

THE PROLOGUE OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

II.—THE LOGOS (*continued*).

With respect to the *idea* of this Eternal Being, the medium of the Divine works and revelations, John had heard (at least we gather as much from his Gospel) Jesus assert his eternity, and, consequently, his divinity. He had learnt from his lips that He was before Abraham, and that Abraham had rejoiced in the prospect of his appearing on the earth as the Messiah. By means of these declarations of Jesus he had explained to himself that enigmatical saying of John the Baptist, "*He that cometh after me was before me.*" From this vantage-ground he looks backward and contemplates the Old Testament, where he discovers the three forms of Divine manifestation which we have pointed out: *Speaking*, by which God acts from the beginning; *Wisdom*, which was his associate in the work of creation; and the *Maleach*, the equal of Jehovah, who, as *Messiah*, was to come and take up his abode personally in his temple.—How, therefore, when once he had recognized Jesus as the Messiah, could he fail to discern in Him the supreme and primordial Revealer, and, in his appearing, the perfect theophany announced as the completion of all previous mediations? The testimonies of Jesus and John the Baptist threw light upon the Old Testament, while at the same time receiving confirmation from it.

2. As to the *term* Logos, employed by John to denote the Divine Being who appeared in Christ, if the Jewish doctors, without having had the slightest connection with Alexandrian speculation, had been

led, by the Old Testament itself, to apply to the superhuman Mediator between God and his people the name, the Word of the Lord, why could not the Evangelist either appropriate this expression—since it was Scriptural—or adopt of his own accord a similar appellation? Apart from our ignorance as to the exact age of the Chaldee paraphrases, the second alternative appears the more probable if we take into consideration the facts mentioned above. Who does not feel that there is an essential difference in the meaning of the term Word in these two expressions: *the Word of Jehovah* and *the Word*, absolutely speaking? The first expression is taken from the intercourse of Jehovah with his people, and denotes nothing more than a simple relation; the second denotes the very essence of the Being thus designated. The latter contains all that is implied in the former, and much more besides. The denomination employed by the Rabbins includes, under a generic name, the entire series of theocratic manifestations; that of John comprehends all those divine phenomena which have succeeded each other in time, referring them to their permanent principle, and teaches us that, if the Being in question has been the agent of Divine manifestation in such and such particular circumstances, it is because He is Himself the revelation. He not merely reveals, He is, absolutely speaking, Revelation itself, the WORD. In Him revelation is not an act or attribute; it is his very essence. John, therefore, only gives an absolute form to the term used in the Old Testament to express the series of Divine revelations; and in this way he raises its meaning to its highest power.

And the object he has in view is simply to say : "There is no revealer after or besides this ! For this Being is Revelation itself, Revelation incarnate. Let every one of the λόγοι which I am going to communicate be received as an emanation from the absolute Logos !" From this point of view the relation of verse 18 to the first verse of the Prologue is obvious. The words ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο in verse 18 are just the author's own commentary on the word Logos. The passage xii. 44-50, also may convince any one that we have found the real thought of the author.

3. We must not identify, as is generally done, the question of the origin of this term with that of its *employment* by the Evangelist. Its origin is purely Biblical, as we have just seen ; but it would be surprising certainly had John, after a long residence in those countries of Asia Minor where the use made at Alexandria and elsewhere of the word Logos could not be unknown, inscribed this term so conspicuously at the head of his Gospel without any special design. If John's employment of this word was not something borrowed, it certainly contained an allusion. To those Hellenists and Hellenistic Jews, on the one hand, who were vainly philosophizing on the relations of the finite and infinite, to those investigators of the letter of the Scriptures, on the other, who speculated about the theocratic revelations, John said, by giving this name Logos to Jesus : "The unknown Mediator between God and the world, the knowledge of whom you are striving after, we have seen, heard, and touched ; your philosophical speculations and your Scriptural subtleties will never raise you to Him ; believe, as we do, in

Jesus, and you will possess in Him that Divine Revealer who engages your thoughts.”¹

The explanation which we have just offered supposes that the discourses which St. John puts into the mouth of Jesus were really uttered by Him; but this premiss is the very point in dispute. We are asked how it comes to pass, if the Prologue is an historical summary of the discourses of our Lord, that the Synoptics should have preserved no trace of this teaching of Jesus respecting his own person.²

It is only from this special point of view, and within the briefest space, that we can discuss the relation of the Synoptics to the Fourth Gospel. But we hope to prove that the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptics not only agrees with, but requires just such a testimony on the part of Jesus respecting his own person, as is given in the Gospel according to St. John. An attempt is made to represent the Jesus of the Synoptics as a simple preacher of morality, quite opposed to the Jesus of John, who is said to be perpetually occupied with metaphysical speculations respecting his own person. The doctrine of the former, it would seem, just amounts to the preaching of love to God and our neighbour; whilst with the latter the whole of religion consists in a belief in his mysterious relation to his Father. Here, again, we have one of those shades of difference which are cleverly construed into contrarieties. Is it not the Jesus of the Synoptics, who says, “*Whosoever loveth father, mother, or wife, more than me, is not worthy of me*”? Is it not He who says, “*Come unto*

¹ See Neander, “*Gesch. der Pflanz. der Christl. K.*,” t. ii. p. 549.

² Baur, “*Theol. Jahrb.*,” t. iii. p. 8.

me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? Is it possible to read the Synoptics without getting the impression that it is in Jesus, and in Jesus alone, that God imparts Himself, and that attachment to Him is the supreme duty from which the accomplishment of all other duties will flow? Does the position of the Jewish Messiah, in the ordinary meaning of the word, explain this complete self-abandonment, this personal and unbounded love which Jesus claims? When He says, "*No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him*" (Matt. xi. 27; Luke x. 22), thus laying it down that the essence of the Son is a mystery known by God alone and that the essence of the Father is only revealed to the Son and by the Son, does He not distinctly assert the existence of that unexampled relation between God and Him which is taught in the Prologue, a relation of equality through the love which the Father testifies for the Son, and, at the same time a relation of subordination through the consecration of the Son to the Father? Is there a single passage in the entire Gospel of John which could serve more completely as a text to the 18th verse of the Prologue? When, in St. Mark, Jesus says, speaking of the day of his return (xiii. 32), "*But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels who are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father,*" does He not attribute to Himself a position superior to that of the highest creatures? Further, when in the institution of baptism (Matt. xxviii. 19) He places Himself as Son between the Father and the Holy Spirit,

is it possible still to explain this idea of the Son by that of the Messiah? The Messiah, as the name denotes, is the anointed of the Holy Spirit, and consequently, in relation to Him, an inferior. And if the Holy Spirit is a Divine principle, the breath of God's mouth (Psa. xxxiii. 6), as all Scripture supposes, what then is He who, under the title of Son, is placed between the Father and the Spirit? Lastly, what would be the reply of our modern critics to Jesus if He addressed to them the same question which He puts to his adversaries in the three Synoptics (Matt. xxii. 45; Mark xii. 37; Luke xx. 41): "*If David calls the Christ his Lord, how is he his Son?*" The answer in our Lord's mind could be none other than this: By his Divine essence He is his Lord; by his human nature He is his son. Our Lord is evidently thinking here of a relation of nature, and not merely of will and love; otherwise this question would have been a mere artifice on his part, and of a very base kind. The authenticity of this incident has the very highest guarantee in that it is found in all three Synoptics, and no particular tendency can have occasioned the invention of it. So far, therefore, from saying, with Baur, that "in the Synoptics we have not the smallest reason for going beyond the idea of a purely human Messiah," we avow our conviction, by means of this brief enumeration of passages, that John makes Jesus say nothing which He might not really have said, if it is true that He said what the Synoptics represent Him as saying. More than this, the position which He assumes in the latter being such that there is not a single Divine attribute or function which is not

necessarily connected with it, we should be obliged in any case to admit, even if we did not possess the Gospel of John, that Jesus was under obligation to speak, at least among his own disciples, with greater explicitness respecting his person, so as to take away the stumbling-block which a half-revelation on such a capital point must have been to them as well as to the Jews. How it is that these fuller testimonies are not found in the Synoptics is a question which we cannot yet discuss, because its solution can only be arrived at after a full consideration of the relation of the Fourth Gospel to the other Three. But this we may say, on the ground of the facts just mentioned, that not only is there no such insoluble contradiction on this point between the Fourth Gospel and the three others, but that, as Ritschl¹ puts it, the teaching of the Synoptics *demand*s, as its necessary historical complement, the teaching of John.

4. In dealing with Baur, however, we may find support in a document which has all the value of a gospel: we mean the Apocalypse. This book is attributed by him to the Apostle John, a true Jewish Christian, representing, consequently, that primitive Christianity which the Apostle Paul is supposed to have transformed and falsified. Baur says himself that the Apostle John took up his abode at Ephesus, and made that city the centre of his activity, for no other purpose than "to maintain the principles of the Christianity of Jerusalem against the usurpations of Pauline Christianity."² His Apocalypse, therefore, must be a fair representation of the former. Now, what does it say respecting the person of Jesus?

¹ "Entstehung der altcath. Kirche," p. 48, 1857.

² "Das Christ u. die Christl. K.," &c., p. 82.

Baur expressly admits that in the Apocalypse "the Messiah is called Jehovah, God in the highest sense;" but he adds: "We must not conclude from this that a true Divine nature is attributed to Him."¹ He acknowledges that Christ is called ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως, and that "this expression seems to imply clearly enough the idea of pre-existence." But he adds: "Since the idea is not clearly expressed anywhere else in this writing, the meaning of this expression must be that the Messiah is the highest of all creatures."² As if, when the Messiah is called Alpha, the first, he *who is, who was, and who is to come*, and is invested with all the functions and attributes of Jehovah in the Old Testament, this did not imply, especially from the point of view of Jewish monotheism, which separates so rigorously God from the creature, the divinity and eternity of this Being. Baur admits, lastly, that "all the loftiest predicates are attributed to Christ in the Apocalypse;" but he says "these titles are only applied to Him externally, and are not connected with his person by any essential relation."³ For the intelligent reader these admissions and answers should suffice. The more it is insisted that the Apocalypse is a document of the primitive Jewish Christianity, the more clearly this book demonstrates that the divinity of Jesus formed part of the faith of the first disciples, and consequently of the teaching of the Master Himself. We observe, in conclusion, that the name "Word of God" is applied to Jesus in the Apocalypse, xix. 13: "*His name is the Word of God,*" and that if this name was borrowed from the philosophy

¹ "Das Christ u. die Christl. K.," &c, p. 315.

² *Ibid.*, p. 316.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

of Philo, or from Gnosticism, it would not be easy to explain how it could have found its way into a writing with such a limited horizon as that attributed to the author of the Apocalypse, and at the remote period when, according to the universal judgment of this school of critics, the Apostle must have composed this book (before the fall of Jerusalem).

Under whatever aspect we regard the question before us, we arrive at the conclusion that the teaching of the Master as contained in our Gospel,—the general authenticity of which, so far from being set aside, is confirmed by the Synoptics and the Apocalypse,—is amply sufficient to explain the contents of John's Prologue.

We have thus obtained the following results :

1. The idea of the eternal divinity of the Messiah formed part of the teaching of Jesus Himself.

2. The name "Logos" is taken by John from the language of the Old Testament, and is designed to set forth the Messiah as the finisher of preceding revelations, as the absolute essential Revelation.

3. The employment of this term by St. John was suggested to him by the desire of opposing a healthy and life-giving *Christian realism* to the *hollow idealism*¹ which confronted him in his contemporaries.

Weizsäcker,² in the article referred to before, has objected that if Christ really declared Himself God, as we find Him doing in the Gospel of John, his disciples would have been unable to maintain those familiar relations in which they lived with Him for the length of three years. But is it not quite as difficult to understand how, if Jesus had not

¹ Expressions of Neander.

² "Jahrb. für Deutsche Theol.," t. vii., fourth edition.

declared Himself God, they could have come to regard as such a being with whom, for three years, they had kept up such familiar relations? Question for question, the first appears easier to solve than the second.

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THE EPISTLES TO
THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.

I.—EPHESUS (*Revelation* ii. 1-7).

WITH the topography of the city of Ephesus, with its history prior to the formation of a Christian Church within its walls, we are not at present concerned. They have hardly the slightest appreciable bearing upon the interpretation of the words which now come before us. All that we need to remember is that its far-famed Temple of Artemis—visited by pilgrims from all quarters of the Empire, who carried away with them on their departure the silver shrines made by Demetrius and his craftsmen as memorials of their visit; surrounded by a population of priests, guides, artisans, who by that craft had their living—made it one of the great centres of Heathenism; and that when St. Paul and his companions, following in the footsteps of Apollos, planted the Church of Christ there, they must have felt that they were gaining a victory over one of the strongholds of the powers of darkness. Its religion was, however, Oriental rather than Hellenic in its character. The image of the many-breasted Artemis who was there worshipped, that was fabled to have fallen from heaven, looking to our eyes like an Indian