

## ARTICLE II.

## THE ADORATION OF JESUS IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

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## II.

IT may indeed be questioned whether there are any who are impartial with reference to the subject which we have been treating. The Jews and the Gentiles who from the beginning reproached the Christians with revering a Crucified One as God, can certainly not be called impartial. Among the Gentiles it was a very natural thought, that men should deify a man, and revere him as God. Malicious Jews might easily be believed, when they took occasion to express the expectation that the Christians might some day resolve to honor as divine, instead of the Crucified, some other from among themselves—say a martyr, like Polycarp, under the impulse of the immediate impression made by his heroic death. Thus might Jews scoff, and Gentiles believe.<sup>1</sup> Some centuries had already passed since Greek philosophers had explained that all the gods of Olympus were men by birth and death, who had been deified because of their services to civilization. But such an explanation was the beginning of the end of all serious worship of those gods. The Romans soon became accustomed to having their emperors translated to a place among the gods, immediately after their death. This was connected with very old traditions of the Gentile world. But the

<sup>1</sup> Martyr. Polycarpi xvii. 2. Cf. note 2 *fin.*, p. 317.

way in which it was accomplished, and the ease with which intelligent people accustomed themselves to it, can be accounted for only on the ground that the old religions were dying out. The noble emperor Trajan was praised for not claiming divine titles and honors for himself while yet alive, like some of his predecessors, but waiting patiently to be *made* a god after his death. This expression "to make a god" was apparently used with entire ingenuousness.<sup>1</sup> We possess a description of the ceremonies, with which at the end of the second century this so-called apotheosis was consummated. While the body of the emperor was buried in the earth, a wax figure representing the deceased with the utmost fidelity, had to take his place, and to be made the centre of pantomimic solemnities lasting several days. When finally, at the close, the wax figure was burned on a costly funeral pile, an eagle fastened there was let loose, in order that it might ascend to heaven with the flames. The narrator adds: "Of this eagle, the Romans believe that it bears the soul of the emperor from the earth to heaven, and from that moment they worship that soul with the rest of the gods."<sup>2</sup> We will not ask how many of the Romans really believed this; but we may confidently affirm that no human being in the wide Roman empire ever called on these emperor-gods in his distress. Even the official style of the writer shows no trace, yea no semblance, of serious adoration. Any belief that these new-made gods could bring down a special blessing on the commonwealth, or on its subjects, was out of the question. We possess a solemn panegyric on the emperor Trajan, which Pliny, whom we mentioned at the beginning, pronounced before the assembled Senate in the emperor's presence.<sup>3</sup> It might be compared with the sermon which a Christian court

<sup>1</sup> Plin. Panegyric. 35; Vell. Pat. hist. rom. ii. 126: "non appellavit eum, sed fecit deum."

<sup>2</sup> Herodianus iv. 2.

<sup>3</sup> The so-called Panegyricus, especially chap. lxxxix., xciv.; cf. chap. i.

preacher is expected to deliver on the birthday of his monarch, in his hearing. The orator rises in one place to an invocation of Nerva, now translated among the stars, the predecessor and father by adoption of the emperor who was present. But he has only this to say to the emperor-god in heaven: that it must be a real joy to him that his successor on earth is still better than himself. In truth the emperor on earth, who was still a man, occupied a higher place, and received more respect, than the deified ex-emperor in heaven! The prayer for the health of the emperor and for the weal of the empire, which the consul worthily voices at the close, is not addressed to the new-made quasi-god, but to the good old gods, especially to Jupiter, the castellan and warder of eternal Rome.

When we turn from this picture of heathen deification of men, back to the worshippers of the living God, to the Jewish people, and to the Christian church which grew up in their midst, we find there a unanimous verdict of condemnation on everything that has any relation or likeness to such worship of men, either living or dead. The fact that the worship of the emperor was not seriously meant, but was only a ceremony, which gave symbolic expression to the inviolable majesty of the empire, of Rome's universal sway;—that fact did not find acceptance as an excuse, in the eyes of the Jews and of the early Christians. The blasphemy was not lessened by the frivolousness with which it was uttered. When in the years 38 and 39 A. D. altars were erected on the soil of Palestine and at Alexandria to the emperor Caligula, who had just ascended the throne, and images of him were set up by the populace even in the Jewish synagogues, a cry of indignation was heard throughout the Jewish world. And when later, Caligula, in order to break down the stubbornness of the Jews, gave command to set up his statue in the temple at Jerusalem by force of arms, it came very near bringing on at that time the bloody conflict which thirty years

later ended in the destruction of Jerusalem. It was not the idea that such an emperor as Caligula, but the fact that any human being, should require from those who "know what they worship" divine honor, which roused the death-defying anger of all Jews.

And the Christians in Palestine, with the missionaries who thence carried the gospel to the Gentiles, were Jews, genuine Israelites in this respect. But this includes all those with whose adoration of Jesus we are now concerned. It was part of their tradition that Jesus fully and completely accepted the fundamental article of the Israelite creed, faith in the one God, alone to be worshipped.<sup>1</sup> They preached this tenet to those who did not yet know it; and their constant contact with heathenism, more than their continued connection with Israel<sup>2</sup> and with its worship, kept alive the conviction that every divine honor paid to the creature instead of the Creator, or beside the Creator, was an exchange of truth for a lie, a crime which invoked God's wrath, and for all religious men, an abomination.<sup>3</sup> When the seer, John, once and again was about to fall down in adoration before the angel who showed him the visions of the Apocalypse, he received each time the warning: "See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren; worship God" (xix. 10; xxii. 9). On the other hand, before the Lord Jesus he prostrates himself, and hears only words of encouragement, in order that he may not die from fear of the adorable majesty of him who ever liveth (i. 17 f.). Jesus in laying his hands in blessing and tranquillizing power upon the head of his worshipper, only confirms the long-standing usage of the church. But precisely because the Christians were conscious that they adored as God, a Lord who had died as men

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iv. 10; Mark xii. 28-34; John xvii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the fragment of a dialogue between a Jew and a Jewish Christian, Jas. ii. 18 f.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. i. 25; Acts xiv. 11-15; xvii. 16; 1 John v. 20 f.

die, was their abhorrence intensified for all heathen deification of men. This seemed to them a satanic caricature of the most holy truth, an antichristianity. It is not generally known, but can be clearly proven, that Christians of the second century found in the mysterious number, which in the Apocalypse expresses the name of Antichrist, the name of Caligula, "Gaios Kaisar," and allowed themselves to alter the number to correspond.<sup>1</sup> And it can hardly be doubted that even Paul drew his picture of Antichrist under the memorable impression of that emperor's sacrilegious crime (2 Thess. ii. 4). The question renews itself: "How can we explain it that the Christian Israelites, to whom every deification of the creature was an abomination, worshipped Jesus, whom they had seen live and die as a human being? It would not be answering the question, but evading it, and artificially postponing the answer, if one should say: They were far removed from the heathen idea, that they could or dared make a human being into a god, though he were the holiest and most glorious of all men; but they were convinced that God had exalted Jesus out of the lowliness of human life to divine dignity, and made him Lord in heaven. For, apart from the fact that the heathen also had similar beliefs, so far as they were at all serious in their worship of the heroes,<sup>2</sup> where else, but in the belief and thought of the disciples, existed that divine act of exalting Jesus to the throne of God? How did it come into their thought? But that is only, in other words, the question to which we are seeking the answer. Nor is it any answer thereto, but only a rejection of false answers, when we affirm that for Christian Jews it was unthinkable that one could be god in the sense of being an object of wor-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my *Apokalyptische Studien*, *Zeitschr. f. kirchl. Wiss. u. kirchl. Leben*, 1885, p. 568 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Even a Pliny says (*Panegy.*, chap. xi.) to Trajan, in contrast to his more frivolous-predecessors: "Thou hast translated thy father (Nerva) among the stars, not in order to frighten the citizens, not in order to offend the gods, not to honor thyself, but because thou believest in him as God."

ship, who had become such only in the course of time. A new god, one come into being, not to say "a made god," was to them at least as much a self-contradiction as to ourselves. God does not come into being; God is, God was, and God will be. Just this was implied concerning Jesus, as often as he was addressed in prayer.

Nor is this by any means only our inference, but the express confession of the first Christian generation. The same Revelation of John, which so absolutely forbids all adoration, not only of the idols of the present and of the last days, but of the good heavenly spirits as well, gives also the sufficient explanation of the fact that to the slain Lamb is due identical and equal adoration, with that due to the Father, from all creatures in heaven and on the earth (v. 13). This is no deification of the creature, because Jesus is in the fundamental element of his person no creature, but the beginning of every creature, the eternal source of all coming into being, and of all that has come into being (iii. 14). Before him, man may and must fall down and worship, since he can testify of himself that which the God of Israel has asserted of himself through the prophets, and that which this same book of Revelation (i. 8; xxi. 6) says of the almighty Father: "I am the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End" (i. 17; ii. 8; xxii. 13). But these are not special disclosures, which were vouchsafed to a single apostle. In this respect there is no difference between what John asserts here, or in the beginning of his Gospel and of his First Epistle, and that which is incidentally and variously expressed by Paul and other apostles. Paul also knows that he who is now a Lord, rich unto all that call on him, was once poor; and that he existed in the form of God, before and when he emptied himself of his possessions in power and glory, and took upon him the form of a servant.<sup>1</sup> This, as the common belief of Christians in the early days, is attested by

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 9; Phil. ii. 6 f.

all the passages where Christ is represented as personally participating in the creation of the world, and in the events of the history of the Old Testament revelation.<sup>1</sup>

The supposition that the apostolic church ever saw in Christ nothing but a deified human being, has no historical evidence in its favor, and is excluded by the fact that from the beginning he was not glorified as the first of the redeemed, but adoringly addressed with the Father as the only Redeemer, as God and Saviour, as source of salvation and grace for sinful men. And if we should read anywhere, that which indeed is nowhere to be found, that God had made him to be a God worthy of adoration, then we should not be able to interpret this otherwise than Peter's saying: "that God hath made him both Lord and Christ" (Acts ii. 36). For there it is not meant that during his earthly life he was not yet the Christ, or, not yet a Lord, but only that God has now raised him to a position and transfigured him to a glorified form of life, in which he can manifest himself to his church as the Lord and the Christ which he was before. This is all self-evident to those who have not only grown up in the faith of the church, but also by their contact with extrachristian thought have in the end ever renewed the strength of their conviction, that this faith of the earliest church will also be the faith of the latest church, and that this faith, together with the church, will be carried safely through all storm and strife into another world, where the enigmas will be explained, and all the fragments of human knowledge will give place to the vision of the truth we have believed. But not all are so happy; and it is thoroughly comprehensible, it is not by any means a phenomenon only of these more modern times, that some Christians should no longer recognize in the original forms of Christian worship, which date from its early days, the appropriate expression for their personal faith, and yet have not

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 6; Col. i. 16-18; Heb. i. 2, 10; John i. 3.—1 Cor. x. 4, 9; 1 Pet. i. 11; John xii. 41.

the courage to create entirely new forms for a new faith. The friends of the old-fashioned faith should not be very much astonished nor very much excited at this. The case becomes grievous only when the new-fashioned Christians, who existed, as has been said, just as really in the first centuries of the church as in its nineteenth, begin by falsifying the facts of the history of Christianity, and then, with a supercilious air and a tone of superior knowledge, proceed to explain these facts according to their own views.

In this way they represent the belief in the personal and eternal deity of Jesus, testimonies to which are met with in the most different writers of the New Testament, as the fruit of the theological or philosophical thought of certain individuals. It is true Paul was a pupil of the rabbins before he became a teacher of the faith of the Christians, and there are not wanting in his epistles traces of his rabbinic education. In itself it would be conceivable, that in the years of waiting and preparation which he spent at Tarsus after his conversion, he might have tried to express his new-found faith in Jesus, the Lord of glory, in the forms of Jewish theological thought. Jewish theology was inclined to conceive of and represent the activities, attributes, and self-manifestations of Deity as distinct personal beings, and on the other hand to ascribe an eternal existence to that which shows itself influential in the sacred history. God's Wisdom, Word, Glory, are spoken of as if they were persons; and even the Law, which was given through Moses, is said to have existed with God, before the creation of the world. But where does a trace of these ideas appear in the utterances of Paul concerning the eternity and divinity of the person of Jesus? There can be no question of a system original with Paul, in connection with which the person of Jesus was exalted above its historic position, and above the estimate hitherto placed on it in the church. Thoroughly unsystematic are the utterances of Paul concerning the eternal deity of Christ; for there is found with



them the ancient Israelite belief in the One and Only God, beside whom there is none other, without any reconciliation between the two.<sup>1</sup> It is not to be supposed that his thought was so unconnected, or, to express it more correctly, the acute Christian rabbi was hardly so unthinking, as not to become aware of the formal contradiction involved in speaking in the same breath of the one God and of the one Lord, who indeed is also a God worthy of adoration. But his faith in Christ was so little a result of scholastic thought, that he never betrays any sense of need to reconcile together in thought and word that which had been from the first a part of the faith of the church; the solitariness of God, and the eternal deity of the Saviour.

Stress has been laid on the fact that Paul never expresses his knowledge of the eternity of the person of Jesus in a formal manner and with a didactic purpose, but always in a merely incidental way. But what conclusion can we draw from this, other than that he did not view this as a new, higher knowledge, which had dawned upon him, and therefore needed to be didactically explained as a novelty to other Christians? It is precisely the way in which Paul everywhere speaks on this subject, even when he is addressing Christians whom he has not instructed, which forms the conclusive proof that he assumes the same knowledge on the part of all worshippers of Jesus. In this assumption he could not be mistaken, and was not. We found the same knowledge and the same formal self-contradiction in the book of Revelation, whose author was at all events not a pupil of Paul. It is clear, therefore, also, that Paul cannot have been the originator of a theological development, whose result was the general belief of the second generation of Christians in the personal and eternal deity of Christ. Our historical view concerns the first generation, especially the Jewish Christians of Palestine and their leaders, James, the Lord's brother, Peter,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 4, 6; Eph. iv. 5 f.; Rom. iii. 29; Gal. iii. 20.

John. It would be absurd to suppose that these men exchanged their original conception of Christ, embodied in the preaching and teaching, in the worship, and in the entire vocabulary of the church, for another essentially different, which had originated in some speculative brain. Such a speculation could have met with nothing but opposition from them. And the New Testament could not fail to show distinct traces of a discord in the estimate of the person of Jesus, if on this subject there had been a development proceeding through the clashing of opposing views. Nor was Paul the man to obliterate or to hide such opposition. But he testifies that even the hostile Jewish-Christian teachers, who were to him a thorn in the eye, preach no other Jesus than he proclaims.<sup>1</sup> All this simply confirms that which was presented to us at the beginning, in the fact that, even before the conversion of Paul, the Christians worshipped Jesus.

If this attitude of the church to her Lord was in any respect the result of a development, it can only have been a development which was practically finished at Pentecost. Only the personal work and teaching of Jesus can have brought to pass in the hearts of his disciples this development, or let us rather say, this revolution in their religious thought, which found its highest expression, but yet one entirely natural, in the worship of Jesus. We might indeed say: the same Spirit, which seized them with irresistible power, so that "Abba, dear Father" broke forth from the hearts of all believers as a cry of nature, also impelled them beyond the range of their own knowledge and understanding to cry: "Lord Jesus, help!" There is some truth in this. But it would be superstitious, and contradict historic truth, to imagine such working of the Spirit as unconnected with the teaching of Jesus. Jesus himself had said: "The Spirit shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine and shall declare it unto you." He would "bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had said to them." To abide

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 4; cf. Phil. i. 15-18; Col. iv. 11.

in the word of Jesus, in his sayings, was the command on whose fulfilment all true discipleship was to depend. And "disciples," that is pupils, remained for a long time one of the names by which the worshippers of Jesus called themselves. Paul, also, who had not himself heard the teaching of Jesus, recognizes the authority of no other gospel except "Christ's gospel," that is "Jesus' preaching."<sup>1</sup> That which is not essentially contained therein, that which does not follow the line of the "gospel of God" first preached by Christ, and cannot evince itself as an amplification and application thereof, required by circumstances, is regarded by him, as by the other apostles, as a caricature of Christian teaching.

But just when we clearly grasp this, arises a difficulty in our subject. The "Abba" which the Spirit teaches the children of God to say, has its firm foundation in the teaching of Jesus; for from the beginning he taught his disciples to set forth before God, as their Heavenly Father, all their petitions in few words. Prayer to *Jesus* appears not to have an equally solid basis in his teaching. Yet it is certain, in the first place, that Jesus did not confine himself to purifying the prayers of his disciples from the distortion and degeneracy prevalent in his day, from pharisaic boastfulness before God and men, and from heathen babbling. Their prayer was to be wholly new. Though Jesus in the Lord's Prayer, in the pattern of prayer which he gave his disciples, follows Jewish forms, yet it was a new relation to God, one founded by Jesus, which should find expression in all the praying as in all the conduct of his

<sup>1</sup> The incorrectness of the translation "gospel about Christ" (Gal. i. 7; Rom. i. 9; xv. 19; 1 Cor. ix. 12; 2 Cor. ii. 12; ix. 13; x. 14; Phil. i. 27; 1 Thess. iii. 2), or "preaching about Christ" (Rom. xvi. 25), or "testimony about Christ" (1 Cor. i. 6), or even "word about Christ" (Col. iii. 16), and "teaching about Christ" (2 John 9), is evident from the comparison with "gospel," "testimony," "of God" (Rom. i. 1; xv. 16; 2 Cor. xi. 7; 1 Thess. ii. 2, 8, 9; 1 Pet. iv. 17; 1 Cor. ii. 1). It is evident further from the fact that, where Christ is to be designated as object of the preaching, other constructions are used (Rom. i. 3; 1 John i. 1 *fn.*). Even Mark i. 1 means the gospel first preached by Jesus; cf. Mark i. 14; Heb. ii. 3; iii. 1.

disciples. Not as members of the people, which God had called his first-born son, but as disciples of Jesus, who had called them as individuals to the kingdom of God, his Father, were they to know and worship God as their Father. It was a new thing in Israel, that an individual, like Jesus, should say to God "my Father," and that individuals should be spoken to of God as "thy Father," as Jesus spoke to his disciples. But above all was it new, that men were now to stand, on the ground of their relation to another man, in a nearer and more intimate relation to God, than the most pious members of the Jewish church who had known nothing of Jesus.

Now if prayer is the most direct expression of religion, this new religion must utter itself in a new kind of prayer. This prayer must express not only the emancipation of religion from national limitations, and its consequent elevation of character as a personal relation to God, but also, and with equal emphasis, the mediation of this new relation to God through Jesus. Neither the one nor the other appears in the Lord's Prayer. That prayer every Israelite could pray, and Israelites who wholly ignored Jesus have prayed in a very similar manner. When Jesus, however, instructed his disciples to concentrate all their petitions into this prayer, this is only one example of the fact that he wished to show them, by word and deed, how to fill the forms of Jewish piety with spirit and truth, and make use of them "in spirit and in truth." The Lord's Prayer was not yet the new prayer of the new church. Still Jesus did not leave it to the natural development of the germ planted in the hearts of those who revered him, to produce spontaneously the kind of prayer appropriate to their religious position, but gave his disciples express instructions in this direction. He instructed them to pray in his name, and attached special promises to this new kind of prayer. Where he, according to the gospel tradition, repeatedly and emphatically referred to the prayer of the disciples in his name, namely in the discourses of the last evening when

he was with them, he expressly calls attention to the fact that this is to be for them a new, hitherto untried way of communion with God, and indeed a way so perfect that it will not cease in the glorious future, when the disciples will no longer stand in need of teaching through Jesus, nor even of the intercession of Jesus, because they have become worthy in themselves of the love and favor of God, by reason of their faith and love steadfast to the end (John xvi. 23-27). On the other hand, we notice that Jesus, the same evening, shortly before the sayings cited, speaks of the future prayer in his name as something long known or self-evident (xiv. 13 f.; xv. 16). It agrees with this, that, according to another source, Jesus at an earlier time assumes it as self-evident, that when two or three shall after his departure gather for united prayer, they will gather for his name's sake, in his name (Matt. xviii. 19 f.). According to this, Jesus must have spoken long before of the relation of the church to him, and of its nature after his departure, so that prayer in his name came to be regarded as the natural and self-evident expression of this relation.

“To pray in the name of Jesus” means indeed nothing else but to call upon God with invocation of Christ, and in the consciousness of belonging to him. So the utterance of the name of Jesus in prayer means something entirely different from the mention of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by Elijah in his prayer (1 Kings xviii. 36). They were great men of the past, who had no active part in the present. Great things had God done for and through them, and the memory of these divine acts strengthens the faith of the later-born petitioner of their race. But they have finished their service, and cannot help their posterity. “Abraham knoweth us not, and Israel doth not acknowledge us” (Isa. lxiii. 16). Jesus, on the other hand, laid claim to the whole future till the end of the world, for himself and for his active working. Death and the grave are to him only the

transition to an activity increased in scope and power in the church and in the world. The worshippers who assemble for his name's sake, and call on God in his name, know from his own words two things, which essentially differentiate their relation to him from any reciprocal communion of dead and living men. They know, first, that Jesus only since his resurrection and ascension to God is possessed of his full life and power, that he is actively participating in God's government of the world, and that he specially intercedes with his Father for his church. And, second, they know from his words that only now, since he was exalted, he can and will fully give them his presence, that he will be with them and their work as constant ally, and especially that when they pray he will tarry invisible in their midst.<sup>1</sup> And therefore their praying in his name is not the naming of one who *was*, but of a living one, and not of one who is absent, but of a present Lord.

Now from this it is a self-evident result that those who pray in the name of Jesus to God, pray also as well to Jesus. It would be unendurable to think of Jesus as being with God as his co-regent and as intercessor for the church, and also as present in the assembly of the worshippers, and yet to believe that prayers spoken in his presence to God, would not reach his heart as the cry and petition of his own disciples. That prayer in the name of Jesus would rather by an inner necessity shape itself as prayer to Jesus, Jesus himself said, at the time when, according to the existing tradition, he first expressly and emphatically treated the subject. When he says: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John xiv. 13), this implies that Jesus will regard the prayer addressed to the Father in his name, as addressed to himself; for not of the Father, but of himself, he says that he will fulfil those petitions. But while here this idea is only incidentally disclosed, and the main emphasis is laid on the fact that all such prayers

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 20; xxviii. 18, 20; John xii. 32; xiv. 16; xv. 4 f.; xvi. 7.

shall find fulfilment, Jesus in the next verse proceeds to say: "If ye shall ask *me* anything in my name, that will I do."<sup>1</sup> That Jesus does not himself instruct his disciples to set forth, after his going to God, their petitions in prayer to himself as well as to the Father, but on the contrary allows this to come in unnoticed, as a self-evident consequence of their relation to him, is the strongest proof that prayer to Jesus was not the result of theological reflection in the first or second Christian generation, but the necessary expression of the religious life created by Jesus in his disciples.

And yet we have not explained how it was that in the whole number of the Israelites who became believers in Jesus, the objections already mentioned against any adoration of another beside God, should have been so completely overcome that we cannot discover the slightest trace of them in the original documents of early Christianity. They could have been overcome only by clear and reiterated testimony of Jesus concerning his relation to God, such as would present the adoration of the man Jesus not as a religious aberration, but as the most fervent way of adoring God. But this is not only a postulate, which results from reasoning back from the adoration of Jesus to its cause, it is also part of the tradition. The same Gospel of John, which alone clearly witnesses that Jesus expected from his disciples prayer in his name and prayer to him, tells us also of such utterances of Jesus as alone give sufficient ground for that prayer, if they were really spoken by Jesus, and are founded on the truth. In this Gospel alone does Jesus speak plainly, and at last

<sup>1</sup> The genuineness of the well-attested reading  $\mu\epsilon$  is evident on the following grounds: 1. It would seem very unnatural beside "in my name." 2. The  $\epsilon\gamma\omega$  in the conclusion, which is more strongly attested than the  $\mu\epsilon$  not only by the same authorities, but also by others, presupposes the  $\mu\epsilon$  in the condition. 3. Without these pronouns verse 14 is after verse 13 a purposeless tautology. That which is new in the second sentence is precisely that Jesus now characterizes the prayer as one addressed to himself, and that he in this connection now first emphasizes the fact that he whom his own disciples address, will answer their petition by his action.

“without a parable,” of his origin from the heavenly world, to which through death and ascension he returns. There he speaks of his being before Abraham was, and of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. On the other side, it is precisely in this Gospel that no line is wanting in the picture of a truly human life of the Son of God, in subordination to God, in gradually developing knowledge, purpose, and action, in experience of human suffering and sympathy for it, also in the cultivation of human friendship. But all this is enclosed within the circle of the eternal divine life of this unique personality. From this point of view it becomes also more comprehensible, than it would be otherwise, how a man who proclaims the truth to men (John viii. 40) could require as conditions of salvation a faith in himself, a love to himself, a dependence on himself, an abiding in himself; how he could teach that all religion and morality which had been before him must develop into joyful allegiance to him, yea, to an honoring of the Son, which should correspond to the honoring of the Father.<sup>1</sup> The accusation of blasphemy he denied as often as it was put forward; but he did this without taking back one of those sayings, which were certainly blasphemies if they were not true. And he could repel the accusation, because he knew that any honor which he might receive would not at all encroach on the honor paid to God, but, like his own work and teaching, would redound to the glorification of the Father. At the end of the book which narrates these things stands the risen Jesus, and before him the doubter, Thomas, who, shamed and conquered, can only stammer: “My Lord and my God.” The Gospel which ends thus tells us how the adoration of Jesus originated. He who regards this Gospel, for this reason, as untrustworthy, as many do, robs himself of the principal means of explaining the common belief of the early Christians.

It is true that the first three Gospels also contain enough

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 21; v. 23; vi. 35, 45; xiv. 1; xv. 1-8.



that implies the same background which the fourth Gospel reveals. There, too, Jesus speaks of himself as in fact no human being before or after him has spoken of himself. That which he there says of his central position in God's kingdom, and of his mediatorship between God and men, enduring till the end of the ages, can be judged only in three ways. We must either find it inconsistent with the well-attested humility and piety of Jesus, that he should have claimed to be the Christ, the Son of God in a unique sense, the Saviour and Judge of all men, and must therefore reject the witness of these Gospels also, in the most essential points. Or, we must allow weight to this historical testimony, and explain the claims of Jesus, which far exceed all that is possible to man, by the supposition that he was of unsound mind, was affected with the illusion of greatness, as has been seriously maintained more than once, even in our own day. Or, finally, we must not only allow weight to this historical testimony, but also permit ourselves to be convinced by the true witness who speaks therein. Perhaps the confession of those who content themselves with the testimony of the first three Gospels, need not be essentially different from the confession of Thomas. We see even in these Gospels preparations for the subsequent adoration of the exalted Jesus being made during his earthly life. For the disciples go far beyond the reverence paid in the East to kings and lords, when, having seen Jesus walking on the waves of the lake, they fall down before him and say: "Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matt. xiv. 33). At the end of Matthew's Gospel we read that the disciples knelt before the risen Lord. But we learn also that "some doubted," and we are not told that this doubt was overcome. This is a symbol of the incompleteness of the testimony of these Gospels, of their insufficiency for the needs of those who are to believe without seeing. Had the church then been confined, or remained for ever confined, to those reminiscences and traditions which are preserved in the first three Gospels,

there would not only have been sensible gaps in her historical knowledge of Jesus, but also doubts would have remained and have constantly reappeared, such as cannot be overcome by religious contemplation and the mere inferences of a ready faith. But doubt is an enemy of prayer. Were that which the fourth Gospel narrates as word and deed of Jesus, unhistorical, or had its contents remained a secret known to few, without influence on the faith of the whole church, then the adoration of Jesus by the early church would not only be historically incomprehensible, but also essentially unjustifiable. Jesus would have had no true disciples, for those who so called themselves would not have been "abiding in his word." But this is incredible. Incredible, because the personal disciples of Jesus desired and would accept no other Master, except him who had blessed them with happiness, and recognized no higher authority than his words. To their faithful memory, and to their own and their pupils' record, we owe all our knowledge of Jesus, and also our acquaintance with those words of the Master by which we measure the right of his disciples to call themselves such. They stand the test, if we do not arbitrarily lower the standard.

When we to-day address Jesus as our living God and Saviour, with the church in her most fervent songs and prayers, or when we stand with our children round the well-spread table, and, folding our hands, say: "Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest," we may feel ourselves united with those whom Jesus himself taught to pray. Though we may deem ourselves, in comparison with those highly favored men, weak in faith and poor in experience, yet we can certainly utter a heart-felt "Kyrie eleison"; and though our restless and eager hearts should often receive no other answer than this: "My grace is sufficient for thee," yet even this is an answer for which it is worth while to pray.