

The bearing of the doctrinal system of the fourth gospel on the question of its genuineness [continued]

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THE BEARING
OF THE
DOCTRINAL SYSTEM OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL
ON THE QUESTION OF ITS GENUINENESS¹⁾.

Before discussing the contents of the Epistles in reference to the Being of the Logos, we will take a brief glance at the teaching of the Acts of the Apostles on the point. The destructive criticism has beat as fiercely against the catholic tradition that the book was written by the disciple and close personal friend of S^t Paul and the author of the Third Gospel, as the Atlantic surges are wont to beat against the rocks on the Western coast of this island, and with as little effect. I will therefore venture to assume the truth of this unbroken tradition of some eighteen centuries.

I must pass by the disputed passage in Acts XX, 28. It is true that *Θεοῦ* has the Sinaitic and Vatican Mss. in its favour. But those Mss. no longer stand in the imposing position which was assigned them by Westcott and Hort. Other uncials of credit are against them, and a number of important versions, and the authority of the Fathers may be described as slightly inclining in the same direction. But S^t Peter is reported as calling our Lord the *ἀρχηγὸς τῆς ζωῆς*²⁾, and the word *ἀρχηγός* signifies not simply Prince or Leader, but contains within it the sense of *origin*³⁾. In Acts V, 31, the word appears to be used in this sense, and is equivalent in meaning to the phrase "Second Adam", applied to our Lord in 1 Cor. XV, 45—47. Whether, as some suppose, S^t Luke had anything to do with

¹⁾ See the International Theological Review, n. 57, p. 102—110. ²⁾ Acts III, 15. ³⁾ Aristotle uses it in this sense in Eth. Nic. VIII, 12.

the composition of the Epistle to the Hebrews or not, we find the word twice there, and nowhere else in the New Testament¹⁾, and still in the same sense. Jesus is further declared in the report of a speech by St Peter to be “Lord of all”²⁾. He is received into the heavens until the time of the restitution of all things³⁾. It was impossible for Him to be holden by the pains of death—a statement containing by implication a declaration of His Sinlessness and His superhuman power⁴⁾. There is salvation in Him, and in no other⁵⁾. He it is who sends the Holy Spirit, Who is in the same book expressly declared to be God⁶⁾. And into His Hands the dying Stephen commends his spirit, even as He Himself had commended His into His Father’s Hands⁷⁾.

The Epistle of St James is short and undogmatic. Had there been no utterances in it of the kind above-mentioned, we should not be entitled to contend that its writer “knew nothing”—to use a favourite phrase of the modern critic—of the doctrine of the Logos contained in the Fourth Gospel. I cannot myself help inclining to the belief that the Epistle of St James is one of the later writings of the New Testament, since the tendency to convert the faith of the Gospel, which was an inspiring principle, into mere opinion, is characteristic of a comparatively advanced stage of Christian thought, one in which a mere formal profession of religion replaces the ardour of the convert. And if so, the “silence” of the writer on such points, seeing that they were plainly and deliberately taught by others, must be regarded as “giving consent” to the generally accepted doctrine of the Church. But even his short Epistle contains some remarkable phrases. He, the relative, according to the flesh, of the “Man Christ Jesus”, deliberately calls himself His “slave”, and dignifies Him with Whom, during His life here below, he must have been on terms of close familiarity, with the title of “Lord of Glory”⁸⁾, or “glorious Lord”. His belief in a Word implanted in us⁹⁾ would come under another department of this inquiry, the doctrine of the part taken by the Logos in the salvation of man. But the expression summarizes the teaching

¹⁾ II, 10; XII, 2. ²⁾ Acts X, 36. ³⁾ III, 21. ⁴⁾ II, 24. ⁵⁾ III, 16, cf. IV, 10—12. ⁶⁾ II, 33; cf. V, 3, 4. ⁷⁾ VII, 59. ⁸⁾ Ch. II, 1. ⁹⁾ ἐμγενητον λόγον, ch. I, 21.

concerning the indwelling Christ of the first, third, sixth, fifteenth and seventeenth chapters of the Fourth Gospel, as well as the whole doctrine of S^t Paul on this important subject, the very foundation of the Christian Life. The close correspondence of all the New Testament Scriptures on this crucial point has been overlooked in consequence of the general tendency to lose sight of the Immanence of the Redeemer in those united to Him by faith.

The Epistles of S^t Peter, the second of which, for reasons already assigned, I shall assume to be his, lead us, by inference at least, to the same conclusion. We have at least as good a right to translate *τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν*, 2 Pet. I, 1, "our God and Saviour", as we have to translate "our Lord and Saviour" in ch. III, 2. Then we find "glory and might" ascribed unto Jesus Christ "unto the ages of the ages"¹⁾. His "power" is "Divine"²⁾. He was not taken up into heaven, but "went" there by His own inherent Divinity, and there He dwells³⁾ "at the Right Hand of God, angels and powers and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him"⁴⁾. He is described as having committed no sin, and as without spot or blemish⁵⁾. His Death must have had a mystical significance, since it was "foreordained before the foundation of the world"⁶⁾. And this, as we are frequently taught elsewhere, was because in Him alone dwells the power which can deliver us from the pollutions of humanity⁷⁾. Such a Being as this, we are constrained to admit, must at least have been little less than Divine.

If the writings of S^t Paul contain comparatively few direct assertions of the Divinity of Christ's Person, the doctrine of the Indwelling of His Divinity and Humanity in the human soul permeate the whole of his writings, and proclaim his belief that Christ is God. I must, however, confine myself to the passages where this belief is stated directly, or by immediate inference. The first which occurs to us will naturally be 1 Tim. III, 16. And here we are met, as in Acts XX, 28, by a dis-

¹⁾ 1 Pet. IV, 11. Cf. 2 Pet. III, 18. ²⁾ 2 Pet. I, 3. Either this Divine Power is ascribed to Jesus alone, or to Him and His Father combined. ³⁾ Or "is". ⁴⁾ 1 Pet. III, 22. ⁵⁾ I, 19; II, 22. ⁶⁾ I, 20. Cf. Rom. XVI, 25, 26; Eph. III, 9; 2 Tim. I, 9, 10; Tit. I, 2, 3 (observe here the similarity to S^t John's language); Rev. XIII, 8. ⁷⁾ 2 Pet. II, 20.

puted reading. I will not attempt to enter into so vexed a question, but confine myself to shewing that the Mystery of Piety therein mentioned is Jesus Christ Himself, “Who ¹⁾ was manifest in Flesh, justified in Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed in the world, received up in glory”, and that the facts predicated of Him are such as can hardly be predicated of any being not divine. I have not seen the point referred to by others, but it is nevertheless the fact that the term “Mystery” is applied personally to Christ in more than one other passage in S^t Paul’s writings. Thus God is stated to have put forth the Mystery of His Will in Jesus Christ ²⁾. The “Word (Logos) of God” is described as “the Mystery which was hidden from ages and races but now manifested to His saints”, and “that Mystery is Jesus Christ” ³⁾. He is once more called the “Mystery of God” ⁴⁾. So far as this goes, it strengthens the argument which was put forward in another paper, that the term Logos, as applied to Jesus Christ, was revealed to the Church before S^t John wrote his Gospel. No single one of the passages cited, of course, can be regarded as conclusive. But their cumulative force may fairly be described as not inconsiderable.

The second passage in which the Divinity of the Son of God is asserted is Phil. II, 6. I need not discuss the rendering of the passage. Whatever meaning is to be assigned to ἀρπαγμός, the fact of the Son’s equality is not merely implied but distinctly asserted in the phrase τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ. The whole argument depends upon it. Besides, Christ Jesus existed (ὑπάρχων) in the form (μορφῇ) of God. He was as much God in His essential Nature, as He was a servant in His external appearance. The word μορφῇ here is applied both to the spiritual reality and to the visible form which embodied it. And this essential equality with the Godhead was no claim to that which the Saviour did not rightfully possess, strangely and marvellously though that vital fact was obscured by the inferior garb in which its worldly manifestation was clothed. It is remarkable that S^t John does not fail to tell us that there were those to whom, during the earthly life of Jesus Christ, the

¹⁾ If we read ὄς, and not Θεός, here. ²⁾ Eph. I, 9. ³⁾ Col. I, 26, 27. ⁴⁾ IV, 3. To S^t Paul, it must be added, is committed the task of fulfilling this Word.

“form of a slave” which He “took” obscured the fact of his Divinity ¹⁾).

Then there are the passages in which S^t Paul calls the Eternal Son the *εἰκλὸν Θεοῦ* ²⁾). Of these the passage in the Epistle to the Colossians is far the most important, though it may be remarked in passing that according to the methods adopted by the subjective school of criticism, the Epistle of the Colossians might have been “proved” not to have been written by S^t Paul, had not the expression slipped in, accidentally as it were, in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. So unsafe is the argument *e silentio*, to which critics of the subjective order so frequently have recourse. Precisely as S^t John does in his prologue, though in different language, S^t Paul tells us that Christ is the Image of the unseen God, begotten before the whole Creation, which derived its whole origin from Him ³⁾), as did also all the living Beings wherewith the world was tenanted. And not only so, but He was moreover the *sustainer* of the world which He had created in virtue of the consubstantial Essence He derived from the Father. Not only were all things created by His means and for His own purposes, but they are *held together* by Him (*τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν*). This statement goes a little beyond anything which is stated elsewhere—a fact which is quite sufficient to shew that the Fourth Gospel does not assert any doctrine about Christ which was not thoroughly received and believed in the Church at least from the commencement of S^t Paul’s ministry.

The present is obviously the place at which to introduce the opening passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews. By whomsoever that Epistle was actually written, the traces of Pauline influence in it are so numerous, that no really sound scholar doubts that the great Apostle’s was the mind from which it really proceeded. Fluent and superficial critics may make out a semblance of contradiction here and there, and doubtless its subject prevented it from presenting so many obvious points of contact with the rest of the New Testament as all the other books, when compared, afford. But the student who reads it again and again, and weighs its contents, finds so many subtle

¹⁾ John V, 18; X, 31. ²⁾ 2 Cor. IV, 4; Col. I, 15. ³⁾ Ver. 16. Cf. John I, 3, 14, 18.

touches which betray the mind, if not the hand, of S^t Paul, that he cannot doubt that if not actually composed by him, it has the *imprimatur* of his master mind. We turn, then, to the opening verses of this Epistle. And there, once more, we find, throughout the first chapter, as elsewhere, the distinct assertion, not only of the superiority of the Son to saints and angels, but of His consubstantiality with the Father. He is the ἀπαύγασμα, or beaming forth, of the Divine Being from its source in the invisible and inscrutable Father. He bears the χαρακίτης or stamp of His ὑπόστασις or essential Nature, that unseen reality which underlies all phenomena¹⁾. By this mysterious, but truly Divine Being, the ages were made. And “He founded”, as was predicted, the earth, and the heavens were the work of His Hands²⁾.

The close similarity of the language which makes the Son bear the same relation to the Father as an impress does to the stamp which it is made, and that which calls Him the εἰκὼν or Image of the invisible God, can only be disputed by those who support a foregone conclusion. But one word, perhaps, may be said of the source from which both these expressions proceed. The language, it may be observed, is not that of S^t John, though there is no substantial difference between its statements and his. But those writers who have exhausted all their rhetoric to prove that S^t John borrowed his language and doctrines from the class of Jews who blended Judaism with the philosophy of Plato are confronted with the fact that the Pauline school, far more definitely than S^t John, adopted the phrases of the Jews of that particular type of thought. We have seen that it is at least quite possible that the word Logos was sometimes used by the other Apostles in the same sense in which it was used by S^t John. And it has been noted that the Targums used the word Meim'ra in a sense very nearly approaching that in which S^t John used it. But if on the one hand S^t John approached the language of Philo and the Targums, the writers of the Pauline school made the same use of the Apocryphal Book of Wisdom, which, as is well known, blended Platonism with Judaism at an earlier period, and set the example in following which it is supposed the writer of the

¹⁾ Heb. I, 3. ²⁾ I, 2, 10.

Fourth Gospel betrayed the spuriousness of his work. In Wisdom VII, 25, 26, we find the following passage referring to σοφία: ἀτμὶς γάρ ἐστι τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ δυνάμεως, καὶ ἀπόρροια τῆς τοῦ παντοκράτορος δόξης εἰλικρινής ἀπαύγασμα γάρ ἐστι φῶτος αἰδίου, καὶ ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐνεργείας, καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς αγαθότητος αὐτοῦ. Compare this passage with Heb. I, 3, and Col. I, 15, and, as far as the word ἐνεργεία is concerned, with all St Paul's Epistles, and we shall see that he and his follower who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews were not at all averse to using ideas and words not uncommon in the Greek philosophy in order to express the doctrine of Jesus Christ. We may even go so far as to say that the Jewish intellect and conscience, exercised in earnest meditation on the contents of the completed Hebrew Canon, anticipated the revelation of God in His Son, and provided the infant Church with a terminology which it did not fail to use in setting forth the doctrines which He taught.

So much then for the direct evidence of identity in doctrine between the Epistles and the Fourth Gospel on the question of the Being of Christ. The indirect evidence is by no means inconsiderable, and might be almost indefinitely extended by any careful student of their contents. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day and for ever"¹). St Paul declares that "all things are put under Him", a passage which is verbally repeated in the Epistle to the Hebrews²). God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself³), a passage which recalls St John's language on many occasions. But the power which dwelt in Him was a derived power, which, as we have already seen, is a doctrine which St John reports Him to have taught. God was His Father as well as ours, His God as well as ours⁴). Christ was God's⁵). He drew His Life from God⁶), as from a source—a truth which is apparently indicated by the word κεφαλῆ. Christ was "sent" by God⁷). If He were to us Wisdom and Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption, He was so "from the Father"⁸). He was God's Power and Wisdom⁹).

¹) Heb. XIII, 8. ²) 1 Cor. XV, 27; Heb. II, 8. Cf. John III, 35; XIII, 3; XVII, 2. ³) 2 Cor. V, 19. ⁴) Rom. XV, 6; 2 Cor. I, 3; XI, 31; Eph. I, 3; 1 Pet. I, 3. Cf. John XX, 17. ⁵) 1 Cor. III, 23; Rev. XI, 15. ⁶) 1 Cor. XI, 3. ⁷) Gal. IV, 4. Cf. St John *passim*. ⁸) 1 Cor. I, 30. ⁹) 1 Cor. I, 24.

But His Humanity is as clearly affirmed as His Divinity. That humanity, as we know, was unintelligible to the Gnostics, who resorted to the most extraordinary expedients to explain it away. Especially was this the case with the schools of Basilides and Valentinus, from whom S^t John is accused by critics of the ultra-analytic school of having stolen his matter. But the witness of every writer in the New Testament declares that “although He be God and Man, yet He is not two, but one Christ”. He, the Lord from Heaven, is the second Man¹⁾. He “took on Him the form of a slave”, and was “found in fashion (*ὄχημα*) as a Man”²⁾. He is the “Man Christ Jesus”, the seed of David, of Abraham³⁾. He was “made a little lower than the angels, on account of the suffering of death, from which, in His true Manhood, He pleaded to be delivered”⁴⁾. His Death is constantly mentioned, not merely as a fact, but as a means of salvation to those who believe on Him. Thus in *all* the writings of the New Testament, as well as in the Prophet Isaiah, we find the paradoxical view of His Person which regards it as at once Divine and Human, infinitely glorious, yet cast down and suffering, supreme, yet in a sense subordinate—an amazing paradox which can only be reconciled by a recourse to the supernatural, by confessing that Mystery, insoluble by human reason, because it is eternally hid in God. Science has lately confessed that He, in His ultimate Being, is “unthinkable”. Faith has, for many long centuries, anticipated this discovery. Modern criticism cannot believe that the prophecies in Is. XI and in Is. LII, LIII, can refer to the same Person. But the Catholic Church, from the first century to the twentieth, has seen no difficulty in doing so. For she believes in the “Lamb slain before the foundation of the world”⁵⁾, and that the Mystery enfolded in Him was revealed to “His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit”⁶⁾.

Here I must conclude. I should have liked to go on to shew that the same identity of essential teaching was to be found in all the writers of the New Testament in regard to all the other articles of the Catholic Creed, and that, therefore,

¹⁾ 1 Cor. XV, 47. *κύριος* is absent from many Mss. and versions.
²⁾ Phil. II, 7. ³⁾ 1 Tim. II, 5; 2 Tim. II, 8; Gal. III, 16. ⁴⁾ Heb. V, 7; II, 9. ⁵⁾ Rev. XIII, 8. ⁶⁾ Eph. III, 5. Cf. Acts III, 18; 2 Pet. I, 21.

the Catholic Christian, in reciting that Creed, may be sure that it rests on the express authority of the Eternal Word Himself. But I have trespassed sufficiently on the time and patience of my readers. I acknowledge that the main work of this Review is the promotion of the union of all Christian bodies which hold the one Faith of Christendom. I will therefore here bring to an end my studies on the teaching of Christ as reported by S^t John. I thank the editor for his brotherly courtesy in allowing me so much of his space, and my readers for tolerating me for so long a time. I will only make this excuse, that my subject, if not directly furthering the objects for which this Review was undertaken, may at least serve indirectly to promote them. The Catholic Church has ever regarded the Holy Scriptures as having been written by those "who from the beginning were eye-witness and ministers of the Word", or who had it "confirmed to them by those who had heard Him", to be the fountain from which all instruction in Catholic Truth must be drawn. It is something to know that this fountain contains no polluted waters, no admixture of error, but that everything in it which is matter of faith has come from the source of all Truth, the Eternal Word Himself. It may be ages before the blessed object of the founders of this review may be realized, and many may be the difficulties and hindrances which must be removed before corporate reunion can be reached. But the Catholic Creed is the sole foundation on which corporate reunion can rest; and all which tends to shew that this Creed can be traced to the Truth Itself—that it flowed from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ—must be a step in that direction. For that reason alone did I ask permission to enter upon the subject.

J. J. LIAS.