

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

*DR. MOFFATT ON THE LITERATURE OF THE  
NEW TESTAMENT.*

VI. THE EARLY DEATH OF JOHN THE APOSTLE.

A LATE chronicler, George the Sinful, devoid of ability or critical faculty or insight, and utterly valueless except that he preserves some older statements in an unintelligent and even erroneous form, quotes Papias and Origen as proving by their conjoined evidence that the Apostle John lived at Ephesus at least as late as Nerva, A.D. 96-98, at which time he was the sole survivor of the Twelve, and that he died a martyr. Dr. Moffatt takes this brief and vague reference to Papias, transforms it by his imaginative historical criticism, and it becomes thorough and trustworthy evidence that Papias recorded the death of John in Jerusalem along with James<sup>1</sup> at the very beginning of the history of the Church. From this, of course, it follows that the Apostle John never was at Ephesus, and never wrote either the letters of John, or the Gospel, or the Revelation.

That is the true, literal and simple statement of the quick-change process through which the Papias of history is transformed into the Papias whom Dr. Moffatt admires so much and knows so well. In the whole range of criticism I know nothing more extraordinary than this. I do not mean that Dr. Moffatt originated the transformation. It is all chronicled in German magazines and German treatises, which are mentioned by the Author with admirable care. The first champions, who feel themselves discoverers,

<sup>1</sup> Not necessarily on the same occasion and day, as Dr. Moffatt allows with some lingering respect for the evidence of the Acts—poor as that evidence, in his opinion, is. Fortunately Paul in Galatians ii. mentions John as alive long after the death of James.

of such a theory may be pardoned for unconsciously overrating and overstating the evidence in its favour ; but a subsequent writer whose declared purpose it is to weigh opinions against one another, shows a distinct lack of the sense for historical evidence, when he conveys to the unwary reader such a mistaken impression of George the Sinful's intention in quoting Papias ; and leaves it to the student to verify the reference and discover for himself that the ancient authorities say the opposite of what they are represented as implying. That is all in "the fearless old fashion" of the Tübingen school and of the later nineteenth century critics in dealing with inconvenient historical evidence. It was customary with them ; but it is not permitted in the twentieth century.

We cannot here acquit Dr. Moffatt of misrepresenting evidence (unintentionally, and only through his defective historical sense), when he persistently talks of "the Papias-tradition." This so-called "Papias-tradition" is an invention of wild and undisciplined hypothesis, rejected not only by Lightfoot, but also by Harnack, Zahn, etc. Would Eusebius have been so confident, if Papias had been dead against him ? Would the unvarying tradition of that period have been so unvarying, if Papias had recorded the early death of John ? In all probability, we must conclude, the real Papias agreed with Eusebius and the rest.

Here, as always, Dr. Moffatt's intention evidently is to be scrupulously accurate in stating evidence and opinions. He mentions that Lightfoot, Zahn, Harnack, and many others, differ from him and give a different form to the statement of Papias, the true content of which after all is unknown and uncertain. What one feels is that he lacks the modern spirit, which tends naturally to state the conditions accurately. So, for example, in discussing briefly the Sa-

viour's prediction that the brothers James and John would drink the same cup and be baptized with the same baptism as Himself, he does not state quite fairly the view which has been held by some modern scholars.<sup>1</sup> As John in the Revelation says, he was the brother of his suffering churches and sharer with them in persecution, and was in Patmos for the *martyria* of Jesus. Gutjahr, Godet, etc., consider that this suffering may be reckoned as a sufficient fulfilment of the Saviour's prediction. Dr. Moffatt replies that "it is impossible to minimise" the words of the ancient record "into injury or exile." But the punishment which John suffered in Patmos was much worse than "injury or exile."<sup>2</sup> John's penalty was hard labour of some kind;<sup>3</sup> it was preceded by severe beating, it was accompanied by perpetual fetters, scanty clothing, insufficient food, sleep on the bare ground in a dark prison, and work under the lash of military overseers; it was reckoned the severest penalty short of death; it was inflicted on criminals of the humbler classes, on provincials and on slaves; as it was almost equivalent to death, the infliction of it was reserved for the supreme Governor of the province, the Proconsul of Asia; even his *legati* were not authorised to condemn a criminal to death or the mines.<sup>4</sup> Finally, this penalty was very frequently inflicted on Christians; and the quarries such as Prokonessos were full of Christians. When John says that

<sup>1</sup> P. 603, note †. "It is impossible, with Godet, Gutjahr and others, to minimise ἀνγρέθη, here or in Georgios, into injury or exile."

<sup>2</sup> ὑπὸ Ἰουδαίων ἀνγρέθη; (ἀνγρέθησαν) is the expression in which George and the epitomiser of Philippus Sidetes, the only two ancient authorities, agree. It is probable, but by no means certain, that they took the three words from Papias. What was the context in Papias remains utterly obscure.

<sup>3</sup> I refer generally to Mommsen's chapter on this punishment in his *Römisches Strafrecht*, p. 949 f.

<sup>4</sup> The proconsul had the *ius gladii*: even his three *legati* had not that right (Mommsen, *loc. cit.* p. 949, n. †), though they otherwise exercised his full authority, as his representatives in districts of the Province Asia.

he in Patmos was suffering along with his suffering churches, among whom the sword was raging, his words are to be taken in their fullest sense : they were all being treated with almost equally severe penalties. There is, therefore, no minimising in the suggestion of Gutjahr and the others that John's penalty in Patmos was a full and sufficient fulfilment of the prediction.

As George says, John was released by Nerva the successor of Domitian ; Domitian's acts were invalidated at his death, and a release of those Christians who had been sent to the mines under his tyranny is not improbable. This would fully explain why John, though condemned to life-long suffering of the most terrible kind, and therefore in the fullest sense sharer in the same cup and baptized with the same baptism as Jesus, did after all escape death and return to Ephesus. He had gone through the pains and terrors of death, and yet he lived again.

Both Philip of Side<sup>1</sup> and George say that John was slain by the Jews, and their agreement shows that Papias, whom they quote as authority, must have said either this or something which suggested this to them. They were both eager to make the agreement with the prediction, *as they understood it*, as close as possible, and they understood that James and John were put to death by the Jews, as Jesus was delivered to death by the Jews. It should not be assumed that the same words in which they agree were used by Papias. There was, in addition to the words of Papias, another force acting on them, viz., the prediction.<sup>2</sup> When James was killed by Herod, it pleased the Jews ; and it may very well be that Papias said something of the same kind regarding the punishment of John. It is not necessary to sup-

<sup>1</sup> Or rather a fragment understood to be the work of a late epitomiser of Philip.

<sup>2</sup> The same force, doubtless, acted on Papias.

pose that Philip and George understood Papias correctly and reproduce his testimony exactly. George quotes Origen on the same subject ; and, as we possess Origen's words, we are able to see that George misunderstood him.

This is all, of course, mere speculation and possibility, Lightfoot in his reply to *Supernatural Religion* makes a different suggestion to restore the real evidence of Papias, which is not in any way inconsistent with what we have just said. The truth is that the two references to Papias are so slight and vague, and so encompassed with inaccuracies in the context, that one can only speculate about what Papias said or meant. What is important to observe is that it is on the strength of a mere speculation that Dr. Moffatt and the modern critics whom he follows build up their empty and untrustworthy theory that John was killed by the Jews at some early time in the history of the congregation in Jerusalem. Such people as George the Sinner and the late epitomiser of Philip of Side are absolutely valueless authorities ; yet Irenaeus and Eusebius must forsooth be set aside as mistaken in order to make room for these worthless and inaccurate scribblers of late time ; and the theory is supported by equally vague combinations of even more worthless evidence selected from the worst side of the Martyrologies, and by a needlessly strained interpretation of a saying of Jesus. Dr. Moffatt probably would set very little store by that saying, if there were not a possibility that it was invented by some anonymous editor after John's death, though he leaves open the hypothesis that it may be a real prophecy of Jesus.

#### VII. THE FASCINATION OF THE SECOND CENTURY.

The words quoted from Dr. Moffatt, p. 315, at the beginning of Section IV. may perhaps be considered by some readers to be a chance expression, over-emphasised by the

author through a slip and not to be regarded as a fair specimen of the necessary and consciously deliberate tendency of his mind. Had that been so, I would not have quoted them. My intention has been to make only typical quotations, and to bring out what is the real character of Dr. Moffatt's position. He does fully mean all that he says. He sacrifices everything that is most striking and powerful in a whole period, and one of the greatest periods, of the world's literature; with the literature he sacrifices all the personalities, all the great men except Paul<sup>1</sup>; and he gives us instead of them a succession of shadowy anonymous "editors," who work up in successive layers by laborious processes a series of writings, which were to delude the world for seventeen or eighteen centuries into a belief that there existed a series of great men moving the world and changing history and stamping their personality on human memory, all of them a fantasy of prejudiced misinterpretation of an artificial literature. That is what Dr. Moffatt asks a rational man to accept. It is irrational and impertinent to set before us such a pretence of investigation into literature on its historical side.

The end of the second century exercises a strange fascination on Dr. Moffatt. He thinks, one might almost say, in terms of the late second century. He looks at and understands the New Testament too much as the writers of that period looked at it. This is especially noticeable in his treatment of the Pastoral Epistles. It is on that account that he finds the author of these Epistles "indifferent to such cardinal truths of his [Paul's] gospel as the fatherhood of God, the believing man's union with Jesus Christ, the power and witness of the Spirit, the spiritual resurrection from the death of sin, the freedom from the law, and reconciliation."

I do not find any real proof of this supposed indifference. In the opening of all three Epistles, "God Father"

<sup>1</sup> Peter is not an exception: see the subsequent Section on First Peter,

has become a fixed epithet, almost stereotyped, and has lost the article. One might say that this fixedness was not attained by Paul ; that it is a trace of a kind of orthodoxy later than him ; but at least it does not betray indifference to the Fatherhood of God. Moreover, no one can seriously say that " God Father " is too stereotyped for Paul, because he uses it regularly in his earlier letters.

One might go over Dr. Moffatt's list of omissions, and show how blind he is to the real implication of the Pastorals ; but I must here content myself with referring him for example to Titus iii. 4 ff., and the words of Dr. Denney (who does not think that Paul wrote these Epistles) : " St. Paul could, no doubt, have said all this, but probably he would have said it otherwise and not all at a time." The Pastorals give more definite expression to certain doctrines, and thus were nearer to the late second century point of view ; they were therefore eagerly seized upon in that period, and the earlier Epistles were interpreted in accordance with them by an age which was no longer able to understand Paul. The earlier Epistles were the first to be rescued from the traditional misinterpretation, because they are most glaringly dissonant from it ; and now the process has to be repeated in inverse order, and the Pastorals have to be interpreted afresh in accordance with the earlier Epistles. It will then be found that Dr. Denney's words require to have a reference to time inserted, and ought to be read : " he would [at the period when he wrote Romans and Colossians, etc.] have said it otherwise."

#### VIII. A GREEK LINGUISTIC ARGUMENT.

Though not observant in such matters, I have noticed a good many false accents or mistaken forms in the Greek words : on p. 501 ἀλήθης in place of ἀληθής, ἀφιέναι for ἀφιέναι, χάρα for χαρά, on p. 500, ιδιώμασιν for ιδιώμασιν,

on p. 269 ἐμνηστευομένη, for ἐμνηστευμένη and συ for σύ,<sup>1</sup> on p. 28 εὐσεβεία for εὐσέβεια, on p. 33 αἰώνι should be αἰῶνι, on p. 34 ἡγιάσμενον should be ἡγιασμένον, on p. 45 ἀκροάσεις should be ἀκροάσεις, on p. 67 εὐαγγελισάμενου should be εὐαγγελισαμένου, on p. 163 συνέργος should be συνεργός, on pp. 408 and 164 εὐρόμενα in the middle voice should be passive, either εὐρημένα<sup>2</sup> or εὐρισκόμενα, and on p. 164 προσοφείλειν should be προσοφείλειω, on p. 173 and on p. 590 δικαιοσύνη should be δικαιοσύνη, on pp. 186, 194, λόγων should be λογίων, on p. 216 πιστέως should be πίστεως, on p. 482 ἀγαπήτος should be ἀγαπητός, on p. 330 μέλεσιν should be μέλεσιν, on p. 300 πρόκοπτω should be προκόπτω, on p. 297 διαλογισμός should be διαλογισμός, on p. 590 ἐκ τινος should be ἐκ τινος, πάλαιος should be παλαιός, and οὐράνος should be οὐρανός, on p. 565 ἐφώνησα should be ἐφώνησα, on p. 588 ψυχικοί should be ψυχικοί, on p. 585 ἀντιχρίστοι should be ἀντίχριστοι.

On p. 501, besides the three false accents, I observe an almost incredibly bad argument. Dr. Moffatt essays to prove from the use of certain Greek words that the Revelation was written by a different author from the Fourth Gospel: among others in the Revelation “ἔρχου replaces ἐλθέ.” Now, even if this were true, what would be its value as an argument? It is absolutely valueless. It is a usage in both books to quote in brief the imperative word “come” from some supposed or real speaker (e.g., Rev. xxii. 17). If in each of two modern novels one found this usage half a dozen times, but in one the word was “approach,” in

<sup>1</sup> The very fact that σύ or ἐγώ requires to be expressed proves that emphasis belongs to them; hence they are necessarily accented, though the oblique cases are enclitic when unemphatic.

<sup>2</sup> εὐρημένον is rightly given on another page, if I rightly remember. The term is unusual; was Dr. Moffatt thinking of the common expression ἀπαξ εἰρημένον? Still ἀπαξ εὐρισκόμενον, though unusual, is a correct Greek expression.

the other "come near," the person who argued that this proved diversity of authorship would be pronounced incapable of reasoning about such a subject. It is quite possible that the same writer might use one word at one time and the other at a different period of his life. The important fact as regards authorship is that a similar brief way of quoting occurs in both books. But what if one book used both "approach" and "come near," the other only "approach"? Now that is the case here. In the Gospel John uses both ἔρχου and ἐλθέ,<sup>1</sup> the former more frequently; in the Revelation he uses ἔρχου only. Moreover, the one case of ἐλθέ is not in this special form, but in the middle of a longer sentence after a preceding aorist imperative (iv. 17) φώνησον . . . καὶ ἐλθέ,<sup>2</sup> The true state of things then is that both the Revelation and the Fourth Gospel express the idea "come" by the present imperative ἔρχου, but once the writer of the Fourth Gospel uses the aorist imperative ἐλθέ under the influence of a preceding co-ordinated aorist imperative.

Another argument to the same effect is drawn on the same page from the fact that the Revelation uses αἰώνιος only once in xiv. 6, "and never connects it with ζωή," as is done several times in the Fourth Gospel. But how does that prove the difference of authorship? Both books use αἰώνιος, one more frequently than the other. Such things are mere pedantic trifling.

The whole theory regarding the Johannine writings is much on the same level as this, a wire-drawn, artificial and utterly unconvincing series of fanciful suppositions. It comes at the end, and is a fair specimen of a work full of learning about modern views, and therefore likely to be very useful to those who desire to study the process of opinion

<sup>1</sup> ἔρχου i. 46, xi. 34; ἐρχεσθε, the plural, i. 39.

<sup>2</sup> I say the only case of ἐλθέ in the Gospel; but I may have missed one; I write in the train with few books beside me.

about the New Testament ; but the learning is rarely informed by an independent spirit or irradiated by a gleam of insight or sympathy. It is all hard, cold and external. Dr. Moffatt has it in him to do much better work than this ; but he must change his method radically, before he can succeed in doing what he was born to do. He ought to give up reading modern authorities for ten years, and devote that time to thinking and to reading the original authorities. His mind has been obsessed by persistently reading bad historical critics, until he has ceased to be able to distinguish good from bad criticism. He quotes plenty of good books, but he usually prefers the bad to the good. He balances the one against the other, and then misjudges. He writes and thinks on his subject in an antiquated tone and spirit.

#### IX. THE ARGUMENT FROM ACCURACY OF LOCAL DETAILS.

Dr. Moffatt admits that the Fourth Gospel contains much local knowledge and circumstantial detail, but denies that the presence of these " can suffice to prove that the author had been a Palestinian apostle " (which no one would affirm). He asserts that " literary annals abound with cases of an imaginative historical reconstruction, where the author is known to have had no direct acquaintance with the countries in which his scenes are laid." His cases are all taken from modern literature.

In the first place, however, he neglects to observe that this seeking after correct historical reconstruction is a modern development, and is wholly unknown and undreamed of in ancient time. Moreover, if the supposed Asia Minor author (or authors) of the Fourth Gospel had set about the task of reading up Palestinian geography and custom with the view of imparting local colour and verisimilitude to the book, he would not merely have done what no other

among the ancients ever thought of, and what was not demanded by the literary canons of his time : he would also have been guilty of deliberate and conscious simulation of a false personality. In seeking to impart this local colour so as to give to the book the appearance of having been written by a native of Palestine, he would show an anxiety to pretend that some Palestinian Jew had written the book. Thus all the naturalness and unconscious honesty which are claimed for the anonymous author (or authors) are sacrificed, and he is degraded to the rank of a conscious and deliberate forger. Dr. Moffatt does not, however, think he was a forger, but that he was acting from high motives and with unfeigned truth.

In the second place, even as regards modern times, I should desiderate much more proof than Dr. Moffatt offers that successful "imaginative historical reconstruction" in respect of geographical detail is so common as he asserts. I have not found it in those cases where I am capable of judging. Let us take Dr. Moffatt's examples one by one : "*Gil Blas de Santillane*, for all its masterly delineation of Spanish manners, was composed by a man who had never been in Spain." I have not been in Spain, and am unable to judge how far there is exhibited any proofs of such geographical accuracy about minute details as is found in the Fourth Gospel ; but I do know that people are very apt to take and repeat such assertions on credit without any first-hand knowledge of the subject. It is also certain that, if Le Sage shows such local accuracy, he must have studied carefully before he became able to impart it to his book. But Dr. Moffatt asserts only that he gives us a "masterly delineation of Spanish manners." How far is this delineation his own ? How far is it taken from the Spanish author whose ideas and plan he adopted, and from whom he borrowed some of the adventures which his hero meets with ?

How far is it due to acquaintance with Spaniards in France, and with the typical Spaniard of literature (as in *Don Quixote*), a very strongly marked figure easily imitated by a writer so skilful as Le Sage ? There are many questions to put and to answer before the argument from *Gil Blas* can be admitted to have even the remotest bearing on the Fourth Gospel.

Dr. Moffatt next mentions Shakespeare's Italian plays. In every case Shakespeare had an Italian story to work on : he took a printed tale, and gave it dramatic form : he was aided by his knowledge of many other Italian stories and of Italian history. Moreover, Shakespeare is an exceptional genius, and it is not a fair argument that, because he could do something, therefore the anonymous writer (or writers) who made up the Fourth Gospel, but who impressed his own contemporaries so little that he was not remembered or even noticed by them, must have been able to do all that Shakespeare did. And then is Shakespeare so accurate in minute geographical detail as the Fourth Gospel is ? I know no proof of this, and should be glad to learn from Dr. Moffatt. What about the sea-coast of Bohemia ?

Defoe is Dr. Moffatt's third example. I have not been in Robinson Crusoe's island, and cannot therefore judge of his geographical accuracy ; but so far as I can remember from time long past the character of his stories, he is most accurate where he has personal knowledge of the situation and localities ; and he deliberately set himself to work up an imitation of true fact and life. He was not trying to teach the world ; he was trying to cheat the world into believing that his stories were true. He pretends and says that they were true. There is no analogy with Dr. Moffatt's theory of the making up of the New Testament books.

This subject is a big one and is not to be lightly dismissed, as Dr. Moffatt dismisses it, with a few remote, insufficient

and uncertain analogies. His treatment of it is audaciously light and trivial. Why does he not take some reasonably analogous case that can be tested and proved? Is it because there are none that suit his argument? Take the case of Walter Scott. Here you have an author who is admittedly one of the most correct of romance writers. You find him marvellously accurate in the Border country, where he was thoroughly at home: not quite so minutely accurate in Argyleshire and the north or central Highlands, but still very accurate: in the *Pirate* he drew historical colour from experience on a voyage among the Orkneys and the Shetland Islands: in England he is much less vividly accurate in geographical detail: in Switzerland *Anne of Geierstein* is admittedly and demonstrably inaccurate: in *Count Robert of Paris* and in *The Talisman* there is the minimum of local colour or detail.

Is not Dr. Moffatt confusing between the artistic ability to give a vivid impression of imaginative reality and the possession of real geographical knowledge of details that can be tested and demonstrated? Could Shakespeare's foreign scenes stand being tested in that prosaic way by the map? Dr. Moffatt knows very well that they could not. Deduct from them what belongs to universal human nature, and how much remains of the specifically and characteristically Italian? The sea-coast of Bohemia is the scene of as true, human, real, vivid life and action as Venice or Padua or London; and that is all that the poet sought.

This paragraph in Dr. Moffatt's book is simply a caricature of historical reality and a travesty of historical argument.

It would be an interesting task, and one not devoid of usefulness, to take a modern romance and go through it carefully, noting the marks of ignorance or carelessness and the signs of accuracy in the narrative whose scene lies

in an age and a country not personally known to the writer, and trying to trace the reasons for the varying accuracy and inaccuracy. Space does not permit this here: but every critic of every school and colour who is going to talk about "imaginative historical reconstruction" in regard to the Fourth Gospel ought to begin by making for himself a thorough study of this kind from first-hand knowledge, and not to content himself with tralaticious *dicta*, imperfectly understood. Scott's *Count Robert* is a very instructive example: one can trace many degrees of accuracy in parts, and see the reasons in most cases. The Prison-of-Anemas scene is well done, whereas the Crusaders crossing the tideless Bosphorus are said to go upstream first in order to take advantage of the turn of the tide. Here one sees the process of truth and of error. One can detect the way in which Scott was misled by a reference in one of his authorities to the varying strength and course of the currents in the Bosphorus.<sup>1</sup> He hastily applies his own experience of tidal seas and rivers, and thus invents a tide for the tideless salt-water river that flows from the Black Sea past Constantinople and Scutari. Where he closely follows a literary model he is best: where he trusts to his imagination he is worst.

Another example can be found in Marion Crawford's *Via Crucis*. The description of the march of the Crusaders in 1146, headed by Louis of France, is founded on an excellent narrative written by an eye-witness, perhaps on more than one narrative; but the writer of the romance is much more concerned with the imaginary career of his hero than with local details, and these are almost wholly omitted, except in the scene of the Turkish assault on the French army in the pass towards Pisidia. More than twenty years ago,

<sup>1</sup> One can see any day boats, and even small steamers, doing what the Crusaders did. I have had the experience in a boat, unintentionally testing the truth of the story.

when first I read the story as written down by one of the Crusaders, I immediately recognised the exact locality, a little way south-east from Denizli, in a long pass which I have several times traversed ; but recently, when I read the modern novelist's account of the same scene, I could gather from it nothing local except that his description of the place bore no resemblance to any pass that I had ever seen. Yet it is quite possible that some western scholar may hereafter quote the whole episode of that march in *Via Crucis* as an admirable "imaginative reconstruction of history"; and indeed it deserves in some respects to be called so ; but still the topography is vague, or when not vague is inaccurate. The novelist also omits that most striking episode when the Crusaders crossed the deep Maeander in the face of a Turkish army and scattered the opposing forces on the other bank. I could see no reason why he omits that episode, which is so pertinent to his main purpose of glorifying "the Guide of Aquitaine" (the Guide might have been described as finding the solitary point on that difficult river where this most gallant feat of arms was possible), if Marion Crawford had known by experience the nature of the country, and had not perhaps got confused between the two Maeanders, which the French Crusaders crossed successively,—the Maeander (ancient Caystros) at Ephesus, and the true Maeander where the feat was performed.

On the other hand, the legend of the Periodoi of Barnabas gives a most elaborate and minutely accurate list of places and times on the Apostle's voyage from Syria to Cyprus.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lipsius in his work on the New Testament Apocrypha draws, on the whole, the correct inferences as to this legend from geographical data ; yet he is extraordinarily far from the real facts about the route of the voyage. He judges, therefore, simply from the minuteness and carefulness of the local detail, assuming that it is all right, though his attempt to place it is almost all wrong. I wrote a long study of the geographical

What are we to infer from this? Certainly not that the legend is historical, but only that the voyage is described according to the real experience and knowledge of the author. He is therefore either a writer of a pure and simple romance, intended to interest and amuse a Cypriote public by the description of places and circumstances known to them, and naturally describing correctly those geographical features that he was familiar with, or he was a deliberate forger who used his personal familiarity with localities to obtain credence for a story designed to gain some end, whether hortatory or otherwise. The further fact that he shows ignorance in geography outside of Cyprus and the Syrian voyage proves that he belonged to this part of the world. There is, at any rate, practical certainty that personal knowledge of the ports (some so obscure that their names are known only in the very minute study of that coast,<sup>1</sup> one having been re-discovered recently by Bent and Bishop Hicks through comparison between an inscription and Stephanus Byzantinus) is involved in this legend, and that "imaginative reconstruction of history" by a native of a remote country has here played no part. Personal knowledge alone gives the power to tell a story involving many local details without betraying ignorance to one who knows the localities.

The Fourth Gospel shows great accuracy in local details, as Dr. Moffatt acknowledges freely on the testimony of

part of this legend many years ago, but the time to print it has never fallen to my lot. It is worthy of note that Lipsius might have been deceived by invented details about this obscure coast, if there had been a series of false names in the legend. The critic needs knowledge. Lipsius practically assumes honesty and knowledge on the part of the writer of that legend; and through this assumption he is led right.

<sup>1</sup> It is through his want of such minute knowledge that Lipsius went so far wrong in his account of the voyage; he looked into the subject only for the purpose of criticising the legend, and not for the sake of knowing the topography thoroughly (as is usual with New Testament scholars in talking about Pauline journeys).

many persons who have known the country, and who have investigated and scrutinised most minutely and critically this feature of the book. Therefore all analogy known to me tends to prove that the Fourth Gospel cannot have been written at a later time by a Jewish native of the province Asia, who restored by an effort of "imaginative reconstruction of history" the features and surroundings of a past time unknown to him, for the purpose of elaborating an imaginary figure of the Saviour as gradually evolved in the growing "consciousness of the Church." That, I think, is a fair statement of Dr. Moffatt's theory; and the theory seems an impossible one.

There are only three hypotheses which analogy and literary possibilities leave open. (1) The Fourth Gospel was written by some person who knew the events and the localities so intimately that he naturally and without conscious effort described everything accurately in its actual surroundings. (2) The Fourth Gospel is the composition of some person who, belonging to Palestine by birth and upbringing, composed a romance to interest and please the Christian public without intending it to be taken as more than a fictitious romance, and who naturally and unconsciously described correctly the local conditions: the conscious straining after local verisimilitude in such a romance by a foreigner was unknown to that age and undreamed of then, and not required by the literary standards of the period. (3) The Fourth Gospel was composed with the intention of moving and affecting the contemporary Church in the situation in which it found itself: the composer was profoundly sensible of the grave needs of the time, and he tried to put things right by a work in which he described the life of the Saviour as it had come to be conceived by the "growing consciousness of the Church": in order to give effectiveness and authority to his work he pretended

that it had been written by an eye-witness who had seen and known what he described—that process Dr. Moffatt defends on the ground that it was considered entirely justifiable and right by this “growing consciousness of the Church”: this composer must have been so determined to gain unmerited credence for his composition that (somewhat after the fashion of the Asian Presbyter who composed the Acts of Paul and Thekla) he took much trouble and studied deeply and travelled in the land of Palestine in order to impart to his work a local verisimilitude that should impose on people who knew the country—a device hitherto unknown to ancient literature; but the general character of the book stamps it as a work of the Province Asia composed for the use of Christians primarily in that province. This whole elaborate process was done so skillfully and successfully that it was immediately accepted as authoritative, and soon mistaken for the work of the Apostle John. Dr. Moffatt does not make it quite clear whether he thinks that the earliest users of the book (who, as he holds, did not regard it as the work of the Apostle John) knew it to be a composition which falsely pretended to be written by an eye-witness, and was really the work of a later Asian composer, or whether he considers that those earliest users fancied it to be the work of some other eye-witness; but he strongly suggests by his general treatment that those first readers were in no respect deceived, and that they even approved of this falseness as a right and praiseworthy device.

The second of these hypotheses is not, and would not for a moment be, entertained by Dr. Moffatt. I doubt if he is prepared to accept the third, although he goes a very long way in that direction; but he wavers between the theory of growth or successive editing by different writers whose work cannot be disentangled, and a theory which approxi-

mates to this. The theory of growth and re-editing far from Palestine fails utterly to account for local accuracy in a Palestinian history. The theory which we have stated as (3) only needs to be stated in order to be rejected. I see no rational theory except the first.

#### X. THE LAWFULNESS OF FALSE ATTRIBUTION IN LITERATURE.

Dr. Moffatt makes, on p. 415, a reference to "the reasons which justified" the author of the Pastoral Epistles in pretending that they were the work of Paul. As he says, "it is not necessary to spend words upon the reasons"; they have already been sufficiently discussed in the *Historical New Testament* and the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. I do not wholly dissent from him as regards the difference between ancient and modern opinion on the propriety of writing a book under a revered name in order to gain authority for the teaching set forth in the book. A pupil may have considered that he was expressing in his book the opinions of his master, and on that account may have from a mistaken but pious motive put forth the book in his master's name. That many works were composed and published under false names is certain; but it is not made out clearly that Christian opinion approved of the attempt to gain Apostolic authority for a work of a later epoch by attributing it to the authorship of an Apostle. That, however, is what Dr. Moffatt strenuously asserts, and assumes to be proven. Almost all the examples which he gives in support of his assertion—an assertion frequently made by many modern writers—are open to question. He says, for example, that Luke fabricated speeches and put them in the mouth of Peter and Paul; and therefore it is evident that Luke thought this procedure honest and right, and could not have objected to the false attribution of

letters to those Apostles. Even if, for the moment, we admit that in the Acts Luke composed speeches and put them in the mouth of Peter and Paul, that is not an analogous case to fabricating a book or a letter and attributing it to an Apostle in order to give it a spurious authority in the Church. A historian might compose a speech containing what he believed to be a good summary of the facts and thoughts which belonged to the situation. That procedure was approved by ancient feeling, and practised by good historians. The historian of standing did not thereby seek to palm off his own views about the situation of his own time under another name : he tried to make the past situation clear and vivid to his readers.

Moreover, I venture to deny absolutely that Luke fabricated the speeches which he attributes to the Apostles ; he had good authority for them, though, of course, he gives merely summaries and not verbatim reports ; and summaries are necessarily coloured by the writer's style. The one certain example which Dr. Moffatt gives of a second-century book attempting to gain credit by the use of Paul's name and by the attribution to Paul of speeches that are entirely un-Pauline is the Acts of Paul and Thekla, composed by an Asian presbyter ; and the publication was disapproved by public sentiment and punished by the degradation of the writer from the presbyterate. The presbyter pleaded that he had acted from love of Paul : apparently he wished to add to Paul's glory by recording the Apostle's exploits and teaching ; but the Church disapproved. Dr. Moffatt will have it that the presbyter was punished, not because he had falsely attributed to Paul acts and words, but only because these words were not in accordance with the doctrine of the Church. The testimony of Tertullian, however, seems to me certainly to imply that the punishment was awarded because of the false attribution. Possi-

bly that may have been a pretence, and the real reason may have been what Dr. Moffatt says ; but even the pretence seems to imply a certain standard of public judgment unfavourable to false attribution. At that time the publication of opinions contrary to the right doctrine was certainly regarded as deserving of punishment : why should the authorities pretend that the punishment, which was deserved on this ground, had been inflicted for the other reason, if public opinion did not condemn such false attribution ?

The question of false attribution requires fuller and more methodical treatment than it has yet received. It is usually treated by persons who have already formed the opinion that ancient opinion permitted every kind of false attribution. So far as I can judge, there is still an opening for the belief that Christian opinion made distinctions : it would not condemn compositions such as the Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans, where there is no intention to spread opinions under the shelter of Pauline authority, but merely to compose an edifying and harmless literary exercise after the fashion of the schools ; but it did condemn the attempt seriously to mould public opinion and affect Church teaching under a false assumption of Apostolic authority. The arguments that have been used or may be used to support this latter view are left out of sight by Dr. Moffatt.

#### XI. THE GROWTH OF A MIRACLE.

From p. 539 I quote a sentence or two that are fairly typical of the general tone of Dr. Moffatt's work. He is speaking of the raising of Lazarus and of the (to him) very suspicious silence of the other Gospels about " so stupendous and critical an episode " ; and he says, " The miracle . . . is an illustration of the profound truth that Jesus is the source of life eternal in a dead world, and that the resurrec-

tion is not, as the popular faith of the Church imagined (John xi. 24), something which takes place at the last day, but the reception of Christ's living Spirit. . . . Whether more than this religious motive, operating on the Lucan material, is necessary to explain the story, remains one of the historical problems of the Gospel." Then the author quotes an explanation of the way in which this tale about Lazarus was probably concocted. "The whole evidence points strongly to the conclusion that the Evangelist, using some tradition to us unknown, and the Synoptic material mentioned, elaborated them freely into a narrative designed to be at once : (a) an astounding manifestation of the Logos-Christ, (b) a pictorial setting forth of the spiritual truth of Christ as Life, (c) a prophetic prefiguration of the death and resurrection of Jesus" (Forbes, p. 273) ; and he continues : "It may be a miracle which, like that of Mark xi. 12 f. (see pp. 225, 236) has grown up mainly out of a parable—with hints from other Synoptic traditions, e.g. the raising of the widow's son at Nain (Luke vii. 11-17)—in this case the parable of Lazarus (Luke xvi. 19 ff.). . . . What historical nucleus lies behind the story, it is no longer possible to ascertain."

Presumably this process of building up a false tale about Lazarus is ranked by Dr. Moffatt in the same harmless and almost laudable category as the action of later writers in imparting influence and authority to their views by publishing them under the false name of an apostolic writer. To us, however, it looks undistinguishable from simple romance writing ; it is wholly divorced from reality : it is a false story invented to convey a spiritual moral. It is not a myth, for myths grow up unconsciously and lie wholly in the realm of fancy. It approximates perilously near to deliberate and intentional falsification of history, for it relates wholly to persons otherwise known to be real figures

(as Dr. Moffatt admits) : both the actors and the spectators are figures who appear frequently in the Gospels ; and the narrator declares that he was an eye-witness of this and of the other incidents which he describes, that this and the other incidents made a profound impression on him, and that he records them in order " that ye may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God " (xx. 21). The book is a tremendously impressive one, if it is the honest work of one who had seen with his own eyes, who had during a long life dwelt in loving memory on certain times <sup>1</sup> and incidents in the life of the Jesus whose disciple he had been, and who at last composed this record of the scenes which had most deeply impressed himself, in the conviction that they would impress others also and make them believe as he believed. If, on the other hand, it is the work of a man belonging to a later age and an alien country, who had seen none of the events that he describes, who invents some or many of them, without any real foundation but with merely an " historical nucleus " supplemented by the free play of creative fancy, who inserts little details which, if they do not spring from vivid memory of the scenes, can only be described as fabrications designed to convey to the readers the false impression of the lively recollection of the eye-witness (such as John xi. 30, 39, 44)—if all that is the case, then the book is the most cruel and heartless imposture that the world or the devil has ever produced. Its greatness, its supreme and unique position in the literature of the world, depends on its truth. That an Asian Jew, or a series of Asians, created an imaginary Jesus, representing him as palming himself off on his contemporaries as a solitary

<sup>1</sup> As Principal Iverach points out, it is remarkable what a small number of separate days and occasions make up the Fourth Gospel : other times and days seem to fade or to be less impressed on his memory ; and in his old age he lives in the recollection of the few days, at long intervals in Jesus's life.

and unparalleled figure, the Divine nature walking among men, is from one point of view an interesting phenomenon ; but the deception practised on a credulous public, the calculated falseness of the whole proceeding, seems to me to be revolting, and all the more revolting because it was so successful. Its success implies great skill in gauging human nature and human credulity, and in choosing so coolly the cleverest means to deceive a people already disposed to accept Jesus as something greater than He in reality was ; and on that account this Asian imposture degrades one's conception of human nature.

The Author's theory is a false application of the principle of development. He attempts to show that the essence of Christianity is a gradual development during the first century and the first decades of the second century through "the growing consciousness of the Church." This "growing consciousness" had no real historical ground to rest on. It created out of the historical and real Jesus an unhistorical and unreal one : I fail to find in this theory any historical or psychological possibility. That is not the way in which great events and great religious awakenings come into being. It is the moving force of some wonderful personality that makes the power of a new religion or of a religious revival. I can understand how the impulse given by the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel and of the whole New Testament moved the world during the first century, and made those great personalities, such as John, Peter, Paul, and others, by imparting its power to them through their intense belief in what they had seen and known ; and yet how they were not able to make in their turn a continuous succession of great personalities living on the same level to which their belief had raised them. The impulse seemed to die out, and yet did not die, but was able from time to time to move and to make these great personalities who felt the spirit of

Jesus, and kept the Church alive and progressive. That historical process is to me intelligible ; but I find no analogy to or justification for Dr. Moffatt's theory of a creative "consciousness of the Church," impersonal, generally anonymous, hidden from the world behind false names for whom it created false personalities and incredible histories. How did this creative "consciousness" come into existence ? Whence did it derive its force ? Not from truth, because it makes falseness and loves concealment and shrouds itself in mist. How and why did this creative "consciousness" come to an end ? It is all a phantasm, a fancy, a fiction, irrational and incredible.

The New Testament describes a "growing consciousness of the Church," but it is a totally different thing from that which Dr. Moffatt postulates. The Apostles, who had known Jesus without really knowing Him, gradually came later to recognise Him in His real character. Their eyes were opened, and they saw. That is a consciousness of the real meaning of real events. Dr. Moffatt dreams of a "consciousness," which falsely imagines events that never happened.

W. M. RAMSAY.

*(To be continued.)*