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A T H E S I S

On

T H E A U T H O R S H I P o f t h e F O U R T H G O S P E L .

By

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LIST of BOOKS CONSULTED.

1. The Gospel according to St. John.
2. Origen: De Principiis.
3. Origen: Contra Celsum.
4. Tertullian: Ad Marcionem
De Praescriptione Haereticorum.
De Monogamia
De Carne Christi.
5. Clement of Alexandria: Miscellanies (
Exhortation to the Greeks.
The Instructor.
6. Eusebius: Historia Ecclesiastica.
7. Theophilus of Antioch: Ad Autolyicum.
8. Irenaeus: Epistola ad Florinum.
Adversus Haereses Books I.-V.
9. American Encyclopaedia.
10. Theodor Zahn: Introduction to the New Testament
Volumes I.- III.
11. Adolf Julicher: Introduction to the New Testament
12. Kurtz: Church History.
13. Sanday: Criticism of the Fourth Gospel.
14. Godet: Commentary on the New Testament:
Gospel of St. John, Vols. I.-II.
15. Athenagoras: Apology.
16. Justin Martyr: 1. Apology
2. Apology.
3. Dialogue with Trypho.
17. G.W. Gilmore: The Johannean Problem.
18. The Expositor's Greek Testament: Gospel of St. John.
19. James Orr: The Virgin Birth of Christ.
20. Hippolytus: Refutation of all Haeresies
(Philosophumena).
21. Salmon: Introduction to New Testament.
22. Encyclo~~paedia~~: Letter of Church at Smyrna.
23. Polycarp: Letter to Philippians.
24. Ignatius: Letter to the Ephesians.

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

The great majority of theological writers of renown are prepared to accept the authenticity and genuineness of the Synoptic Gospels. Many indeed give forced interpretations to various passages, interpretations that remind one of the Gnostics of old, but most scholars admit that the titles of the Synoptic Gospels are true.

The fires of criticism, however, burn brightly about the Fourth Gospel. Since the publication of Bretschneider's able work in 1820, theologians of note have struggled with the question of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. I will not for a moment intimate that either side had any ulterior motive, although the speculations, pro and con, have sometimes reminded me more of the arguments of a skilled lawyer than the serene and even-handed justice and calm reflective abilities of a scientist. Such speculations, while showing the ability and individuality of the writer, are to my mind of a questionable benefit. Aristotle's law of the golden mean is of service here as elsewhere. And forced interpretations are almost as odious as logical fallacies. In the following pages I will do my best to avoid both. I will try to prove my own views on the subject I discuss -though mathematical proof is not obtainable- in the best way I can, but try to be fair.

The question before me is an historic one. Whatever views we may entertain, facts of history contain the final criterion of the question.

What then are the facts of history bearing on this case ?

Despite some extravagances of imagination, it must, I think be conceded that primitive Christianity (40 -300 A.D.) was earnest and zealous in attempting to obey the Master's command to lead the world to Him. Confessions of faith had not been written; how was it possible that differ-

ent systems would not be formulated?

Even the chief of the Apostles made a mistake at Antioch that could easily be construed as antagonizing the theology of Paul. Men approach perfection by divine aid only, and none but the Apostles had, in the literal sense, been the disciples of the Lord. One fact, however, holds my attention as I read the pages written by the Fathers of the Church.

Their moral earnestness is indisputable.

They speculated, but their very speculation shows zeal for the cause they advocate.

They may err, but they do not fabricate. And they are far from showing any puerility of intellect. It is true that legendary writings, were published in that period, but even these show how greatly the writers delighted in thinking on theological subjects. I do not think that there is any fact of history to prove that the writers of the New Testament Apocrypha or Pseudepigraphs intended that their writings should be regarded inspired. They wrote, I believe, according to their own understanding, and could no more desist from writing than a poet can cease to sing or a bird can quit warbling. It was spontaneous outburst of religious fervor, the motive being to glorify God, whatever we think about their views. And even if we have to admit that some apocryphal writings were quoted by the Fathers of the Church as Holy Scripture, (as Irenaeus, Clement and Origin regarded "Pastor Hermae"), these were exceptional cases.

The early Church, moreover, does not show any marked signs of fanaticism, with the possible exception of Montanists. This is all the more to be wondered at when we consider the persecutions of Christians during the first three centuries. The calm fortitude displayed by the Christian martyrs under all conceivable forms of torture, speaks volumes in defence of the credibility of the writers who wielded their pen in

in defence of their faith during the second and third centuries. This bravery of resignation, which has not the least resemblance to bravery of despair, had the effect of spreading Christianity speedily and surely. Now, I will not strive to minimize the ^{ych}psychological effect of one mind on another mind. That certainly has its great value. Neither do I deny that Christ fulfilled, during those times of trouble, in a special way, His promise to be always with His disciples. Yet it seems to me necessary inference that there were then some writings of acknowledged apostolic authorship, in order to harmonize faith and reason in the minds of Christians, but more especially to satisfy those cultured men and women who swelled the ranks of Christians during the first two centuries. I cannot believe that master-minds as the two Clements, Irenaeus and especially Origen possessed, could have been converted to Christianity, no matter how beautiful her teachings, and in whatever contrast to the immortality of heathenism, had there not been any writings of "apostles or apostolic men", that could fully be relied on. To become a Christian in those times meant to renounce the pleasures of the world, protection of the law, life itself if need be. Men will not lay aside all hopes of earthly happiness, unless they are convinced, not only of the beauty of Christianity but also of the truth of it. Men with such acknowledged intellectual abilities must have been converted by the written word as Paul was converted by the living Word.

But, it may be asked: What has this to do with the Fourth Gospel? Are not the Synoptic Gospels sufficient for this purpose? Yes, they are. And yet the Fourth Gospel shows such intimate understanding of Jesus, such tender affinity between Master and disciple, such Christological completeness, so child like faith, that I fail to see its parallel in even the Synoptic Gospels. I see, therefore, in the

It may, I believe, be taken for granted that about the
 greater number of trustworthy testimonies adduced.
 unsolved, the probability, however, being on the side of the
 of opinion regarding this question, - the problem remains
 broken or vague, or if there is not to be found a consensus
 But if that cannot be accomplished, - if the evidence is
 ury. If this can be done the question is practically solved.
 apostolic authority, extending throughout the second cent-
 whether we can find a connected chain of evidence for
 in favor of that which exists". Let us then proceed to see
 Gospel contains narratives of miracles. "The presumption is
 but not simply ruled out of court as improbable, because the
 I can claim is that such tradition be disproved if possible.
 ity in favor of apostolic authority of the Gospel. The least
 seventeen hundred years, furnishes strong antecedent probabli-
 I contend then that this tradition, undisputed for about
 of all times.
 ever will persevere, - the strongest bulwark of Christianity
 that unique work, - the most beautiful they ever read or we
 that they would not try to find out who was the author of
 lantly such lack of earnestness and practical common sense,
 is the height of presumption to impute to primitive Christ-
 of it, it was easy to find out who the author was, and it
 the second century, and especially during the first half
 Such is the voice of tradition, and yet, during all
 name.
 that St. John was the author of the Gospel that bears his
 Alogi, who never rose to the dignity of a sect, - believed
 this: All the ancient church, - with the exception of the
 Now what are the facts? The first I will adduce is
 Gospel of Luke.

year 200 A.D., the Fourth Gospel was universally acknowledged as the work of St. John. I will then proceed from that date and trace the evidence backward, as far as I can.

My first witness is Origen (185-254). A mere glance at his great dogmatic work *Τεπι' ἀρχῶν* is sufficient. He quotes there the Fourth Gospel over thirty times. It is undeniable that he regards it of the same rank as the other Gospels of our Canon or the books of the Old Testament. Special quotations would be superfluous in this case. Origen wrote in Greek. Unfortunately most of his manuscripts are lost, but Rufinus has given us a Latin translation of Origen's works. It is true that Jerome and others accuse Rufinus of having treated the works of Origen in an arbitrary way. Be that as it may; even the poorest translation is sufficient for our purpose, showing abundantly the dependence of Origen on our Gospel as other books of Scripture.

So much for the evidence furnished by the great scholar of Alexandria. From African Carthage a voice is heard about 220 A.D., quoting the Fourth Gospel. In the writings of Tertullian such quotations are numerous. Yet, as he uses them less profusely than Origen I will insert two or three from that author.

1. "Thus, in the Gospel of John, the woman of Samaria, when conversing with the Lord at the well, says, "No doubt Thou art greater" etc; and again, " Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, but Ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship". (John 4: 12,20).

2. " Salvation was of the Jews". (John 4: 22, with change of tense).

1. Adv. Marcionem IV. 35

2. Adv. Marcionem IV. 35

1. " I still have many things to say unto you, but ye are not yet able to bear them, when the Holy Spirit shall come He will lead you into all truth". (In substance John 16: 12-13).

I have said enough to prove that the Fourth Gospel was treated in the same manner as other books of Scripture about the close of the second century. We will now examine the writings that were published before 200 A.D. Clement of Alexandria (? - 220) is my next witness. That he made use of the Fourth Gospel cannot be disputed. He quotes the Gospel at least sixty times in the Miscellanies (*ΣΤΡΩΜΑΤΕΙΣ*) and his other writings bear the same testimony. I will insert three examples one from each of his chief works.

2. "For the Lord says, ' Ye are of your father, the devil; and the lusts of your father will ye do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it". (John 8: 44)

3. "You are hurried to destruction, because ' light is come into the world, and men have loved the darkness rather than light". (John 3: 19).

4. "He speaks of him as one, 'that they all may be one: as Thou, Father, art in me and I am in Thee, that they may also be one in us: that the world may also believe that Thou hast sent me. And the glory which Thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and Thou in me, that they may be perfect in one". (John 17: 21-23)

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1. De Monogamia I. 2
 2. Miscellanies I. 17
 3. Exhort. to the Greeks Ch. I.
 4. The Instructor I. 8

Clement also tells us in what order the Gospels were written. He says that "John, last of all, perceiving that what had reference to the body in the Gospel of our Saviour, was sufficiently detailed, and being encouraged by his familiar friends, and urged by the Spirit, he wrote a spiritual Gospel".^{1/} Enough has been said to prove that Clement regarded the Fourth Gospel to be the work of St. John.

I will now adduce the testimony of Theophilus of Antioch (115-188 A.D.), whom Eusebius declares to have been the sixth bishop of Antioch in Syria, from the apostles. 2/ In his work to Autolytus written about 170 A.D. there are found some few expressions that more or less reflect the thought of the Fourth Gospel. In one place only, is a direct quotation, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God"/ 3/ This sentence is said by Theophilus to be the words of John one of "the inspired men". This quotation settles all doubts as to the value of the other passages in the same work that seem to be of Johannine origin.

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons (born 135, died 202), is the most important writer during the second half of the second century. His great work against the heretics (Gnostics) is more complete than the writings of any other contemporaneous apologist. He is, therefore, our most important witness during this period.

In a letter to Florinus, a Valentinian Gnostic Irenaeus reminds him that they were both disciples of Polycarp. But these are his words. 4/" For, while I was yet a boy, I saw thee in lower Asia with Polycarp, distinguishing thyself in

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1. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. VI. 14.
 2. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. IV. 20
 3. Ad. Autol. II. 22
 4. Epist. ad Flor. II.