

later, to the great crisis of May, 1738. For this omission I can give no satisfactory explanation, except possibly lapse of time.

From the above will appear how great is the debt of all English-speaking churches to the teaching of Wesley. We need not wonder that here and there it is open to trifling criticism. His treatise on *Christian Perfection* bears witness to the immaturity of his own thought. For he does not hesitate to correct some of his earlier statements, and he admits, in one important point, the development of his own opinion. Amid his ceaseless activity he had no time to give to his teaching scientific precision. And what he left incomplete no one has been found to complete. His doctrine of Entire Sanctification remains now as he left it. We have good devotional books of a desultory kind. But we greatly need a scientific exposition, an offspring of the mature and consecrated thought of the age in which we live, of the great salvation which Christ purchased for us by His death and left as a legacy to His Church.

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THE PROLOGUE TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

IT is one of the accepted results of New Testament interpretation that the Gospel of John is constructed on a somewhat elaborate plan. Commentators have for the most part regarded the first eighteen verses as an introduction, the design of which is to set forth the Gospel in miniature. There is however diversity of judgment as to the lines on which the Gospel develops, a common opinion being that it displays the progress of faith and unbelief, the former strengthening into assured victory, while the obstinacy of the latter grows more tragic as the story of the life of Jesus advances. If this be the main theme of the Gospel, there is

justification for the fashion in vogue at present, which regards the prologue as a tripartite prelude in ever-widening circles with the *motifs* of the drama to follow.

This pretty unanimous opinion of scholars whose theological positions are utterly divergent from one another has been disputed by Harnack. He finds a different atmosphere in the prologue from that by which the Gospel figures are surrounded. The latter is mainly Jewish. The first eighteen verses are Hellenic, and serve to introduce the Jewish narrative of the Palestinian Messiah to those Greek readers who had their home in Asia Minor.

None of the ordinary interpretations appears to be entirely satisfactory, so that we are at liberty to attempt a more adequate explanation.

The author of the Gospel has told us in chapter xx. that he had quite a definite object in writing his Gospel, and it is antecedently probable that the plan of the work is so arranged as to place the subject in the light that will most clearly produce the result at which the author aims. In accordance with this, I hope to show that a true reading of the prologue will prove that its purpose is best seen when it is read in the light of John xx. 31, and that its leading conceptions occur in the body of the Gospel.

We are told in xx. 30, 31, that the record of Christ's life is to set forth events which are *σημεῖα* of the nature of the Person. His life was a continual display of these *σημεῖα*, but such a selection has been made as to throw the real nature of this Person into relief, that men may be persuaded that Jesus who lived on earth was the Jewish Messiah, the Son of God. A belief of this kind is no mere historical certainty nor an intellectual conviction. The full name, the Christ, the Son of God, has in it a marvellous dynamic; for the name is a true description of the Person; and if you can believe in the name of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, you have life. The object of the Gospel then is

to unfold to men what was wrapped up in that Man Jesus. His whole human being in all its activity instinct with the life of the Messiah, the Son of God, is recognised by the believer because it is a *σημεῖον*, an expression of divinity. If Jesus is depicted, belief and life will ensue. The author does not purpose primarily to describe the course of faith and unbelief. These are secondary results. His aim is to show forth the fulness of the life of Christ, to explain its inner meaning, to prove that the God of being and history was revealed in the Galilean Jesus. Heaven and earth have met. Of necessity it follows that those who are receptive believe and live, but the objective portraiture is independent, at least largely so, of the faith of those among whom He lived.

Further, the writer justifies these stupendous assertions from his own experience. He has received life from his personal contact with Jesus. His discovery of the meaning of that life brought him life, and he believes that by his faithful testimony to facts others will have a like blessed experience.

These thoughts are found in the prologue. Prominent in it is the witness of personal testimony. "The Word tabernacled in our midst, and we beheld His glory . . . from its fulness have we all received." We recognised the divine attributes of grace and truth because their completeness brought grace and truth into our own souls. Now for the first time we have had a full revelation of the nature of God. Not that it came to us entirely as a surprise, for we had been long looking for a theophany. The Old Testament spoke of man as the image of God, of a Messiah; and we who knew the highest that it could give have found a higher. It was because we read the past aright that we understood the present revelation.

If the assumption that has been made is correct, the prologue should be found to develop in accordance with

xx. 31, through three manifestations of the life of the same Person—the Son of God, the Messiah, Jesus. It is to be observed that the order of progress in the prologue is the reverse of that in xx. 31, the reason for which is obvious. Assuming that the prologue enunciates the principles of the history, the author naturally proceeds from the more general statements and the eternal conditions to the concrete realization ; while in the Gospel, which is a history, the process of the life of Jesus makes manifest a character so full of grace and truth—that He must be the Christ, and therefore of even more august lineage—the Son of God.

To proceed to a more detailed examination of these verses. As has often been remarked, the Gospel opens with a word that is assumed to be well known. John is writing for eager readers. His age was one in which the wise were becoming wearied out with the attempt to bring heaven and earth together. The great dualism of life they had sought to solve by the method of philosophy, and in the system-building which was rife the term *λόγος* was significant to the men of those times. To the Greek it meant much, embodying what was most precious and ideal in the result of his mental struggle. To the Jew it meant more, for it was to him the living word of God. In the word of the prophet thrilling with a life not his own, spoke that mystic soul which is elsewhere called wisdom, God's architect for the world and their own history. The word *Logos* thus summarizes two worlds of thought. Strange to say, its ambiguous meaning gives the answer to the earnest attempts made by two national spirits to solve the problem of existence. God is infinite, said the Greek. He is purest thought, of essence so subtle that He is utterly remote from matter, and His habitation is the realm of ideas. Yet our world is manifestly an expression of reason, so much so that one school of thinkers found the immanence of God a more rational belief than barren transcendence. The world

displays the active reason of God, who is its soul. The latest, and in a way the highest, attempt of philosophy to unite the two truths of the transcendence and immanence of the Deity, finds its ablest exponent in Philo. It must however be confessed that Philo's attempt was a failure, for his Logos is a bundle of contradictions. Unintelligible as the conception was, it was widespread. Every earnest thinker of the East, whose problems, brought in to him along lines of commerce between brilliant provincial capitals, grew commonplace as they travelled, knew what was meant by the term. It was the symbol of squaring the circle of intellectual thoughts, from which attempts some were soon to seek satisfaction in the revelations of Neoplatonism.

But the Jew also had faced the same riddle of life, though from another side. God was for him the great inscrutable Person, the Holy One, whose name even cannot be uttered. And yet the world of mortal men cannot stand alone. "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee," is the cry of Israel. How can Jehovah come near enough to satisfy? Israel's problem was religious as the Greek's was metaphysical. The former seeks to bring two persons together—the latter to form a synthesis of pure thought. Accordingly revelation is the religious possession of Israel; and down through its history, in angel, prophet, servant of the Lord, Wisdom, Messiah, Memra, the religious need of personal speech from God is more or less adequately satisfied. Speech through human mediators, speech in the life of the servant Israel, speech in the objectified wisdom of God in creation, speech in the Messiah to come—all this and more was signified for the Jew by the term *ὁ λόγος*. The author of this Gospel was acquainted with both these efforts of thought, and it was necessary for him to define the sense in which he took the term. "In the beginning was *ὁ λόγος*." Every reader is arrested at once. By the choice of this word at the commencement of his

Gospel, he means his readers to understand that he is girding himself to the task of all tasks. What deliverance has the aged apostle to give on this supreme question?

His answer is at once a manifesto. The Greek world has attempted the impossible. No solution can be given in terms of metaphysics. John casts aside the attempt of Philo as hopeless. Thought is baffled, for abstract reasoning is too narrow to compass the full-orbed life of this world of love and hate. But where pure thought failed, life in a Person succeeded. What man could not reason out, the Son of God in His love spoke. Accordingly John, a Jew of the Jews, follows in the lead of his nation's effort and success, telling his readers that the riddle of all existence can be solved only by religion; in this agreeing fundamentally with another Jew, who wrote, "God, who in time past gave a partial and varied revelation through the prophets, hath in this new Dispensation spoken by (His) Son."

The term Logos is architectonic for the whole prologue. As the cathedral contains within itself, and gives shape to, nave, transept, and inner shrine, where the worshipper adores before the altar, so in the life of the Logos there are three manifestations, whose harmonious unity reveals the complete glory of His nature. After the eternal pre-existence of the Logos has been set forth, He is shown to be the Messiah of Israel, and the third event in His career, the Incarnation, forms the climax of this opening section.

A more detailed examination will establish this statement. Verses 1-4 describe the nature and function of the Logos as *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ*. John's conception of the Logos as a pre-existent Person, in communion with, and therefore of like nature with, God, is contained in the first verse. As though to emphasize what he regards as most important in the first verse, he repeats his opening words

as to "the mysterious league of union absolute," from which source of eternal love all being springs. There was no primeval, unresolvable chaos to baffle the forth-putting of this generous activity. Love had so far met no obstacle (*v.* 4). As life flowed forth in abundance,¹ the love hidden within its volume burst out into the higher life of man, who had light of mind and heart to know and return the love that brought him forth—

"Thus God dwells in all,
From life's minute beginnings, up at last
To man—the consummation of this scheme
Of being, the completion of this sphere
Of Life."

These verses are John's ontology. All creation is the expression of the loving nature of God, and is the handiwork of His Assessor. Life and love, not pure thought or abstract ideas, are the archetypes of existence. Not crushing Fate, nor the imperious movement of an unconscious eternal order, nor a weltering ocean of chaos, whose dark bosom is the storm-driven home of failure, sin, and the mystery of human life—none of these have anything to do with creation. The Logos whom men seek is declared to them to be a Divine Being who lives.

In all this there is little or no direct Hellenic influence. The fundamental thought is Hebraic, tempered, however, defined, reduced to greater precision by current Greek conceptions as to creation. The Logos is not Reason, but a Person. Creation is not the self-production of the thought of God, but the expression of His loving will. The Logos is supreme, with no eternal cosmic foe. Man is not the unconscious outcome of a *λόγος σπερματικός*, the immanent life of creation.

All existence starts from, and is summed up in, a self-

¹ I take the marginal reading of Westcott and Hort.

conscious Being, and the circle is not complete till life, becoming light, issues in the intelligence of man, who can think and know and love. Such truth would not be utterly strange to the pious Jew, who understood the spirit of his own scriptures.

So far John has told us that the light of man is to be traced to the active life of this pre-existent Being. Nature and history throb with an invisible life, and light breaks through from an eternal fountain. Having thus described the Logos as the Son of God, it would have been possible to omit the section 5-13, and to pass on to *v.* 14, which begins a new moment in the history of the Son of God.

This verse states the supreme fact in revelation round which the whole movement of the prologue turns, and we are now in a position to give a clearer analysis of the development.

It would be premature for *v.* 14 to follow immediately on *v.* 4. We ask why there was an Incarnation. And further, was this the first revelation in history of the life of the Logos? To these two questions we get the answers given, the first in *v.* 5, and the second in *vv.* 6-13, which are also dependent on *v.* 5. *V.* 5 contains the ultimate reason, not only of the Incarnation, but also of the Messianic career of the Son of God. In *vv.* 6-13 the author states the true conception that the Son of God is also the Messiah of Israel, together with the cause of His rejection by His own people. Finally, the proof and the results of *14a* follow in *14b-18*.

In *v.* 5 we are told that, ever since the life of creation brought forth man with his moral nature, the light of man, which comes from the Logos, has been surrounded with the immoral element of darkness. Light, darkness, truth, falsehood, moral activity, sin, have been opposed, and the victory which is to be given to the one, which so understands the other as to snatch away his secret (*καταλαβείν*),

has been long undecided. Light shineth in darkness, therefore the true light must come to dispel the darkness. There has been much light in Israel where the Shekinah of God dwelt, but the full glory of the Father was not seen till the only-begotten Son revealed it.

The second main section of the prologue begins at the sixth verse with the appearance of John, a messenger from God. We may observe in passing that at the commencement of each of the three sections there is a reference to some manifestation in the history of the Logos; first, His eternal condition, then the culmination of Messianic preparation, and finally the full incarnate appearance.

The reason for beginning *v.* 6 with the public ministry of John is to be found in the fact that with him the Messianic period of Israel's national history closed. He, as the last and greatest of the prophets, was to usher in the new Dispensation. Witness-bearing was his function, and the Person whose approach he heralds is none other than the Son of God, the Messiah of His people. But there are two things to be explained, the fact of John's failure to receive recognition from the leaders of his people, and, even more, the kindred fact of the rejection of the Messiah Himself, whom John proclaimed. The writer has this in mind from *vv.* 9-13. If the Life of the world and the Light of men was the Messiah of Israel, the immanent unseen life of the Logos making Israel what it was, the theocracy should have been the home (*τὰ ἴδια*) of the Son of God, and it was not an unreasonable expectation that John the Forerunner, who was in thorough sympathy with the Light, should have so stirred up the latent faith of his people that they would be willing to receive the Messiah when He came. How, then, account for His rejection? Unquestionably in Paul's time, and in that of the other apostles, presumably even in the later life of the Apostle John, the rejection of the Messiah by His people was one

of the great difficulties in the way of the Gospel. Hence there is a whole world of apologetic concealed in this Gospel, and there is only one answer to all objectors.

The nature of the Messiah accounts for His rejection. He was the Messiah because the Son of God. If that is the case, recognition of Him does not depend on natural birth or fleshly privileges, but on that moral sympathy which comes from God, and gives a man the right to be called a son of God. The Jews were sons of God in name only. They lacked faith, or the moral condition that made it possible for them to believe on the name of Jesus and become sons of God. Hence the tragedy in the life of the Son of God, the passionate bitterness of those who were once the people of God, but are now "the Jews"; the joyous confidence of feeble strangers in a world ruled by the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of the flesh—all this is accounted for in *v.* 13.

Attention should be directed to the three expressions of *v.* 13, which are Hebraic, being used to contrast the ordinary Pharisaic with the spiritual conception of sonship. At the time when John wrote another aristocracy was beginning to put forth claims for its adherents, intellectual, however, rather than national, based on the possession of natural pneumatic endowment. This materialistic intellectual claim of Gnosticism must have been known to John, as we gather from his epistles; and yet the fact that he uses no terms descriptive of it in this verse seems to prove that he has here no direct thought of Hellenic readers, but that this section is Jewish and is intended to meet the difficulties of Jewish readers with regard to their Messiah.¹

To substantiate this interpretation of *vv.* 5-13, it may be observed how fittingly they serve as an introduction to the

¹ Whatever Jewish elements there were in Gnosticism, it drew largely on Greek thought.

main history of the Gospel. It opens with the proclamation of the Messiah to the world by John. Nicodemus puts forward the very objection that is answered in *v.* 13, and the various discourses and discussions with the Jews in the first twelve chapters present the same difficulty as their leading motive.

The third section of the prologue is the consummation of the history of the Logos, which is given in the solemn announcement of the Incarnation in *v.* 14. While it is indeed true that the fact itself has been anticipated in *v.* 11, it was, however, given in a connection so different as not to interfere with the progress of the thought. There we had the bare mention of the historic event without any addition being made to the history of redemption. It was apologetic, and in place when speaking of the Messianic character of the Logos. It was given as a part of the philosophy of the history of Israel. His advent illustrated the method of God's revelation to Israel, and explained that as a whole the history of the nation was a failure, because it misinterpreted its Messianic hope.

Beginning with the 14th verse, we have the Incarnate life of the Messiah, the Son of God, witnessed to by personal experience. This is in exact accord with what we should expect from *xx.* 30, 31. The believing eyewitness has found the life of Jesus to be his life, and expects to be able to communicate his faith by presenting a life of Jesus so full of grace and truth as to belong only to One who is unique, the only begotten Son of God. John and his fellow believers had been seeking for truth. Jews and Greeks, who had long been scanning the horizon for new revelations, had almost lost their moral enthusiasm in the quest for a wisdom that eluded them, as the city of the sun in the west sinks with its glory and leaves the mariner to night and the stars. But now truth has appeared, not in the abstract, but in a life. Truth, harmony, love, are at the

basis of all being, for the Man Jesus shows the glory of the Father full of grace and truth. Jesus, the only-begotten, proves to me that the world was created in love. His grace and truth were with a fulness so overwhelming, so inexhaustible, as to have come only from the glory of the eternal Father. Such a life as that of Jesus must be cosmic, universal. All the broken lights of the past, the glimmering constellations of Israel's night, or her bright particular star of morning, or streaks in the orient that presaged the coming day—these, the light and hope of Israel to men, were fulfilled by being lost as the dawn of His glory broke in upon the world. John, the forerunner, knew the secret of Israel, and he sent his disciples to the Lamb of God, and now the apostolic band can testify that Jesus has more than satisfied all that they as true Israelites had looked for. No believer who had had a life under the law could dream of exchanging the grace and truth of Jesus the Messiah for the rigour of Moses again. As is brought out afterwards in *vv.* 37-47 the true Israelite recognises that Moses wrote of Jesus, and the law which was given points to the full life of grace.

Verse 18 sums up the whole prologue. The word *Logos* has been dropped, having served its purpose when it arrested attention. The problem has been solved by substituting for it the new term "Son" or "God." (The variant readings make no real difference in the sense.) *Logos* was too remote. God, the unseen, is revealed in the Man Jesus, who as the Son is of the essence of God, who possesses the highest nature that mortal men know. He is a Father full of grace and truth. Thus the final word on religion has been spoken.

At the close of the Gospel in *xx.* 28, Thomas really brings the history to a conclusion with the profoundest confession given in its course, and one that harmonizes with the last verse of the prologue. Overcome with the gracious con-

descension of Jesus, he exclaims in adoration, My Lord and my God.

If the foregoing interpretation is correct, it will be seen that the prologue is neither designed particularly for Greek readers, nor can it be regarded as an addition by a later hand to accommodate the Gospel to a new environment. Its nerve and tissue are those of the body of the Gospel. Its connections are too subtle, its harmony too delicate, its spirit too indefinitely similar, to be the work of another than the author of the Gospel.

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SOME RECENT OLD TESTAMENT LITERATURE.

THE ability and learning of the first volume of Prof. McCurdy's book on the Monuments and Semitic History whetted the appetites of Bible students for the rest of the work. The importance of the second volume¹ is even greater than had been expected. It was stated in the first volume that a second would complete the work. The author had intended to devote a single chapter to a very brief sketch of the governmental, social, and moral progress of the Hebrew people. But the importance of this branch of his subject grew upon him, and he was led to treat it on a much larger scale, so that 236 pages—more than half the present volume—are occupied with the "Inner Development of Israel." Hence there is to be a third volume, which will deal with the period after the Fall of Nineveh and include an account of the development of ancient Hebrew literature. Obviously any notice of the second

¹ *History, Prophecy, and the Monuments*, by J. F. McCurdy, Ph.D., LL.D., Professor of Oriental Languages in University College, Toronto, vol. ii., to the Fall of Nineveh. New York: The Macmillan Company. London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., pp. xxi., 443. 14s. net.