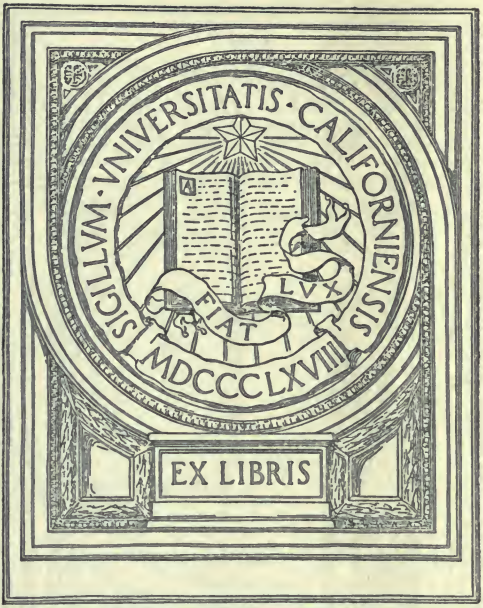
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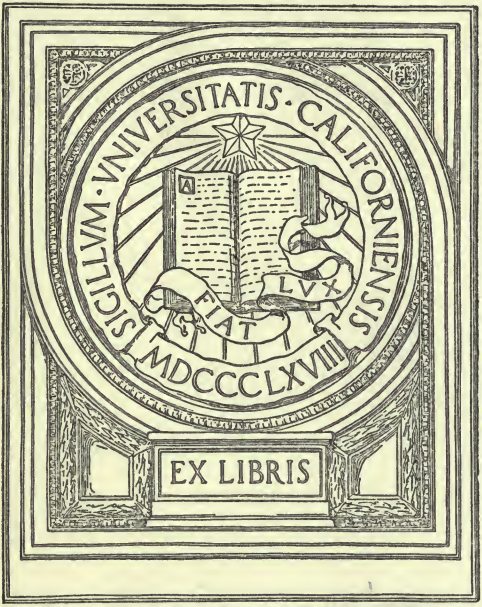
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THE ORIGIN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

BY

† DR. WILLIAM WREDE

HARPER & BROTHERS
LONDON & NEW YORK

THE ORIGIN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

BY

†DR. WILLIAM WREDE

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TRANSLATED BY

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THE present brief and crisp treatise on *The Origin of the New Testament* was originally delivered by the late Professor Wrede to an educated audience of lay folk in the form of lectures. The reader will not fail to perceive marks of this in the direct personal style of address throughout.

A certain melancholy interest attaches to it as a posthumous publication. It is among the literary remains of the late Professor William Wrede, published by his brother with the assistance of a friend of the deceased theologian. The present work is intended for, and suited to, a much wider circle of readers than more elaborate and technical works. The interested layman, or the busy cleric with insufficient time at his disposal for wider special study, will here find a plain and, considering the limits of space, exhaustive account of the present condition of criticism of New Testament origins from what is commonly known

as the standpoint of the "advanced" school. The work itself sufficiently explains and makes clear its point of view.

The student or the thoughtful reader will scarcely be in need of being reminded that it is obviously impossible within the limits of so few pages, in so small and popular a treatise, that the arguments which may be advanced in favour of the more conservative and traditional, not to say orthodox, positions should be stated at length. The interested student must go elsewhere for these.

An example may be given. On the question of the early decease by martyrdom of S. John as bearing on the authorship of the gospel traditionally ascribed to him, Wellhausen makes the confident statement that John suffered martyrdom with his brother James in Jerusalem; on which Harnack, in a review of an article, which appeared in the *Irish Quarterly* for 1908, on the *Traditions as to the death of John, the son of Zebedee*, says that the positiveness of this statement does not make it more certain. It rests on two questionable arguments apart from the controversial interpretation of S. Mark x. 35, while it has half a

dozen of the strongest arguments against it. Wrede, indeed, admits in the thoroughly plain and candid manner which characterises his style in this book that this is a doubtful point. In the article alluded to Bernard shows how the probably false tradition of this martyr-death may have arisen. This may serve alike to illustrate how the interested student may extend his reading, and gather up fixed points, distinguishing them from those which are far from settled, but also of the fine candour which marks the style of the author. He nowhere dogmatically decides where something like certainty is not obtainable.

In a much longer published article on S. Paul, of which what is here said of the Apostle is in some sense an echo, Wrede draws out a contrast, and, so to speak, antinomy between S. Paul and Jesus. Of this there are no traces in the present brief dealing with the same subject, while sufficient is said to give a medallion portrait of the author of the epistles with whose origin he deals in so compact a fashion.

The most fastidious student cannot find fault with the work on the score of want of due reverence, or of consideration for the opinions and feelings of

others, while all who are at once interested in the subject, and unprejudiced in opinion, will feel glad to possess in so wonderfully clear and compact a form the results of labour on such serious and important problems. Not a word is wasted from beginning to end. Only an expert, thoroughly master of his subject, could have packed so much into so small a compass.

JAMES S. HILL.

STOWEY RECTORY,
March, 1909.

THE ORIGIN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION

LET us go back in thought two hundred years, to that time when the subject of the origin of the New Testament was not one of widely extended interest and things were in a wholly different position. The question—how did that book, small, but extraordinarily influential, and so infinitely important for mankind, which we call the New Testament, come into existence?—did not exist at that time at all for the wider circles of learning, and scarcely for theological science itself. Only the very merest beginnings of a scientific treatment were then present, and almost another hundred years elapsed before the extraordinarily zealous and enduring labour was commenced which theological science has been applying ever since to obtain an answer to the question.

To be sure, even to-day the result of this labour is as yet in no way the common property of the educated classes; still it has so far penetrated into the wider circles that there is everywhere a sense for and interest in the problem, and particularly among all those who are seeking a reconciliation between the interests of religion and the

results of modern science; and also among many who have little of religious interest, and desire simply, as educated men, to know what is the state of the case with the classical sources of Christianity—that is the New Testament.

This openness for the subject, this interest in the questions which are here put give to a scientific expert the right to speak plainly on these matters. It is perfectly true that it is a subject of special delicacy, because intellectual and emotional interests are everywhere bound up with it. But it is just as true to say that it is impossible for science to remain obscurantist. It must be permitted to communicate honestly and openly what it has honestly investigated to those who honestly *inquire*.

Now inquiring is: wanting to know, therefore answering is communicating knowledge. This quite briefly indicates what I intend in my work. I intend to explain what we know of the origin of the New Testament, and how much we know. That is all. I emphasise this because some might easily expect something from this work which it is not intended to offer. I have neither the design to defend the New Testament against objections, nor even to attack and confute certain ideas on the New Testament, and its value. That sort of subordinate design is aside from my purpose. It is the legitimate privilege of real, genuine science to ignore all that has to do with the theological passions, and

controversies of the day, and undeviatingly to aim at one end only—namely, to get right down to the bottom of the facts. I wish to make use of this privilege at this present time.

But one thing must certainly be clearly said in advance, for no misunderstanding must be allowed to arise on this head. The former conviction which for many still remains unshaken in respect to the supernatural origin of the Bible, especially of the New Testament, science cannot share. For science itself has destroyed that idea. It is shattered even by the simplest facts; for example, by the manifold contradictions which exist in the narratives of the four gospels. It is, besides, demonstrable that when the New Testament writings arose this idea was not in existence; and it really represents a later judgment of the Church on those writings. No, the books of the New Testament were not, as was once thought, literally dictated to the human authors by God Himself; rather were they written by men in a way entirely human; in a word, it is a question of historical origins, memorials of a religious history, the history of Christianity at the epoch of its commencement.

This does not impugn the religious value of the New Testament, or affect the sublimity of its ideas. But it is really quite plain that the question as to the origin of the New Testament is a historical, and a purely historical question.

The theologian who is busied with it is in truth a historical scholar. He inquires in quite the same way as he who strives to ascertain from ancient documents the primitive history of the Roman State or the origin and age of the books of the Hindoos. Even the so-called orthodox theologians do not theoretically act in a different way. They propound the same questions as the theologians of the liberal or critical school, and they decide them by historical considerations.

But in all this there lies the fact that the investigation demands (as it will bear) full freedom. The results of research cannot possibly be assumed at the outset; the line of march cannot be prescribed, or otherwise the whole inquiry is mere illusion, and child's-play. And the intermixture of any kind of theological opinions, of any kind of prejudices every scholar earnestly deprecates, and, so far as he is concerned, anxiously avoids. The point is to ascertain the facts of the case in regard to a long-past event. How, then, can subjective opinions, personal theological convictions, possibly contribute to its elucidation? They can only be a continual source of disturbance. Knowledge of what once was and what once happened can never be settled by subjective considerations, but only from existing historical documents and sources.

But is the question as to the origin of the New Testament capable of any solution? To this

we can neither answer by a mere affirmation, nor a mere negative. Over the origins of all great historical movements there usually lies a certain gloom or twilight. Is not this true in many respects also of Christianity ? It is as with the seed-corn ; the first stage of its growth is completed under the covering of the soil. Of course any one who lived in the period of the commencement of Christianity might probably have noted its growth. But it is naturally the case that a newly arisen religion does not, to begin with, feel the need of self-observation, and of laying by in store a fund of information for a later time. A religion in the course of formation is full of intensive life, but it does not busy itself with self-study. Such interest does not arise until a later time, and then a good deal of the early period has become obscure, or quite disappeared from view. As regards the writings of the New Testament, trustworthy information of the kind that may be derived from later ecclesiastical writers is very sparse. Our knowledge depends in the main wholly on the New Testament itself. But since this did not aim at imparting information about itself, it is easily intelligible that there must always be many gaps in our knowledge, even in important matters ; and that elsewhere we can only get closer to the truth by inference and hypothesis. In fact, scientific assumption, hypothesis, plays no small part in

this department. And wherever this is the case, there is always present the possibility of error. This is gladly made a reproach against free theological inquiry when it is said, it works so much on hypothesis, and so many of these hypotheses turn out to be untenable. But only those who are but partially informed are terrified by this charge. Hypothesis is an absolutely necessary means for gradually advancing to better knowledge in an obscure region of inquiry. It is only he who builds up a flimsy hypothesis, and does not distinguish between hypothesis and assured results, that is blameworthy. For the rest it is true in manifold ways: we must have the courage to make mistakes. For an error may be fruitful, it may contain elements of truth, and assist in finding out the right way. That it shall do no injury, science itself will take care, for it is a ceaseless process of self-correction.

However, I have no desire at all to awaken the impression that in our department everything is insecure and doubtful. That is really not the case. By unwearying labour research has succeeded in actually solving, or partially solving, a great number of problems. If, therefore, we must be quite content to be ignorant of much, and possibly never know many things, while acquaintance with other points is only tentative and uncertain, it is still, in no way whatever, purposeless to face the question as to the origin

of the New Testament. We are able after all to draw a definite picture, and frequently to rectify current ideas.

The observations which I have so far made I was compelled to say in advance in order briefly to make it clear in what sense I am thinking of treating my problem. I now turn to the subject itself.

The theme embraces in reality not one question, but two, which are to be separately treated. In the first line we ask as to the origin of all the separate twenty-seven writings which are brought together in the New Testament. This problem will form the main element in my work. However, it is at once obvious that twenty-seven separate writings do not of themselves constitute the New Testament. The further question is raised: how did it come to pass that these writings were formed into one whole? or how did the collection of writings and the special distinction which belongs to them above all other writings arise? In a word, what was the origin of that which we call the New Testament canon? To this question I will devote some attention at the close of the present work.

I

PAUL AND THE PAULINE EPISTLES

WHEN Jesus died there remained to His followers the heritage of the powerful impressions which they received from His personality. There remained also the remembrance of His words and of the substance of His teaching. But no written heirloom was left to them. For Jesus wrote nothing. He was no learned author, no theologian. He was more than this, a free-grown son of the people. He was not busied with books, or with the exposition of the maxims of the Law, like men whose profession it was, but with living men, and most of all with those among whom books were scarcely read, let alone written. It is correspondent to His whole inner nature that He who lived in the spirit troubled not about the written letter. When the Master was gone, the disciples were to begin with nothing more than a Jewish sect whose speciality properly consisted in the fact that they saw in Jesus the Messiah whom the Jews expected. Its adherents were most naturally and first of all formed among the lowly and simple, not amongst the educated classes. That at once makes it intelligible to us how it was that on this commencement of the

new religion no adequate writings were produced. Besides, the hope was cherished of a speedy coming of Jesus in His Messianic glory, and this too was perhaps a hindrance to the thought of putting into writing their cherished recollections. But finally they also possessed a book, which Jesus also reverenced; a book which at first completely satisfied all needs—the Old Testament. Of this we shall have more to say.

I desire to draw attention to these points, because it is important to make it clear that the beginnings of the Christian society are older than the first beginnings of the New Testament, and generally of a Christian literature. A Christian society existed at least two decades before the first of the New Testament writings was written; about a hundred years before the last arose, about one hundred and fifty years before the foundation of a collection of New Testament writings was in existence, and quite three to four hundred years before this collection in its present shape was completed and generally recognised.

Which of the writings of the New Testament have we to put at the beginning of the development? The ordinary layman for the most part has the idea that it is the gospels. For they open the series of the New Testament books, and they convey information of the beginning, i.e. of Jesus Himself. This idea is doubtless wrong. But also the epistles of James and Peter do not stand in the

forefront. The oldest Christian writings that we possess are rather the epistles of S. Paul. The epistles of Paul, therefore, naturally form the first subject for our consideration.

To-day we are accustomed to regard these letters as literary products. For do we not find them in a book, read them in printed pages? But the man who composed them never thought of himself as an author, and it never occurred to him that his utterances would one day be multiplied and get into the form of a book. It did not even occur to him that they would at all be preserved, and soon after his death would be dispersed through the whole of Christendom.

Each genuine epistle is the product of a definite time, and designed for a single purpose such as never repeats itself; it has a definite situation of the recipient before the eye of the author. And every genuine letter is only designed for a particular recipient, whether of a single person or a single group of persons, as a church. Nothing is farther from the intention of the writer of letters than the idea of publication, otherwise he could only write an "open letter." But then this is only the form of a letter, and not the real thing.

Consequently, then, the epistles of S. Paul are not as to their origin literature, they are throughout products of the occasion, designed for a wholly private circle, and in this way their first recipients regarded them. We herewith note an

important difference between the epistles of Paul and the other portions of the New Testament. A gospel, for example, or the Acts of the Apostles, was never written for an individual person or a single church; such a work according to its nature is designed for an indefinite public, appears, and is diffused, reckons on diffusion; whoever likes can read it, and it is therefore always a literary product. It is precisely in this distinction that there lies a good portion of the peculiar charm which the Pauline epistles exercise on every one who gives himself the trouble to read them connectedly, and is able in some measure to understand them. A genuine letter, if it is not a merely business one, continually bears a personal impress, and at the same time the confidential and familiar stamp. It is therefore a bit of life, no mere product of thinking, but a bit of real intercourse between man and man. It is in truth a substitute for the spoken word, for living, moving conversation; it is personal interest in definitely real circumstances, and mirrors the frames of mind which are awakened by living intercourse, inspiring the words of joy and sorrow, of sympathy or aversion, of disappointment, annoyance, or hope.

It is important in *any* writing to know the author. But whoever writes a book or a treatise, e.g. a gospel, for the most part only deals out to us what he thinks or knows; his thoughts or his information

may be understood even if he himself is unknown. But he who writes a *letter* of importance deals out what he *is*. And if we would really fully comprehend letters of a distant past, we must know the personality of which they are the effluence. Even the epistles of Paul will not be truly living so long as we do not possess a clear picture of the man who wrote them. The man himself is the explanation of his letters. On that account we must be permitted to sketch him at least in hasty outlines. We must not, however, merely think of his personal character, but also of his religious and theological views.

Paul belongs to the few (even in the religious sphere few) men whose life is separated into two halves by a single event. He experienced such a breach striking down to the very depths. From that moment when he experienced the vision at Damascus which made it a certainty to him that the Jesus, whom he hated, and whose followers he persecuted, was risen from the dead—from that moment onward he is a different being, and lives henceforth in the feeling that he has so become.

This, of course, must not be erroneously conceived. In a certain sense we might properly say of Paul that he remained after his conversion the same that he was before. There remained not merely the peculiarities of his temperament, but also his moral qualities, the essential traits of his character.

The conversion of Paul did not consist in his turning away from a life of sin in order to become a saint. The guilt of his life he only sees in his denial of Jesus, in his unconscious blindness to that which he subsequently regarded as truth. It lies properly, therefore, in the region of conviction, of belief, and only indirectly in that of act so far as that act—i.e. the persecution of the followers of Jesus—was the expression of conviction. Therefore the conversion itself belongs in his case to the region of conviction, and of belief. And so it may be said of him with a certain correctness, that although converted and transformed, he still remains the same. Paul the Pharisee is as to character more similar in fact to that of the Christian Paul than we commonly suppose. Even Paul the Pharisee strove to serve God with passionate zeal, and with deep sincerity, only in another way. And even the Christian Paul shows a certain severity, harshness, passionateness, such as once characterised the Pharisee.

Nevertheless, it remains true that Paul was really another through his conversion. All his capacities and peculiarities certainly are impressed with a new spirit. Above all, the feeling in him is never weakened that he is a subject of grace, and to that corresponds a deep and pure gratitude. Besides this there is also the consideration that he, the whilom persecutor, feels himself called to be a

chosen instrument. But the principal thing is the feeling of a great freedom which has fallen to his lot. He is freed from this whole world of the flesh, of sin and of death, and at least in his belief he feels that he is already transplanted into a new and higher existence, which will really become his own when he has put off the body of the flesh. "Behold, all things are become new."

The feeling of this freedom fills Paul to the depth of his soul, but anything like inactive indulging in it is far from him. This feeling prompts him to action. His gratitude expends itself, as it were, in a burning zeal to work, and to woo for Him whose grace he has experienced; and so much the more as in this way he atones for the guilt of the past. In fact, Paul must, after his conversion, according to his whole nature, be as active for the Gospel as he once was antagonistic to it. And thus he became the unique messenger of the Gospel whose life is simply spent in his calling.

He who gives himself the trouble to dissect dispassionately what the apostle attempts in his working will perhaps here and there observe that a certain ambition to accomplish the highest is not foreign to him. Paul is in no way quite indifferent to the question as to what he accomplishes. However deeply he feels that all that he does he owes to the grace of God, yet he is not in the usual sense modest or diffident; he is

not without a strong self-consciousness, and knows well enough that he has " laboured more than they all " (1 Cor. xv. 10). He makes it his special boast that he has done more than his mere duty, and especially in so far as he declined any recompense for his work in the Church, or any support. He declares that he would rather die than that any one should take away this boasting from him. He hopes also to find a special reward from God for special service (1 Cor. ix. 15 ff.). All this may be shown from his letters. But this ambition is, however, doubtless not the essential element, it is only an accompanying chord. The chief motive of his zeal still remains his enthusiasm for the cause of Christ, and the consciousness that he is set apart for and called to his work.

Paul belongs essentially to those who are in a special sense religious personalities. The converse side of this is that he felt himself as regards the world a stranger to it. He says in fact " all is yours " (1 Cor. iii. 21), but it is a misunderstanding if we take this saying to mean that he had a frame of mind open to the world. In this point he feels quite differently from Luther. He despises the wisdom of " the world," and does not find enjoyment in its pleasures. He knows nothing of family life, and does not feel that this is any loss ; he even boasts of it as a gift of grace that he feels no desire to marry. Nowhere in his epistles does it appear that he had any senti-

mental feeling for nature. The lilies of the field and the birds of the air do not trouble him. In short his idea of the worldly and natural life has undeniably something gloomy in it. He does not see the brighter side of things, but, above all, he sees sickness, misery, the ruin of sin. This is explicable, not merely from the fact that he (as all contemporary Christians were with him) is convinced that they are near to the end of the world, but it lies deep down at the base of the whole of his religious conceptions. Of course we cannot be greatly surprised at this since this pessimistic temper of mind was widely spread throughout cotemporary Judaism. And, as above said, this is only the converse side of his personality being wholly concentrated on the world of faith and the cause of God.

Paul must have been a person of overmastering energy. His letters lead us to feel this. It was shown in his relations with his converts, his churches, his opponents. How winsome he can be to men is likewise shown by his letters. But his manner, we may suppose, was not alike attractive to all. He is easily abrupt, often ironical, brusque, and bitter, passionate and hasty in front of his opponents, and can even call them "dogs" (Phil. iii. 2). It may be questioned whether he was always quite correct in his judgment. Justice is often hard to those natures whose feeling is that they exclusively are the representatives of a divine cause. But of

course it is certain that this man was not devoid of love, he who has sung the praises of love in so sublime a manner. Especially when he is met with confidence as in the church of Philippi, there he is warm, there he can discover the true tones of affection.

The most important natural characteristic of the apostle is of course his tough, unbending energy. His life is a battle, everything shapes itself into a combat. He is just as extraordinary in carrying out plan after plan, and in his expeditions through wide stretches of country, winning one piece of ground after another; as, on the other hand, in enduring the sufferings which his calling brings with it, in unwearying self-sacrifice. The pictures of these sufferings, for instance, in 2 Corinthians iv. 6–11, are amongst the most pathetic of anything he wrote.

This energy is still the more worthy of admiration when we remember that his body appears to have been only a rather feeble organ of his activity. His opponents say of him, "his letters are weighty, but his bodily presence is weak and contemptible" (2 Cor. x. 10). He himself in Corinth, the city of commerce and of culture, had to battle with a feeling of timidity such as results from weakness of this kind (1 Cor. iii. 2), and he speaks especially of a bodily weakness repeatedly recurrent, "a thorn in the flesh given to him, a messenger of Satan to

buffet him" (2 Cor. xii. 7). This is supposed to have been a kind of epilepsy.

We are tempted to bring into connection with this suffering a certain visionary excitability and irritability which we must suppose from his own statements. He repeatedly experienced visions and revelations. This is indeed only another side of his religious enthusiasm, the energy with which he was filled does not therefore stand in contradiction thereto. But what one would not expect to find united with this tendency to the visionary, namely, thoughtful wisdom, practical prudence, is that which the apostle undoubtedly manifested in questions of church life. The finest memorial of this is in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where he, in a magnanimous way, shows how in church life he can reconcile the extremes which were manifest, and knows how to bring the spirit of order to bear on all sorts of abuses.

If we take all these things together, Paul is a character which certainly had its human limitations, but which we can without exaggeration call great and noble, great by the power of faith, great by the pure sacrifice of the whole man for his cause.

In what, then, consists the significance for the history of the world of this apostle of Jesus? We will first of all think of the fact that he carried the new faith to a great number of the most important centres of civilisation, for he worked throughout in the most considerable cities.

Certainly that is a great, but it is not his sole service. It is still almost more important that he raised the faith in Jesus which so far was bound to the narrowness of the Jewish religion high above this level. Paul set free Christianity from Judaism; he produced this great division by his work as Missionary to the Gentiles, as well as by his theory of making Gentile Christians free from the duty of fulfilling the Jewish ceremonial law. By this he further was the first to establish Christianity as a new, independent religion, designed for all nations. The preliminary condition for this lay in the fact—which also belongs to his world-wide historical importance—that he was in a certain sense the first Christian theologian, i.e. the first who really *thought* on the new faith; who, reasoning, contrasted the Christian religion as a religion of redemption with the Jewish religion of the law, and attempted to account for this contrast.

Of course, when we call Paul a theologian, we are not to think of this in the modern sense of the word. He was neither in the present sense of the term scientifically trained, nor did he think through his thoughts on all sides, and develop them connectedly and logically. But according to the idea of the times he was a theologian.

That is a conclusion from his life-history. As the son of strict Jewish parents born in the Cilician city of Tarsus, he went as a young man to Jeru-

salem, certainly with the intention of becoming a learned Jew, a rabbi. It might be supposed that against this is the fact that he learnt the trade of a worker in leather. But the carrying on of a trade was among the rabbis no unusual thing. We find among them shoemakers, smiths, and so forth. The epistles of S. Paul show us in many places that he really had received a rabbinical training, and brought it with him into Christianity. He has indeed also much natural acuteness, a gift of developing thoughts; but the manner in which he divides a proposition and proves it, the way in which he arrives at conclusions and various objections, in order directly to refute them, shows at once the rabbinical training. This accounts for his acuteness often becoming subtlety. For example, on one occasion he lays stress on the proposition that the promise of Abraham's seed must refer to Christ, because the word "seed" is used in the singular (Gal. iii. 16). That is pure rabbinism. Luther himself said that this reason was too weak to stand the test.

Especially does this method of training exhibit itself in his exposition and application of the Old Testament. In this respect Paul shares the methods of his time, which appear to us to be quite impossible. He insists on the letter, he takes passages out of their context, he neglects the actual sense of the words, and explains them allegorically, i.e. he assumes that behind the

proper sense there lies still another presumably deeper. Only those who do not understand the period can be surprised at this. All these peculiarities fall away when he turns in simple speech to his churches; while they are particularly prominent, when the question concerns the establishment of propositions and the confutation of opponents.

But he who freed himself and others from Judaism and the Jewish law, still brought much more Judaism into his Christianity. That is frequently unrecognised, but it cannot be denied. What was more natural? When Paul was converted he was a Jewish theologian. How, then, could he free himself from all the ideas which he had hitherto held? No one who has such a long spiritual development behind him can suddenly make himself into a blank sheet of paper. If he gains new ideas, then they will reasonably mingle with the old ones. Indeed, if we compare the utterances of the Pauline epistles with the Jewish writings of the times, then the convincing proof is at hand, that Paul held many more originally Jewish opinions as a Christian than is commonly supposed. To these belong his statements concerning angels and demons, on the last things, on sin, on the fall of Adam, on the divine predestination, and many other points.

Of course this Jewish heritage is now apprehended and penetrated, partly transformed, by

ideas proper to Christianity. And these naturally form the important and peculiar elements in his views.

In the centre of his thoughts stands the person of Christ, but it is not the life of Jesus, not His words, His teaching, not His sublime personality in its purity, love, and goodness, on which he insists. That is for him quite subordinate. Rather to him Christ is a divine being, who has descended from heaven to earth and taken the form of a man, and apart from this doctrine of incarnation he dwelt, properly speaking, only on two things, on the death of Christ on the cross and on His resurrection. According to Paul it might even be said that Christ really only became man to die and rise again. In the crucifixion and in the resurrection of Christ he finds the divine secret of our redemption. The death of Christ has freed the whole of mankind from the service of sin and of the law, nay, from the whole of this worldly existence; the resurrection has opened to it a correspondingly higher glorious life in heavenly glory. There are scarcely any Christians to-day who hold the opinion of Paul closely in this sense, and make it their own, as he has intended it; but it cannot be gainsaid that the teaching of Paul bears a strong relationship to strict Church teaching

There are those who have actually called the Apostle Paul the proper founder of Christianity.

That is an opinion which cannot be maintained. But we shall be compelled to confess that the teaching of Paul is in no way a mere repetition, or even a mere development and enlargement of the teaching of Jesus. There really exists a striking difference between the teaching of Jesus and that of S. Paul, and the apostle has laid the stress on thoughts which were not present in the original preaching of the Master. The explanation and illustration of this I am unable to enter upon here. It is moreover important to note that Paul never saw Jesus during His life, or, at any rate, did not know Him personally, nor come under His influence. Any one may make the distinction clear to his own mind by simply reading consecutively the Sermon on the Mount and the Epistle to the Romans. In the case of Jesus no one can speak of His dogmas. The step to dogma is taken by Paul. But if we must so decide, we must then not overlook four points. First, it was just this theological, dogmatic manner of Paul that was a means of giving firmer stability to the Christian faith in the world of that day—for every religion which is to have a future will somehow produce a theology, shape out definite connected ideas, such as are not essential to mere simple piety. Secondly, Paul remains the liberator from Jewish narrowness and the Jewish law; and thirdly, he has in his teaching on justification by grace, through faith—although in a form variously

misunderstood to-day—given expression to a thought which is the core of what has everywhere and always been characteristic of genuine religion, that man in relation to God recognises himself as a recipient, and does not boast before God of his excellence. Fourthly, his epistles, beside their peculiar teaching of redemption, which is the central thought, contain numerous expressions such as are related to the spirit of the Master, and ever and again will edify the sympathetic soul.

We return to the EPISTLES OF S. PAUL. We have to start with spoken of them as letters of occasion. The occasions which called them forth originated with the missionary activity of the apostle, the extraordinary extent of which the known names of the epistles, Corinth, Thessalonica, Galatia, etc., remind us. To the missionary work of Paul belonged not merely the winning of converts, but besides this the confirmation and training of those already converted, the care and edification of the churches already in existence. The epistles are nothing else but a part of this edifying and pastoral activity, for they are all addressed to those already won to Christianity and existing Churches.

Paul availed himself in his epistolary correspondence of a means of intercourse which presumably was already in use throughout the whole world of the scattered communities of the Jewish diaspora. Possibly he may have taken from

thence also certain set forms which regularly recur in his epistles, especially at the beginning and end of his letters. The salutations which stand at the head of his epistles, with the usual name of the sender, of the persons addressed, which contain a wish (Grace be with you), answer generally to ancient usage; only this wish has in the case of S. Paul a specially religious and Christian colouring. But even this religious colouring, and the manner of placing greetings at the conclusion, and of again giving utterance to prayers for blessing; further the habit of giving expression at the outset to thanks for the prosperity of the church—all such things may very well be influenced by Jewish examples. The Judaism of the Greek-speaking world—and Greek was then the universal language—has, generally speaking, served for a certain preparation for the mission of Christianity.

There is no doubt whatever that Paul wrote far more letters than we possess to-day. At one time, of course, it was not allowed that epistles of Paul could be lost, because the fact appeared to cast a doubt on the teaching of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. But the fact is most definitely clear from the evidence of the received epistles. The First of Corinthians in chap. v. presupposes that Paul had already written a letter to Corinth, which we no longer possess. Between the First and Second of Corinthians, there was, in

all probability, another letter to the Corinthians, now lost, which Paul says he wrote with tears. In the Epistle to the Colossians he mentions a letter to the neighbouring church of Laodicea (in Phrygia). This too has disappeared. But there is scarcely need of such testimonies. Before Paul traversed, in a bold expedition, the wide region of Asia Minor, and then passed over on to the soil of Europe in Macedonia and Greece, he was actively engaged in Syria and his native Cilicia for a period of fourteen years. We have not a line of his belonging to this period. Is it likely that he wrote no letters during this period ?

The fact that numerous, and quite certainly not merely unimportant, epistles of Paul have been lost is not merely of significance because we can very well perceive from this how little the writings of S. Paul were looked upon as inspired, but it also shows us that in our present epistles we have only a fragment of the whole. Nor do we know completely, but only fragmentarily, all the views of the apostle. For in none of his acknowledged letters has he developed his whole thoughts.

Still we may be glad for that which has been preserved. The whole of the present epistles fall, of course, into a period of about ten years: the first, i.e. the First Epistle to Thessalonica, and the oldest Christian document generally, apparently written in the year A.D. 54, belongs to the later mission period, while the last, probably that of

the Epistle to the Philippians, was written during the Roman imprisonment. But on the intervening time the received epistles cast a very clear light. They show us Paul in most active relation to his churches. Besides this they are so different in their kind that they suitably complement one another. In the Epistle to the Romans we have a letter to a church unknown to the writer; in the Epistle to the Colossians also; but the latter church was founded by an intimate disciple of Paul (Epaphras), and recognised the apostle's authority. All other epistles concerned his own churches. The short letter to Philemon, again, was to a private person. We have letters which show a close, warm relation of Paul to his churches, as the 1 Thessalonians and the Epistle to the Philippians, and again others, as the Epistle to the Galatians, where he appears as critic and combatant. In the one the questions concerning the life of the church are prominent, as in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, in the other we have notices of the person and life of Paul, and the Epistle to the Romans is strongly impersonal in its style. We have quite simple, unassuming letters like 1 Thessalonians, Philippians, and again such as those in which the didactic elaboration occupies the largest space. In short, the scanty material is at the same time very varied.

Whoever applies to the letters of Paul the test of formal correctness, smooth expression, polished

style, will be compelled to say that the defects are numerous. The Greek language was of course Paul's native speech. But the style is often rugged, often too many thoughts are forcibly compressed into one proposition. There is no absence of obscure sentences; the metaphors are often not, as regards style, carried to completion. Paul himself would surely not have claimed the praise of an artistic letter-writer, just as little as that of orator. He has himself admitted that he would not satisfy conventional taste in his speech (2 Cor. x. 10). But they are not the greatest orators who know how to speak in ornate propositions without flaw or fault—at least if that is their whole secret. He is the greatest orator who sways the souls of all hearers, who understands how to charm the listener by his personality, as by his subject. Such an orator Paul must have been. And accordingly his letters too, merely as letters, merely in the matter of style, although not faultless, yet exhibit a considerable and rare originality. They take the readers captive, because they are a true expression of the living personality, and also because there is no pretence about them. At the same time there is also no absence of rhetorical passages; without effort he employs, too, the means which the orator loves, play on words, antithesis, etc. When he is soaring his highest he is able to write passages which the first stylists in the world

might envy. A Swiss author has lately spoken scornfully of the epistolary stylistic monstrosities of Paul. Now this critic would hardly be able to write anything comparable to that panegyric of love: "Though I should speak with the tongue of men, and of angels, and had not charity, I should be as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor. xiii. 1).

Paul usually dictated his letters. In the Epistle to the Romans, e.g., a certain Tertius speaks of himself as his amanuensis. From this usage much obscurity and much of the incorrectness of his method of writing may be explicable. We must in reading always bear in mind: these are dictated letters. At the conclusion of the letter Paul then willingly took the pen in his hand, and added greetings, and perhaps a few short pithy sentences. In various ways he emphasises this: "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand" (1 Cor. xvi. 21); in the Epistle to the Galatians he writes: "See with what large letters I have written to you with mine own hand," and in this way indicates the difference between his own perhaps large handwriting and the smaller script of the amanuensis.

Of the content and character of single epistles no complete picture can be given in brief. It must suffice to draw out some main features.

In historical value the First Epistle to the Corinthians takes, above all, the first place. And, in fact, just because Paul here enters on such a

large number of questions, and occurrences in relation to church life, and in part gives precise answers to a series of inquiries which the church in Corinth had made in a letter no longer extant. What invaluable information we have here on the prevailing usages, and on the method of divine worship; of the celebration of the Supper of the Lord; of enthusiastic speaking with tongues and prophesying of those filled with the Spirit; of the veiling of women in public worship; of the position of Christians in regard to the use of food which had been offered to idols; of eating flesh presented in the heathen temple and then offered for sale; of the doubt in the minds of many Christians on marriage; of lawsuits before heathen judges; of those who denied a bodily resurrection —all these subjects are treated. We gaze on an extraordinarily active life, full of fresh movement, but full of leavening energy, full of extremes and dangers. The picture of the Church is no way a mere picture without shade; strife and party spirit have already entered; there is a tendency to divisions; and how traceable is the old heathenish spirit observable in the relations of the sexes. In short this epistle is a true mine of information, a document of the first importance to the investigator of the oldest Christianity.

Of emphatically original value is next the shorter letter which Paul sent to the Galatians, the Christians of the small Asiatic province of

Galatia. It is the outcome of powerful excitement on the part of the apostle, in which his impetuous and combative disposition reveals itself. It exhibits to us a situation which justifies the excitement. It has not all happened so peacefully and harmoniously in that first Christian community as one might easily imagine. The missionary work to the heathen was for Paul not merely heroic effort, but even a real battle, a battle against those who were not content with a Christianity which was not at the same time Judaic. The Epistle to the Galatians itself contains, besides other important information on the life of Paul, the much-discussed report of an interview between S. Paul and the Judaistic Christian apostles in Jerusalem; in which these apostles, in spite of differences at the outset, convinced by the success of the apostle, gave a formal recognition to his Gospel freed from the law, although not sacrificing the law. There were, however, Judaistic Christians who were not satisfied with this. They organised a regular agitation against Paul. They sent their emissaries into his own churches, in order to seduce his disciples from their allegiance. This agitation was now being carried on in Galatia, and the churches of Paul are on the point of yielding, and adopting circumcision, according to the Jewish law. This is the significant situation in which Paul despatches this epistle. And this

explains the passion and the displeasure which permeate it: he sees the work of his life threatened precisely on this point. In opposing the Judaisers he at the same time uses his theological weapons, and develops thoughts on justification by faith alone which are of the greatest value for the knowledge of his opinions. In this respect, however, as a didactic epistle, the Epistle to the Galatians is considerably surpassed by an epistle nearly related to it, that to the Romans.

The Epistle to the Romans was intended to be a message preparatory to a personal visit to Rome, which, of course, was only regarded as a halting-place in carrying out his designed journey to Spain. Paul had so far never been in Rome; the Roman Church was not even founded by one of his disciples. He was therefore a stranger to it. We can thus easily understand that this epistle has a very impersonal ring about it, and reads more like a treatise. Paul develops, above all, two thoughts: first he defends his gospel of justification without the works of the law; and then his design is to make the fact comprehensible that his own Jewish people, for whom he has a patriotic regard, could, in spite of the promises which have been given to it, be cast away; and, at the same time, he gives expression to his conviction that these promises would one day be fulfilled in the conversion of Israel. The statements in this epistle present difficulties to the under-

standing which in themselves are great. But the most difficult problem consists in understanding what Paul intends, with all his explanations of the law and of the Jewish people, to say to a church which, according to clear evidence, consisted of men of Gentile birth. This problem according to my idea has not, in spite of numerous attempts, been really solved.

Impersonal as the Epistle to the Romans is, the Second Epistle to the Corinthians is the most personal of all. But this too is particularly difficult, of course, on quite different grounds from that of the Epistle to the Romans; simply because it is hard to judge from the information given what the events in Corinth were to which Paul alludes. In other respects, however, we again meet in this epistle with the Judaising agitators. There is, however, no lack of the most important teaching. And still more valuable are the materials which we find for the biography of the apostle, especially as to his sufferings and revelations. Less important than these four letters are the First Epistle to the Thessalonians and the Epistle to the Philippians (both therefore sent to Macedonia), and yet with all their unassumingness they have their special charms. The 1st Thessalonians is especially instructive in that it concerns a still young and scarcely established community. The Epistle to the Philippians is the warmest and most affectionate

of all the Pauline epistles, and in this respect a real jewel. For the doctrine of the person of Christ, the epistle to the church of Colosse, or Colasse, is important. Paul is here treating of a special phase of thought, i.e. with the so-called false teaching which has a half-Jewish colouring and half not; and which perhaps was one of those religious mixtures such as, in that period, particularly in the East, were everywhere so frequent. This teaching laid stress on Sabbaths, feasts, and new moons; besides, it demanded abstinence from flesh and wine; it was ascetical, and united with this a peculiar worship of angels.

Five epistles which stand in the New Testament as letters of Paul I have not so far mentioned: the Epistles to Timothy and that to Titus, the second to the Thessalonians, and that to the Ephesians; the reason of this is, I do not consider them to have been written by Paul.

But have we any certainty at all that we actually possess letters from the pen of Paul, and that they are from the Paul to whom we have ascribed them? There have been and are a number of critics, especially in Holland, who deny this. They have held the opinion that these epistles all originated in the second century A.D. In this opinion I can only recognise an extraordinary retrogression of criticism. Surely there are really quite definite marks of an authentic letter, and those are present in full measure in the

epistles of Paul. A quite definite personality speaks in them, and such a one as is conceivable only at the commencement of the Christian development. The utterances on the circumstances are so vivid, concrete, and at the same time so spontaneous that every idea that they concern only fictitious statements must be absurd. We may take one single example only, the most unpretentious and perhaps the least known among all the epistles of Paul, the "note" to Philemon. Philemon was a distinguished man from Colosse. A slave named Onesimus had run away who had probably been guilty of some fault against his master. This Onesimus had met with Paul, remained with him a time, and won his regard. Then he sends him back to his master, gives him a letter, and begs Philemon to receive back his slave in a friendly spirit, and forgive him. He does this in an affectionate and courteous manner, and he covers the fault of Onesimus by making his cause in a certain measure his own cause. "Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels." "Receive him as myself."

Now how can any one suppose that this letter is a mere artificial piece of work? It has, however, been said that the letter really only represents a general idea, namely, how Christianity makes a slave the brother of his master. But this idea is, in fact, by no means put didactically, and set out

in general propositions, but it is simply an incident of actual life which is treated. That this incident should be invented would be more unintelligible than that it actually occurred. In this way the other epistles have their actual origin from Paul most plainly stamped on them. To-day then, in Germany, the following epistles are admitted by as good as all the learned to be genuine: the Epistle to the Corinthians, the Galatians, the Romans, the 1st Thessalonians, Philippians, and the Epistle to Philemon. On the other hand, it is not generally recognised that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Colossians. It is especially considered that the teaching of this epistle deviates from that of the rest. I consider this epistle genuine. That Paul makes statements somewhat different from common is quite natural, because in this case the angel worship of the false teachers determines his utterance. For the rest there are for all the teaching of this letter points of contact with the other letters which may be shown.

Notwithstanding, this is not, of course, saying that all these genuine epistles were published by Paul in the shape we read them to-day. Probably this is true of the Epistle to the Romans. In the final chapter we have an exceedingly long list of greetings which Paul sends. Plainly those thus greeted are, for the most part, personally and intimately known. This is clear from the

adjuncts to the names. Now Paul had not been in Rome when he wrote this epistle. How is it then that there were so many to whom he was known ? This difficulty has led to the supposition that the greatest part of this sixteenth chapter belonged originally to another Pauline epistle, and thus had by some accident become attached to the Epistle to the Romans, and much may be said for this supposition. Probably it is a question of an epistle to the Ephesians. If we conceive of it in this way it is possible by acute exegesis actually to obtain a short history of the church of Ephesus from this long list of names. Also of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians it has been thought that a separate epistle may be separated from it, which orginally constituted another epistle to the Corinthians. As a matter of fact the tone of Paul in this portion changes so suddenly and surprisingly, he becomes so bitter and sharp, that such an idea is probably worth considering although it has not yet been actually demonstrated.

We must, however, return to these five letters of which I have said that Paul did not write them. Very many experts agree with me in this opinion; most at least deny the Pauline authorship of four, the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and the Ephesians.

But do not these epistles claim to be Paul's ? His name stands at their forefront. They bring guarantees which have only meaning if Paul is

their author. The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians says at the end: "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle. So I write."

Then are we dealing with falsifications and deceitful pretence, a morally doubtful author? This will be the impression which will, of course, easily arise in the mind of the layman, and it is quite intelligible. Of course, we ought not to be led astray in our judgment. For if there are actually decisive reasons for supposing a forgery, we must honestly acknowledge them.

But our judgment will be somewhat different if we fix our eyes upon certain literary phenomena of that period. That writings should be pseudonymous, be put forth under another name, was then not so uncommon as it is to-day, and was by no means infrequent. In the time just subsequent to the New Testament we find, for example, a "Revelation of Peter" "a Gospel of Peter," "a Discourse of Peter"—all of them pseudonymous works. We have the same phenomenon in the domain of Judaism. All the numerous apocalypses, that is, revelations which there were written in this time, do not appear under the name of their actual author, but under a name famous of yore—Enoch, Moses, Isaiah, Ezra, Daniel. But also in the sphere of the heathen educated world there are analogous facts. For example, under the name of Pythagoras dozens of treatises were

published in those centuries. These facts show us that that time in this respect had different ideas from our own. The large number of such pseudonymous works would otherwise not be intelligible. A correct judgment of a period is only then possible if we measure it by its own moral standard. This whole literary procedure, therefore, means something different from what it would mean today. And consequently it is not right to brand such pseudonymous works, apart from special cases, with the moral stigma of forgeries. Plainly the authors of the many Jewish apocalypses did not regard themselves as literary forgers. Nay, the teaching which was put into the mouth of a revered teacher of past time is traced back to him by a kind of pious devotion. It was considered that his thoughts agreed with the author's, and by this means he sought to increase their weight, and so he put them forth under such authority.

It is not a theological vagary to account for the matter thus. Philologists in their own department judge in the same way. They declare that it is absurd to call Plato a forger because he put things into the mouth of Socrates which he never uttered, or to inveigh against the neo-Pythagoreans as deceivers because they put forth their teaching under the name of Pythagoras. It cannot, therefore, be said at all that a pseudonymous religious treatise loses its religious value on account of the question of authorship. Under

certain circumstances it may be more valuable than a genuine one.

But now what are the grounds on which the composition of these five epistles by Paul is doubted? On this just a few observations. The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, at first sight, gives without doubt the impression of genuineness. But if we look closer, we find quite surprising agreements with the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. The same thoughts, the same terms are repeated and often quite closely in the same place. Only one section, the prophecy on Antichrist, is excepted. Otherwise the similarities go so far that we receive the impression of an imitation, or a copy. And we find it difficult to believe that Paul would have written the same letter which only shortly previously he had sent to the church.

The case is similar with the Epistle to the EPHESIANS. It is so like the Epistle to the Colossians that only the assumption which regards it as a kind of working over and extension of the Epistle to the Colossians explains everything. To this other reasons may be added. The phrases and the thoughts deviate markedly from the genuine epistles of Paul. The author speaks of the "holy" apostles, which Paul never would have done, and the whole piece is completely impersonal in a way that in a Pauline epistle is without example. It is in truth no real epistle, but a kind of sermon in the form of a letter.

Besides, the words of the salutation, "To the saints which are in Ephesus," which gave rise to its name as "the Epistle to the Ephesians," are not found in the original text.

The case is the clearest of all, anyhow, in regard to the so-called PASTORAL EPISTLES, i.e. the epistles to TIMOTHY and TITUS. The first who maintained that the First Epistle to Timothy was not authentic was no less a person than Schleiermacher.

These three epistles have a decided ecclesiastical tone. First, they argue against certain false teachers; and then next they treat of the proper choice and conduct of certain ecclesiastical officers. Finally, they give varied directions about the wellbeing of the church, e.g. the conduct of divine worship.

In these epistles we meet with points which make it evident that the origin of these epistles is not from Paul; at the most, we may allow that they contain a few small genuine remains of Pauline memoranda or letters. The internal data make it at once difficult to find a place for them, in what is known to us of the life of Paul. In many respects the relations which are presupposed between Paul and his disciples, Timothy and Titus, are surprising and full of contradictions. As Titus, for example, is thought of as in Crete, he must be better acquainted with it than Paul himself. And yet Paul just describes the false teachers to him as if Titus knew nothing of them

at all. If the phraseology is surprising in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the language, style, and statements of the Pastoral Epistles are entirely different from those of the epistles of S. Paul. In the doctrine there are some echoes of Paul, but the main impression is that of divergence. It is a sincere, simple Christianity which they set forth, but there is an absence of the depth of the Pauline thought, and this Christianity has already gained an orthodox flavour. Hatred of heretics is already manifest and just as plainly traceable as zeal for correctness of belief.

Criticism, however, does not rest content with collecting the characteristics which exclude Pauline authorship. The judgment, an epistle is not by Paul, properly speaking, is only the settlement of a preliminary question. Criticism has not merely to say No, but it ought if at all possible to advance to an affirmative; it ought to ascertain what the circumstances are out of which such writings actually arose.

In these epistles that is substantially possible, although we do not know the authors. They plainly set us in a period when the organisation of the Church is far more developed than can have been the case in the apostolic period. And just as plainly they show us the Church already at war with its opponents, which gave her so much trouble for the most part in the second century. That is the so-called Gnosticism, i.e. the tendency

which threatened to undermine the Faith of the Church arising from a sort of philosophy and speculation, and largely also by the assumption that Christ's physical life was merely an appearance. The false teachers who are combated in these epistles are Gnostics. In order to overcome them these epistles were mainly written, presumably not until the beginning of the second century, perhaps half a century after the death of Paul.

The Epistle to the Ephesians and the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians were probably written somewhat earlier. We are not in a position to know how the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians came to enlarge and work over the Epistle to the Colossians. On the other hand, it is possible to show a definite motive for the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. It arose from the excitement enkindled by the idea that the last day was now already at hand. This excitement it is designed to allay by teaching that Christ cannot possibly come again until the Antichrist arise, who must first appear, and this is yet a hindrance. The deepest and most important of these unauthentic epistles is the Epistle to the Ephesians.

On a review, then, we may be permitted to say that precisely the finest, greatest, and most important epistles which the New Testament contains bearing the name of Paul must, with full

confidence, be allowed to be trustworthy, genuine, original documents of the earliest Christianity. They do indeed teach us only isolated facts on the life and the historical personality of Jesus, but they give us, with all their gaps, the material in order to gain a really correct idea of the character, and the facts of the earliest Christianity on the soil of heathendom, and they bring to us one of the greatest personalities of religious history into intimate acquaintance, because we hear him speak always in his own words. Greater than Paul is, of course, the Master for whom he seeks to prepare the way. More important than the epistles of Paul must, therefore, those writings be which tell us of Jesus, namely, the gospels.

II

THE GOSPELS

IN the development of the teaching of the Church in the past the gospels (the Gospel of John, of course, excepted) have not by any means been the most influential. They have not been for the theologians of various periods the most important books of the New Testament. Even Luther himself rather put in the background the first three gospels. For him the foundation book of the New Testament was the Epistle to the Romans, with its little pendant, the Epistle to the Galatians. But on Christianity as a whole, on the lay-world of the Church, the gospels, and especially the first three, have continually exercised a quite special fascination. Why ? Because they not merely taught of Jesus, but present a view, a coloured picture of Him, which far more impressively speaks to the imagination, and to immediate feeling, than any formal propositions, and any mere instruction. In modern times this interest could not but greatly increase the more there was found in Jesus a real and wholly human personality ; and, at the present moment, wide

circles of theologians assign a foremost place of importance to the gospels over all other writings of the New Testament. We may even assert that to-day something exists which did not exist previously, viz. a yearning for the true, the historical life-picture of the man Jesus; and the keen criticism which has been employed on the facts of the gospel narrative has not lessened this desire, for many indeed rather increased it.

We may regard the gospels as the first beginnings of a Christian literature, since the idea of literature as applied to the epistles of S. Paul does not appear to us to be a proper one. Although the gospels, first of all, found their readers in ever so narrow a circle, they made their appearance before the world in the way that is characteristic of literary productions. If there had been an art of printing at that time, it is safe to say that they would have appeared not as manuscripts, but as printed books. Only the term literature must not awaken too exalted ideas. So far as the literature of the world was concerned at that time, these writings were of no importance to begin with. And, on the other hand, a secular literature existed —with its distinct forms, Drama, Epic, Science, Compendiums, Dialogues, Oratory, etc.—but not for Christianity. It is not until perhaps about the middle of the second century that Christianity begins to employ these forms of secular literature.

Nevertheless, we might ask whether biographical

works, as they were then composed, did not give an impulse to the writing of our gospels, or afford a type for the character of their recital. As a matter of fact, that must, however, probably be denied. This literary form of the gospels is rather a product of the Christian Church itself, and sprang out of its natural needs. Within the Christian circle it doubtless quickly acquired special favour, and dominated Christianity. The best proof of this is the fact that a great number of gospels existed, and not simply four. A part of these writings did not arise, of course, until a much later period than our gospels. They are those works in which in particular the history of the infancy, and then also the history of the passion, and even the so-called descent into Hades, are depicted in completely legendary form, and which, with their fables and (in part ludicrously exaggerated) miracles, must be called Christian romances. We entirely ignore these. But there were other gospels which stand proportionately closer to the rest, and which in character show much affinity with them. We have a series of fragments of a quite ancient gospel of the Hebrews, which must have had some relationship to our Matthew, but certainly also exhibited great differences; further a few fragments of a gospel according to the Egyptians, which, therefore, was once used in Egypt. Somewhat more than a decade ago there was found in an Egyptian tomb

a considerable fragment of a gospel which purports to be by Peter, and which relates the history of the passion and the resurrection. The gospel citations of the Martyr Justin, who about the middle of the second century wrote an apology or defence of Christianity, cannot be satisfactorily accounted for from our gospels, and appear, therefore, to necessitate the conclusion that he used a gospel unknown to us. A number of years ago there were again found in Egypt some few logia of Jesus, and in the same locality quite recently others were discovered. They must therefore have belonged, if not to an actual gospel, yet at least to a writing which stands in close relationship to the gospel literature. All these writings in my judgment must be put earlier than our four gospels. But there must also have been lost gospels which were just as old as or older than our gospels or most of them. Luke says in the short preface with which he introduces his book that many before him had made the attempt to compose a narrative of the life of Jesus. Now John was not then written, and Luke probably did not know our Matthew. But if he had known him, then he would not have used the expression "many" if Matthew and Mark had then been the only gospels extant. To this account agree also the conclusions to which the criticism of the gospels leads and has led. Our gospels presuppose the existence of one older gospel at the least.

THE GOSPELS

It is of importance as to our conception of the four gospels that these facts should be made clear in advance. The question is not one of four single writings which never had their like; but of four examples of a widespread class, and to this I add of four links in a chain of development. For a development with considerable modifications may be plainly perceived in this literature. And therefore the gospel writings which fall later than our gospels are by no means valueless. The layman will of course only put the one main question, Do such gospels teach us anything reliable about Jesus? And if this question must perchance be answered in the negative, he will deem the matter of no further interest. But the expert knows that the gospels are not merely sources for the actual life of Jesus, but also documents which illustrate the gradual development and change in the conception of that life. And so for him a later production may be very important, if it shows surprising alterations in the repetition of the sayings of Jesus or the stories of Him. And generally the more material is presented to us for comparison, the clearer shall we be able to recognise the style, character, and value of the New Testament gospels.

Let us turn now especially to these four gospels of the New Testament, the so-called canonical gospels. Here we must at once, as a preliminary, make a sharp division—the gospels of Matthew,

Mark, and Luke stand on the one side and John on the other side. For nearly related as are the first three gospels to one another, so different is the fourth that it is a writing of an essentially different pattern. Of this even the illiterate reader of the Bible has at once an immediate perception. Science is accustomed to denote the three first gospels with a common name, as the synoptic gospels, or shortly the synoptics. This name expresses their striking affinity. For it affirms that the text of these three writings, for the most part, can and must be considered together, because they formally invite comparison. These synoptics we cannot therefore merely consider individually. That, of course, must also be done; but with that there must be united an examination which embraces the whole group.

As historical works the synoptics have a truly individual stamp, and it is at once obvious that the question is as to three sister writings. It immediately strikes us that their account only stretches over a small part of the life of Jesus. Mark relates nothing of the whole period up to the public appearance of Jesus. Matthew and Luke then, of course, give histories of the birth of Jesus, but are silent on the whole period of His youth, and His growth to manhood, apart from the short narration of Jesus in the temple at twelve years old given by Luke. The mode of

presentation itself is in general characterised by interchange of word and history. The historical narrative, however, consists essentially of episodes, we might say anecdote, if this word had not a secondary meaning which did not originally belong to it. It is almost solely vignettes, miracles, brief conversations, single scenes; on the other hand, there is no general development, no great lines of presentation, no searching characterisation of persons, no attention to the connection of occurrences. A stronger chain of connection between details is most clearly obvious in the history of the passion of Jesus. A broader picture is painted here.

We must not suppose that the evangelists were merely fishers and handicraftsmen. They were in a way literary men who as such belonged to the more cultured members of the Church. At least that is true of the author of Mark, more of that of Matthew, and especially of that of the Gospel of Luke. The latter prefaces his work with an introduction such as we find usual with educated men in the literature of the period, in which he speaks of predecessors, mentions the order of events, is interested in chronology, in short, he makes it clear that he is following a certain historical plan. Of course, this is not to be denied of the other two: their intention is not merely to preach about Christ, but to tell of Him in narrative form. But nothing could be more perverse than

to regard these authors as modern writers of history, and here I am not at all thinking merely of learned and trained historians, but of popular story-writers. It is in fact to be sharply emphasised that the evangelists do not tell their story merely as a story, but that they rather pursue as their first intention practical and edifying purposes, Luke not excepted. They do not, as the phrase is, write objectively, or as personally uninterested, or as mere chroniclers; they write for believers and as believers. The Gospel of John is easily put in contrast with the synoptics, the former depicts the Christ of faith and the latter that of history. In this contrast there is, no doubt, a certain truth, but Matthew and Mark and Luke depict for us most certainly the Christ who is the object of faith, whether this coincides with the Jesus of history or not. It cannot be made too plain that these men intend to write books of edification, their writings are designed to win men to Christ, to teach about Him; they are intended for those who are already instructed in the Christian faith; and meant perchance to be read in public worship. In short, they are intended to preach Christ. He who, for this reason, supposes that they proceed like proper historians with the same painstaking accuracy and care in the arrangement of the material, in the disposition of the accounts which come to hand, in the confirmation of details, puts

forward false claims, and employs an absurd criterion.

It is extraordinarily difficult for him who is not intimately acquainted with the synoptics to consider them apart. When closely regarded they have with all their similarity each their own special point of view. In order that the names Matthew, Mark, Luke may not be to us merely names, I should like to call special attention by a few touches to the specialty which is clearly manifest in each.

I begin with MARK, the shortest gospel. Mark consists quite predominantly of narration, that is, he is, in comparison with Matthew and Luke, poor in discourses; apart from some parables and a longer discourse on the events to precede the second coming of Jesus, he only supplies us throughout with isolated sayings. The style of this evangelist is singularly fresh and lively; his disposition is more original, and he is less elaborate than either of the other two. It is striking that Mark in his narrative has many minute details of events more than the others, and presents the situation with a richer colour and in livelier form. Among the miracles of Jesus which the evangelist numerously narrates, there stands in bold relief a specially significant class, the healing of the so called demoniacs, i.e. those possessed, or, as we should say, those suffering from mental disturbances. The evangelist appears to have had a

quite special interest in these miracles. Besides, the gospel has probably not been preserved to us in its entirety. The conclusion of the gospel as we read it in our Bibles—i.e. the last twelve verses—is without doubt not genuine, as, in fact, these verses are wanting in the oldest manuscripts. Now the gospel scarcely ended with the words which precede the unauthentic and later superadded verses. We expect that at least another appearance of the risen Christ in Galilee will be related. The genuine conclusion is therefore presumably lost, possibly was designedly omitted because it did not suit the ideas of later readers, and is now replaced by an account which has been compiled from several other accounts of the resurrection.

The Gospel of MATTHEW has been the most influential and the most popular among the three synoptics. And it deserves this popularity also on account of its fine arrangement of material, and the excellent structure of the whole. Discourses and narratives are interchanged in fine proportion with one another, and the discourses of Jesus have the more striking effect, as they appear in great separate portions; the case is indeed different in S. Luke; he gives scarcely less discourses, but the sections and pieces are more and shorter, and are distributed over the whole book. As Luke, so Matthew contains a history of the childhood and a genealogy of Jesus, but is

precisely in these sections quite distinct from that of Luke.

Matthew gives a series of the logia of Jesus which have a sharp Jewish or Judaic-Christian tone. For example, the apostles are expressly forbidden to go to the heathen and Samaritans (x. 5), the inviolable value of the law is emphasised (v. 17); and so it is said: "Pray that your flight be not"—in the coming distress—"in the winter or on the Sabbath" (xxiv. 20), in which saying there is the implication that the law forbids a long journey on the Sabbath. Such expressions have led to the untenable opinion that this gospel was intended specially for Jewish Christians, just as there are other phrases which have quite a different tone, which, in fact, as plainly as possible say that the Jewish people are not privileged, and that the call of the gospel is for all peoples (xxviii. 19 f.). Here there is a contradiction which can only be explained by assuming that the author found the one view present in another writing, and preserved it in using the text, whereas the other view represents his own opinion. We are therefore hereby led to the supposition that at least *one* source lies at the base of the gospel.

The author of this gospel is thus, so to speak, the theologian among the evangelists; he shows in particular an intimate acquaintance with the Old Testament, and it is one of his foremost cares to demonstrate that in the facts of the history of

Jesus Old Testament prophecies had been fulfilled. Consequently the frequency of the formulas, " this was done that it might be fulfilled," " as it is written." This so-called prophetic proof had, of course, a generally powerful influence for the early Church. In Matthew it appears especially in its classic form.

In his preface LUKE has, as we have already said, particularly emphasised his striving for accuracy, that is, completeness, and for a correct sequence of narration. In both respects he apparently desired to outstrip his many predecessors, for each later evangelist wished naturally to make his gospel somehow better than the previous ones. We may now also observe that Luke has not quite forgotten this programme in the gospel. For example, he transposes many narratives of his predecessors; he also endeavours occasionally to bring the great world-events into connection with his story, and so he names at one time Cæsar Augustus (ii. 1), another time the Emperor Tiberius (iii. 2), and other rulers. Criticism cannot, of course, assert that the alterations of Luke are really improvements in the sequence of the story. The great journey, e.g., which he inserts in chapters ix. to xviii., is as such not imaginable—though this is not saying that the accounts are worthless which he puts into this frame.

We shall, however, find that the superiority of

Luke consists in quite other points. This evangelist's method of narration is in a special degree thoughtful and attractive. Some of the most impressive features of the gospel history belong to him alone; e.g. that Jesus "looked on" Peter after his denial (xxii. 61); and he is fond, in the parables which he records, of letting the persons concerned speak for themselves, recording sentiments which lay bare their very soul—"Work I cannot, to beg I am ashamed," which, e.g., the unjust steward says. "I will arise and go to my father," in the prodigal son (xv. 18). In such traits we may really recognise a certain addition belonging to the style of Luke, for Matthew relates the parables in a somewhat different way.

Jesus appears in this gospel in a quite special manner as the friend of the lost and of those classes despised by the Jew, "publicans and sinners" (as it is said); but at the same time as the enemy of the rich. And this is an evidently plain characteristic of this gospel. Nowhere are riches so sharply judged as here, and nowhere is poverty placed higher or charitableness which deprives itself of its possessions. The critic accordingly asks whether here the evangelist presents the thoughts of Jesus with real accuracy, or whether, perhaps unconsciously, they are coloured by his own ideas. The conditions of life in Palestine did not, it seems, so closely concern Luke as Mark and Matthew, possibly he did not assume much interest

in his readers, at any rate in Luke the discourses of Jesus do not possess that local Jewish colouring which is clear in Matthew. I mean by this that the antagonism of Jesus to the Pharisees does not appear so obviously.

As an eye-witness of the life of Jesus, not one of the three makes any definite claim. None of them narrates in such a way as to imply that he was speaking of his own experiences. Not one speaks of his relation to Jesus, or uses in his story the personal "we." Luke, however, positively disclaims being an eye-witness, and belongs to a later generation.

Besides such differences as I have thus dealt with, it is now proper to fix our attention chiefly ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE THREE BOOKS. This is, in fact, most striking. The question is not merely as to the general similarity of the method of presentation or the order and succession of short descriptions. And not merely that the whole framework of the narrative is the same: commencing with John the Baptist, the baptism, the temptation, the continuation of the history in Galilee and the journey to Jerusalem, the conclusion with the particularly detailed account in all three of the passion, death, and resurrection. More surprising is, at any rate, the relationship in the choice of material. It is immediately obvious that Jesus in the period which the evangelists depict did

more and said more than they record on their few pages. How does it happen, then, that the content of the material so preponderantly agrees? What all three, or at least two, evangelists have in common amounts to two-thirds of the whole content. The similarity in the order of the different narratives is in addition very marked. Whole groups of accounts appear in two or three in the same order. That is not at all explained by saying that this is because they give the real succession of events. How, then, could it be explained that the order frequently is so divergent? It is just this difference that makes the partial likeness so surprising. Finally it is besides notorious that the agreements, not only in the sayings of Jesus, but also in the narratives, extend very largely to verbal agreement. The exact sameness of the words is, moreover, worthy of note. For Jesus did not speak Greek, the language in which the evangelists wrote. His mother-speech was rather Aramaic, a dialect related to Syriac, which had then superseded Hebrew in Palestine. Since, then, the words of Jesus lie before us only in a translation, the agreement to the smallest details is doubly surprising.

We now stand in the presence of the problem to which research has addressed itself from the close of the eighteenth century until to-day with really eager zeal, and which is known as the synoptic problem. How is this far-reaching relationship in

content, in arrangement, and verbal agreement, to which correspond the equally remarkable differences, to be accounted for? or, how are we to explain this peculiar mixture of likeness and unlikeness?

Accident is no explanation, for the similarities cannot be accidental. The doctrine of the divine inspiration of the gospels also yields no explanation. For in this way we do not comprehend the differences. Literary criticism alone can bring us a solution.

Research has struck out manifold and different paths. The thought is, of course, obvious that one of the evangelists used the text of the others. Next to this the supposition is started that our evangelists might have drawn from one or several lost gospels, or possibly from various smaller sketches and portions of narrative. Lessing already developed the fundamental ideas of this hypothesis. Finally oral tradition has been brought in, that is, that the frequent repetition of the words and acts of Jesus gradually assumed the set form of a narrative. The strong agreement may, it is said, thus be accounted for.

Later investigation no longer allows us to believe that one of these hypotheses alone leads to the goal, and least of all the idea of oral tradition. It holds that it is needful to accept what is right in all these attempts, and in this way it has reached definite results. Of course we cannot

speak of absolute agreement among critics, but a preponderating majority agree at least in several fundamental points, and these may in fact pass as a real result of prolonged labour.

The first of these is that *Mark was a source of Luke and Matthew.* As a matter of fact, there are the strongest grounds for this. I point out some of these. If Mark had used the other gospels, then we cannot understand why he left out so much of their material; if, on the other hand, Mark is the base, then the two successors incorporated almost his whole gospel; but why they left out some portions is altogether capable of a valid explanation. Further, it follows that the sequence of the Marcan narrative lies at the base of the others. They diverge frequently from this sequence, but ever keep on returning to it. In addition it is in favour of this that Mark gives no history of the childhood. The histories of the childhood in Matthew and Mark, poetic as they are (and precisely because they possess this poetic charm), are to be regarded throughout as myth—the appearance of angels marks them as such—and they belong undoubtedly, as unfettered investigation generally acknowledges, to the latest portions of the gospel tradition.

If, now, Mark previously read Matthew or Luke, then he would hardly have omitted these stories, which agreed with the belief of the time. But in detail also we may abundantly recognise

that Mark at least offers for the most part the oldest text. For example, in the baptism of Jesus Matthew relates of a refusal at first on the part of John the Baptist: "I should be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?" This is not in Mark. But he did not omit this, but Matthew added it. Offence, that is, began to be taken with the fact that Jesus was baptised by John, because this did not appear compatible with the sinlessness of Jesus, and also it was feared to subordinate Jesus to John the Baptist. This objection was the cause of the addition in Matthew. If John, however, said himself that Jesus stood in no need of baptism, then the doubtfulness of the procedure was removed. Another example. "Good Master," says the rich young ruler to Jesus, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" To this Jesus replied: "Why callest thou me good? None is good save God only." So Mark (x. 17 f.). In Matthew the epithet "good" is not there. It says: "Master, what good thing must I do that I may inherit eternal life?" To this Jesus replies: "Why askest thou me after the good? One is good" (xix. 16). This difference can scarcely be otherwise explained than that the text of Mark, "Why callest thou me good?" appeared questionable, and consequently was changed.

The second great result of criticism is as follows: *besides Mark another source lies at the base of the gospels of Matthew and Luke*—in the portions

which are not taken from Mark and in which again these two are in such an extraordinary agreement. The question essentially concerns a great portion of the sayings of Jesus. This source must be a book lost to us. The usual designation of this is a collection of sayings or logia. And it is conjectured that it was a kind of catechism or lesson book composed of sayings and words of Jesus which offered rules such as the Church needed for her life, spirituality, mission, and her hope for the future. We still possess the content of this source in good part, in just those words of Jesus, which Matthew and Mark have in common, and also possibly in the one or other portions which are found in only one of them ; of course it must be taken into account that they have been used by each evangelist in a different form. But would it not be much simpler to explain that common element by assuming that Matthew used Luke or Luke used Matthew ? Of course this method has been attempted, but it does not lead to the goal.

A third and final result may be thus formulised —*for the portions which Luke has alone, and in the same way also for those which only Matthew presents, one or several sources must be assumed,* which we no longer possess. Here and there both evangelists probably drew from oral traditions too. This completion of the two other main propositions is needful, since it is wholly impossible that Luke

invented the accounts which he alone has. To these accounts belong a series of the finest parables of Jesus, all of which have a claim to be reckoned as part of the best tradition of the gospels.

It is, of course, generally correct to say that a certain part of the accounts is due to the evangelists themselves. In the main they hand down what they have received. But they themselves shape the tradition variously, make additions, abridgments, and unite according to their own judgment one source with the other. The proof of this is quite plain in our gospels. Even where Matthew and Luke only follow Mark, we are aware of frequent alterations, and Mark did not act differently from the rest.

By all these explanations it is not intended to awaken the impression that everything, or even all that is of importance, is explained. What are the sources of Mark? Did he, too, use written sources? Possibly even the collection of logia? Is our Mark the oldest form of this gospel? or was there an older, an original Mark? What was the real shape of the logia? So I might continue. On all such points the battle of opinions still wavers hither and thither. Will it ever cease? Shall we ever be able to assert that we have solved the whole synoptic problem? We may well doubt this, for we have too many unknown elements to deal with. And if the mounds of Egypt, the ruins of Asia Minor may still afford

us many a find to rejoice the heart of the expert inquirer into the origin of the gospels, there is but little probability that the very writings from which our gospels were drawn will ever see the light.

Meanwhile that the results attained are in any case of the highest importance should be easily evident to every one. I insist only on two points. First, that the historical importance of the Gospel of Mark rises considerably higher if it was the common source of the two others. If these drew from Mark, then, their witness just where they are dependent on Mark is of no independent value. That is, in the greatest portion of the narrative material properly so called. And we have, therefore, in this case not three witnesses for an event, but only one, that is Mark. The credibility of this writer thus becomes a fundamental question. That is to say for all that relates to the course, the development in the life of Jesus, we are dependent on Mark, because here both his successors rest wholly on him. Secondly, it is also of high importance to note that a collection of the sayings of Jesus forms the basis of Matthew and Luke. For thus we gain for the sayings which are in question an older witness than Matthew and Luke themselves. And in this way the historical importance of Matthew and Luke is raised above that of Mark, since Mark does not contain these sayings at all.

There remains to us another problem. It is of consequence to consider *the gospels in connection with the whole development* which the tradition of the life of Jesus underwent. We must consider and historically conceive the gospels as stages in this development. This leads us, then, at once to the question as to the historical value of these accounts, a question to which this work certainly can only do very incomplete justice.

Of course this development, as far as it lies beyond our synoptics, is to us in great obscurity. But we can from these arrive at certain *a posteriori* conclusions, and we know that in fact all human tradition is dependent on certain laws.

The moment after the death of Jesus, when the tradition about Jesus was still quite rich and fresh, indicates the starting-point. Of course, even then many a valuable piece of information had already been forgotten. For obliviscence commences just exactly the moment there is anything to recollect. But it is certain that the eye-witnesses, who had accompanied Jesus, could then relate infinitely much about Him, and that these recollections stood before their eyes with singular clearness. Now the first propagation of recollections was in all respects free and various. Naturally they had further chiefly to do with single sayings, instructions, and individual narratives. Generally speaking, no question was raised as to a total view of the life

of Jesus; certain main facts were known, and this was sufficient. That long discourses like the Sermon on the Mount could be verbally retained in recollection is improbable. The consideration of our gospels themselves teaches us that the long discourses are composed mostly out of shorter pieces or even single sayings. On a designed retention of recollections no one thought, just because the speedy advent of the Lord was expected.

Then the tradition would become gradually poorer. The eye-witnesses died or were dispersed. In this way much was lost. Next of importance is the fact that the tradition was early transplanted to a soil where it was not indigenous, that is outside Palestine. In such a transplanting much always falls away; especially is it the case that those who dwell at a distance are not at home in the local and personal conditions with which those on the original spot were naturally familiar. They have no interest in them. In this way the idea of the real events grows pale.

There is one thing more. The tradition did not remain a mere matter of personal, loving remembrance, but obtained a special significance for the life of the Church. At an early date the words of Jesus became, as we already see in Paul, looked upon as standard rules for the Church. That which was important for the interests of

their faith and life was naturally held to with special steadfastness; particularly the words of the Lord were more firmly fixed in the mind, and perhaps also isolated sayings brought together into connection. On the other hand, however, that which was purely personal, and more occasional, fell in the tradition into the background. Of the events in the life of Jesus those especially were passed on to others which might illustrate the work of Jesus as Saviour and helper, or had otherwise a didactic importance. For the chronology, the relation of Jesus to the people, His private intercourse with His disciples, His relations with individual persons or whole groups, the interest was small. Naturally the stories of Jesus were repeated in a free manner with all the pleasure which the relation and repetition to others of such glorious things would afford.

The earliest gospel writings, then, are a landmark in this development. What do they import as to the tradition? First of all, the very important fact that now a portion of the recollections became fixed so that it could be no longer lost. But besides this another is not to be overlooked, that is, that with the origin of the gospels a further impoverishment of the tradition took place. That sounds strange, and yet it is right. When the first writings of this kind arose there was doubtless much free oral tradition current.

But only that which was collected in the receptacle of these writings was retained, while the remainder was in the main lost, and that just because written gospels are now extant. For these now henceforth become the proper storehouse of the recollections of Jesus, and to them those turn who wish to hear about Jesus. The free recollections lose their significance. Facts corroborate this view. Of credible stories outside the gospels scarcely anything has been retained in the old Church writings. Of course there are sayings of Jesus which have been handed down which do not find a place in the gospels, that is, the so-called Agrapha, i.e. utterances which are not in the gospel accounts. We have a considerable number of them. Some may very well be genuine, as, e.g., the saying: "Be a good banker"; perhaps also that fine word which Jesus is said to have addressed to a man whom He saw working on the Sabbath day: "Man, if thou knowest what thou doest thou art blessed, but if thou knowest not thou art condemned, and a transgressor of the law." But it is quite likely that there are only few such words which, as genuine, can come into question.

Now at what particular time did these earliest gospels originate? There is no agreement as to the date of our Mark. Some put him in the time immediately before the destruction of Jerusalem in the years A.D. 65–70, therefore quite more than thirty years after the death of Jesus, but many

ten years later or more. The collection of logia *perhaps* arose somewhat earlier, and a good many experts trace them back to the Apostle Matthew, and assume that on this account the name of the apostle passed over to our gospel according to S. Matthew, just because it incorporated the collection of sayings. For *our* Matthew is certainly not by the apostle of that name. Against this there are several reasons, among others, the large dependency on Mark. And this work might, just like that of Luke, not have originated until about the end of the first century.

In the time mentioned—in the last three or four decades of the first century, therefore, so far as we see, the first and foundation settlement of the tradition was completed. That the development did not stop here we have already seen. For there now follows one gospel after another, not merely the Gospel of John, but also that to the Hebrews, the Egyptians, the Gospel of Peter, and then the fanciful productions of a later period. We cannot be surprised that the increasing impoverishment in genuine traditions has as its accompaniment a growing increase in unauthentic ones.

All human tradition implies alteration. If we are to understand the gospels, then we must have an eye for the transforming effect of tradition. Luther's saying at the Diet of Worms, at which half Europe listened : " Here I stand, I can do no

other," even in the year 1521, in which it was spoken, was extant in three forms. Surely according to such analogies we must expect that the narratives of the life and teaching of Jesus underwent changes which are of importance, in the long course until they came into the gospels. Our gospels themselves supply us with the original evidence of this. Even in the decades which may have intervened between their several origins we see how alterations now small and trifling, now more comprehensive, were effected. The tradition gradually grows to completion, receives elucidation in the way it was understood, it receives also designedly, of course in the best faith, correction when an expression appeared disturbing, when perchance it did not seem suitable to Jesus, or no longer corresponded to the belief of a later period. Nay, it may be shown that in the honest conviction that Jesus must have said something or related something, He is declared to have said it. For example, those detailed prophecies on the suffering, death, and resurrection in which there is already deposited a little history of the passion might have originated in the thought that surely Jesus must have foreknown all.

If this, then, at this time is now plainly perceivable, could, in the time which lies before the first written gospels, the tradition have flowed on unchanged? This is an idea which has every probability against it. For as this history of the changes

before our gospels is in obscurity, only isolated facts can be surmised from our gospels. But the transformations in the first thirty or forty years cannot have been insignificant.

Only we must not suppose that the development could have altered all traditions proportionately. That great teaching: "Judge not, that ye be not judged," or that sharp incisive saying: "No man can serve two masters." "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Or that word of consolation: "Be careful for nothing . . . your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Such words were as true thirty, forty, fifty years after the death of Jesus as at the time He spoke them. They might be forgotten, but they would scarcely be essentially changed; or at the most the phraseology. On the other hand, the alteration must have been great on such points where the ideas of the Church were greatly developed; above all, on the question of the person of Jesus, that is, on His higher superhuman nature or the significance of His death; or, for example, on the expectation of the future—will Jesus soon come or delay long? or on the question whether the heathen were to have a share in the Christian salvation, and more of the like. Here it was in the long run quite impossible that the teaching of Jesus, or the story of His life, should not have responded to the quick forward-moving development of the Christian beliefs of the Church;

possibly even be at variance with them. Hence there was then started unperceived a work which adapted the traditional picture of Jesus to the interests of the beliefs of the particular time, so as to be reconcilable with them.

Of course all this still does not help us to any clear determination what and how much, then, in our gospels can be regarded as genuine recollection, what and how much is later accretion. I have already intimated that I cannot really solve this widely comprehensive question in this work. Not only because the space would fail me, but because in doing this I should be overstepping my subject. This sets before me the task of speaking of the origin of the gospel writings. The question as to credibility plainly goes beyond these limits. Consequently on this point only a few observations may be allowed.

The picture of the life of Jesus as it lies before us in our gospels resembles a painting which has been coloured over once, or perhaps more than once, so as more or less to hide the original colours and outlines. Even our Gospel of Mark, sad as it may seem to us to say, in no way simply depicts the life of Jesus as it was. It not merely contains mythical features, such as the meeting of Jesus with the Devil or the walking of Jesus on the sea, the feeding of five thousand with but a little bread and fish; it also unquestionably shows definite dogmatic conceptions. Jesus is no longer regarded as

simply a man, but even as a divine being who could do all things, and, for instance, accurately prophesy the future and the details of His own sufferings. Mark hardly knew very much of the development of the life of Jesus. The sequence of his narrative is scarcely the actual chronological one; for he arranges it for the most part according to the relationship of the subject-matter. And on this very account it is impossible for us to describe more accurately the course of the life of Jesus. For here we are quite dependent on Mark. Certainly most assume that in Mark the recollections of the discourses of Peter have been used, but these, then, in any case can only be found in a portion of the narratives. The force of the facts mentioned is not destroyed.

But on the other hand there can be no mistake that in its various narratives there is found much genuine tradition, whether this is to be traced back to Peter or not. Besides this, many accounts of miracles are not to be eliminated so far as they concern miracles of healing. For it is scarcely to be denied that Jesus possessed a gift of healing, and this does not contradict historical probability. For this kind of gift is found elsewhere. Further, the scene of action in which the life of Jesus was passed is still in many respects plainly discernible. Certain narratives cannot have been invented because their invention is inconceivable. Peter was in the oldest Christianity almost

the most considerable personage. Who would have concocted the story of his denial, which was to his prejudice ? Who can have devised the sharp contrast in which Jesus appears in relation to the Pharisees ? For this a later period could have no longer any interest. But we may put special confidence, e.g., in the sayings of Jesus, so far as they comprehend the plain deep teaching of the purest piety and morality ; the illuminating clear parables, the short striking sayings, the rules of life, which are so original in their form. But besides all this a wholly definite image, which cannot be confused with any other, the image of a real personality not recognisable in every feature, but still speaking to us with the force of reality, exalted, majestic, subduing, great and pure, deep and clear, serious and loving, strong and mild, stands before us.

Yes, the picture of the life of Jesus has been coloured over, and in many places strongly coloured over, but the original colours everywhere shine through the additional colouring. It is the task of science, where it is at all possible, to remove the superposed layers, and so far as it is possible to unveil the genuine picture.

Hitherto I have kept silence on the *Gospel of S. John*. Yet our reflections so far have set forth much that is preparatory to the comprehension of this gospel. For John represents

a stage in advance of the Synoptics; I mean not in respect of value, but in development.

The strife of opinions has, as to this gospel, turned quite preponderantly on the person of the author. Is it the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee or not? And no question in this department has possibly been debated with greater fervour. I must, however, say emphatically that this is no way the single question of importance; just as important is the question as to the nature and design of this treatise. And this very question is of the greatest importance as bearing on the question of authorship.

Before giving close attention to the gospel, a word is needed on a preliminary question. It has been frequently attempted to prove that it is a composite book, and contains an older work, elaborated by a later editor, and incorporated with his own work. This attempt must be pronounced a failure. This work is a work from one mould, it is, in the words of a critic, like the seamless robe of Christ, about which it is possible to cast lots, but which cannot be divided. For everywhere it betrays the same spirit and the same way of presentation. *One* narrative certainly, as is commonly acknowledged, did not originally stand in the gospel, and in fact one which if we are not altogether deluded rests on original recollection, the pathetic history of the adulteress to whom Jesus manifests His tenderness. In addition it may still

be regarded as doubtful whether the last (21st) chapter is an original part of the gospel, or, as many think, an addition by a later hand. The end of the 20th chapter indeed sounds just like a formal conclusion: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." Nevertheless, personally I accept even chapter xxi. as originating with the same author as the rest, even though it may have been written somewhat later.

If we start with the Synoptics, then the whole impression made by John is a completely different one. There is not wanting matter in common, as in the history of the passion, in the miracles, in the story of John the Baptist. But the greatest part of the synoptic material finds here no parallel. And how much there is that is new given by this evangelist! His commencement, for instance, the so-called prologue sounds so utterly different from that of the synoptic style. It is an exposition solemnly marching along of the "Word" as "with God," and then as "made flesh." Then if we just think of the conversation with Nicodemus, with the Samaritan at the well, of the resurrection of Lazarus, of the feet-washing. Nay, the whole theatre of action of Jesus appears changed. In the Synoptics it is predominantly completed in

Galilee, and then later on in Jerusalem. Here the scene of action changes different times, in the main Jesus appears in Judea and Jerusalem. It gives the impression that He has touched Galilee but very slightly.

But all this is insignificant compared with the difference in the discourses. Save a few short sayings it reminds us of scarcely anything of the discourses of the Synoptics. All the words concerning forgiveness, love of our enemies, of serving, of the pride of the Pharisees, of the kingdom of God, all the striking parables have wholly disappeared. Instead of this we find an exceedingly great abundance of new discourses, all of a quite different character, throughout quite uniform, evolving a definite thread of thought, and in them everything turns properly on one theme, the person of Christ, and faith in Him; that He was with the Father before He came in the flesh, that He therefore can witness of the Father; that He is one with the Father, on an equality with Him; that He can raise from the dead, and judge mankind; that He is the bread of life, the way, the truth, and the life; that the world rejects Him, rejects the Father — such thoughts meet us in ever new shapes. He who for the first time actually apprehends this distinction from the three Synoptists can only be in the highest degree surprised.

The comparison of the gospel with the Synoptics

leads us on to those portions which both have in common. In the first place one result is to see that John is dependent on the others, and that is most clearly seen in the history of the passion. The similarities, e.g. in the sequence, are here and elsewhere too great to be understood in the absence of such assumption. Of course it is possible to ask whether John is not the older, but this view cannot be taken seriously. For we everywhere see that John represents the later stage of development. And this very thing is full of instruction. I will not dwell on the fact that John's accounts are marked by their peculiar indefiniteness. We have enough individual cases to make the judgment more definite. There is, e.g., plainly perceptible a climax in the accounts of miracles. Mark also speaks of a resurrection, of the raising of the daughter of Jairus immediately after her death. In John, however, the raising of Lazarus follows after his body has lain in the grave four days already, and decomposition has commenced. The Synoptics also relate cures of blindness, in John the blind man is healed who was blind from birth, and more of the same sort. Then there are some single examples of transformations. The sentence in which John the Baptist announces the coming Messiah runs, e.g., "There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose" (Mark i. 2).

In John it is similar (i. 27), but it says also: "This is he of whom I said: After me cometh a man which is preferred before me, for he was before me" (i. 30). It is impossible to doubt that the sayings of the Lord are the same, but in John an idea has been superadded which is not found in Mark, the idea of the so-called pre-existence, e.g. of His being with God before the incarnation, and that is all the stranger as it is pronounced at the very beginning by John the Baptist. Mark represents how Jesus, when He wishes to tell Peter that He must suffer, said: "Get thee behind me, Satan" (viii. 35). This is not found in the like scene in John. On the other hand Jesus says of Judas Iscariot: "One of you is a devil." We shall not be far out in the assumption that it appeared to later readers questionable that Christ should apply to Peter, this foremost disciple, the epithet Satan, and that they deliberated whether such a name must not in fact mean Judas who treated Jesus so diabolically.

This relation of John to the synoptic narrative is very important for any historical judgment on the book, and its author. But the proper character, the nature of our writing is not made quite clear in this way, and it is before all needful to recognise this.

This is now the principal important result which theological labour has gained, that this gospel in its deepest core does not follow the design

of relating the life of Jesus, but of giving teaching concerning Him. This is indeed the true aim, evident on every page, which the author sets before him. The narrative must be regarded as the mere drapery of the teaching.

The very narrative, especially the miracles, shows us this in various ways. The miracles are intended to illustrate the superhuman, divine dignity of Jesus. For this reason are they related. If, for example, the resurrection of Lazarus is given, it is done for the purpose of illustrating the proposition: "I am the resurrection and the life," which follows. Or the feeding of the five thousand contains the teaching that "Christ is the bread of life." But the matter becomes much plainer still by the discourses and conversations in the gospel. Here the teaching of Christ which the author will proclaim is formally developed, and expounded in ever new shapes and forms.

Of course it is impossible to gain the right point of view so long as we disguise from ourselves the knowledge which is essential to the comprehension of these discourses. Briefly put, these discourses are the author's own work. The Synoptics have also probably here and there in some degree shaped the discourses of Jesus, but in the main they repeat the tradition. John also gives in his narrative a good deal of tradition, although in later form, but in the discourses at the most a few short sayings can be regarded as traditional.

How do we make good such an assertion? First of all the Johannine discourses of Jesus are in style, character, and content so different from the Synoptics, that we cannot believe that one and the same person spoke them. If Jesus discoursed as He speaks in John, then we may safely assert, He did not speak as the Synoptics make Him. But it is doubtless they who give us the right notion of the popular, crisp, striking method of Jesus. Secondly, the content of the Johannine discourses is of that kind that it already presupposes a long development of the Christian Church. This teaching of Christ which the gospel unfolds transcends even the utterances of Paul. The human personality of Jesus has almost quite disappeared; a divine being stands before us, who has existed from the beginning, and who has at its disposal the attributes of omnipotence and omniscience like God Himself. In other words, the discourses presuppose an elaborated dogma of Christ's nature. Thirdly, and this is a most striking instance, the First Epistle of John of our New Testament certainly originates from the same author as the gospel. If we compare the two, it is surprisingly plain that Jesus in the gospel speaks like the author in his epistle. The accordances are occasionally almost verbal. But the prologue, too, of the gospel sounds almost like a discourse. And still more. The discourse of John the Baptist, which stands in the third

chapter, is again quite similar to the discourses of Jesus. The necessary conclusion is: here only one person is speaking, the Evangelist.

If this view is right, then we can understand that here no real historical work lies before us, but a theological treatise. We might with some correctness say—the teaching of Paul concerning Christ has here, though in an advanced didactic stage, been formed into the mould of a sketch of Christ's life.

But still this does not explain what was the motive which induced the author to write such a book, and we find the key to this if, with the idea that the question is one of teaching, we combine a second point of view. I formulate it thus: This writing has the purpose of defending the Christian faith; it is of the nature of an apology, i.e. a defensive writing which has throughout definite opponents in view, and so it opens the series of numerous apologies which were written in the first centuries for Christendom.

The enemies which the author combats are, however, not the heathen, nor are they in my opinion heretics within Christianity. We can infer from this gospel that the Christianity of the time when the author writes has no longer any connection at all with Judaism. The work of Paul has borne fruit, the Church has rejected Judaism, which has become far more than in Paul's time an actual enemy, and at the same

time its rival. Judaism, however, not merely requites the enmity, it has hated the growing Christianity from the beginning. Now it hurls reproaches against Christians, and seeks to hurt them especially by attacking their faith in Christ. It maintained that Jesus was really not the Messiah because He must have been differently constituted; that it was ridiculous and blasphemous to call Him Son of God; that He possessed no divine power, but was a powerless human being.

Our gospel must have been written in a locality, presumably in Asia Minor, where this feud was violently inflamed, and that has moved the author, as said, beyond all else, to the composition of this writing, and given it its tendency to refute Jewish objections and invectives; and to provide his fellow-Christians with weapons ready to hand. This view is on the whole a recent one, but it is making victorious progress among scholars.

To adduce an actual proof of this view is of course impossible in this place. But some few remarks may serve to show that it is feasible. First of all, it strikes us as strange that Jesus in this gospel is so sharply antagonistic to the "Jews," as they are called; there is no mention of definite persons, even the Pharisees and scribes fall into the background. It is ever this general expression: "the Jews." That sounds strange to be a historical account. The author

so writes because by these "Jews" he has the Judaism of his time in his mind's eye. But the proper proof lies in the discourses themselves. The Jews say once to Jesus (x. 33): "We stone thee for blasphemy and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." In the real life of Jesus we cannot understand a speech of that kind, for it presupposes that Christ is in the supernatural sense, in the doctrinal sense, the Son of God. It is only in this way that the Jews could find blasphemy in this name. They start from the fact that there is only one God, and if a human being makes himself into a divine being, then it appears to them to be blasphemy. But now what Jesus subsequently says aims at demonstrating that Jesus, nevertheless, could bear the name of God and the Son of God, as may be shown from the Scriptures, which also designate men as gods. We have in this, then, the defence of the Evangelist. In many passages we note that the Jews said that Christ could not save Himself from death. To this the author answers with the idea that Christ quite voluntarily went to His death (xviii. 67). This tendency is especially plain in the words that are put into the mouth of Jesus (x. 18): "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself, and I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." This is so also in the case of the words addressed to Pilate: "Thou couldest have no

power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (xix. 11). The "Jews" adduced the treachery of Judas Iscariot—could such a disciple be chosen by one who was omniscient? The author makes answer to this by showing how Jesus repeatedly predicted this treachery (vi. 70; xiii. 18; xxi. ff.), and also by the fact that Jesus said: "I know well whom I have chosen" (xiii. 18). From his point of view the miracles are of special importance, as they are to him proofs of the omnipotence of the Christ, and he relates them as such. It is equally characteristic that John the Baptist is only honoured as a witness for Jesus. Altogether the gospel speaks throughout of witnesses and testimonies — quite conceivably; for in a case such as he is conducting against his opponents witnesses are needed. In this way the whole gospel is pervaded by references to this antagonism, and it is only when we pay regard to this in exposition that we can really understand his utterances.

Who was the author of this unique writing? It cannot possibly be the Apostle John, the beloved disciple of Jesus. Besides, the gospel nowhere asserts that this is the case. It certainly speaks of a disciple whom Jesus loved, who appears to be thought of as standing in some special relationship to the gospel, but it is still problematic whether John, the son of Zebedee, is meant. These questions as to what the gospel says about itself, and the disciple

whom Jesus loved, make up a special and by no means easy problem. I must pass this over, and can do so, since for the question whether the Apostle John wrote this gospel the result of such inquiry, whatever it may be, is not determinative. The decision that it cannot originate with the apostle is placed beyond doubt by internal evidence, the nature of the gospel itself. On this the whole of the scientifically impartial theological world is as good as united in opinion, and it has not unfrequently happened that specialists who in their younger years have believed that they could in whole or in part maintain the Johannine authorship have seen themselves compelled by the force of facts to change their conviction.

I believe that we have discovered by the investigations so far made a whole series of proofs on this question. Is it likely that the Apostle John not merely used the Synoptics, but developed their accounts in an unhistorical direction ? Is it likely that the Synoptics, not apostles, have preserved the words of Jesus, which bear the stamp of originality, and John has assigned to him discourses, the central idea of which is the Church dogma of Christ as the Son of God ? Is it likely that the eye-witness would present the intensified narratives of miracles, while those who were not eye-witnesses relate the simpler ones ? Would they depict the circumstances in Palestine more plainly than the apostle ? Is it likely that the

more graphic narrative of the Synoptics is the later, and the less graphic of John the older? And on the whole is it likely that this picture of Christ which this gospel paints and which manifests scarcely any human features; which is purely a picture of marvel; in which everywhere there shine the rays of omnipotence and omniscience; which everywhere lays stress on His divine origin is to be preferred historically to the human form which in the Synoptics is frequently veiled, but yet plainly shines out, with its prophetic weight and grandeur, and its sympathy with the despised, lost, and infirm?

No, here only one opinion is possible—there is quite an abundance of reasons for this—this work is the work of a later time, and dated before the beginning of the second century, at the very earliest the closing years of the first, is not conceivable. Certainly in this we place ourselves in contradiction to the judgment of the Church which has prevailed for so many centuries, and also with the opinion held by the Church even as early as the close of the second century. For it was then thought that John came from Palestine to Asia Minor, and laboured in a position of authority up to a great old age, and wrote his gospel towards the end of his life. How this tradition may be explained is a question not now to be entered on. I may still remark that investigation in general has often impugned the idea that the Apostle John lived so

long, and dwelt in Asia Minor. It is said, on the contrary, that John died early, like his brother James, the death of a martyr. The former tradition arose through a confusion with the other John, the so-called John the Presbyter, whose existence in Asia Minor does not admit of a doubt. For this assertion relevant reasons may be adduced. In fact, even in our Mark there stands a passage which appears to presuppose a martyr's death of the Apostle John. For when Jesus says to him, and to his brother: "You shall indeed drink the cup which I drink of," this prophecy, as others of the like kind, appears to have had its origin in the death by martyrdom which had already happened. Still this point remains undecided. The problem thus presented is a peculiar and complicated one which at all events has not yet been brought into full clearness. Far less can the recent hypothesis be regarded as proven which purports to find the author of the gospel in John the Presbyter.

The result is that this gospel can only claim to be of very little value for the knowledge of the actual life of Jesus, although there are portions of sound tradition found in it. But this is not the same as saying that it has no value at all. Its historical value is indeed quite considerable. It is a source of knowledge of the development of Church teaching of the first importance, and of the relation of Christianity to Judaism. And as a literary

product it is one of the most splendid creations of early Christianity. A Christian enthusiastic for his faith, and convinced of hitting off his Master's intentions and depicting Him correctly, has here clothed his lofty thoughts in the form of a narrative of Jesus, which gives these ideas a far greater impressiveness and liveliness than if he had put them forth in the form of an instruction or treatise, in the conviction that he is giving the mind of his Master and presenting a true portraiture of Him. Of course we must to-day assign to the much simpler and less theological writings of his predecessors, the Synoptics, a higher, I think, a far higher value. For surely Christendom has to thank them for the best that it possesses, the picture, although frequently obscured, of the human personality of Jesus, and the knowledge of a great portion of His words full of spirit and life, full of power, depth, and simplicity.

III

THE REMAINING BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE two groups of New Testament writings which I have so far treated, the thirteen epistles which bear the name of Paul and the four gospels, doubtless include the most important books of the New Testament. Nevertheless, the ten additional writings not yet discussed present for our consideration just as rich and interesting material. If we but to some extent want to exhaust it, it appears advisable to come to the point without digression, and all the more, as I have still to carry out a promise given at the beginning, and that is to sketch in brief outlines how the separate writings were gradually incorporated into a collection of canonical importance, into a New Testament canon.

The first book to which we have now to devote attention is to be the one which stands closest to the gospels, by its character as a narrative and also from its author, I mean THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, which undoubtedly is the work of the same person who wrote our third gospel, that of S. Luke.

ORIGIN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the last chapter I touched upon the fact that there were more than four gospels in existence, that this special literature of the gospel had rather a wider diffusion. The same thing is true of the Acts of the Apostles. The Greek title of the book means accurately acts or deeds of the apostles. Accordingly there were books entitled the Acts of Paul, of Peter, of Andrew, of Thomas, also produced under the name of "Travels" or "Miracles" of this or that apostle. In the Church these were frequently valued as edifying reading books, particularly with the less educated classes, on account of their miracles. In value as a source of information, not one of them can be even distantly set in comparison with our New Testament Acts of the Apostles. But was our Acts of the Apostles the first example of this sort? It is hardly safe to speak positively; it is not impossible that it had predecessors. Of course the sources which have been used do not quite give us the right to make this assertion.

However that may be, we may in any case assume that this class of literature of Acts of Apostles did not arise until there were already gospels in existence. It is to be regarded as a kind of pendant to the gospel or as a shoot from the gospel stock. Acts of Apostles were first written when the apostles were already surrounded with a halo of higher sanctity than was the case during their lifetime; when already a special

religious interest was taken in the persons and deeds of the apostles, who were looked upon as the classical witnesses of Christ and the classical representatives of Christianity, in other words, when the term apostle had already got a dogmatic colouring. To some extent the apostles now appear as men set to complete or continue the teaching of Christ. Then, so to speak, the history of the apostles is the completion and continuation of the gospel history, and the books which tell of the apostles are a kind of continuation of the books which relate of Christ, and at the same time presuppose them. The relationship of our Acts of the Apostles to the Gospel of Luke enables us precisely to understand the real nature of the relationship. There are two books, and yet at bottom only one, a twofold work, a building with stories. At the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles the author says: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus." In the "former treatise" he has spoken of Jesus, His life and teaching, and represents in this way the second book as a further part of his entire work.

The name "Acts of the Apostles" leads us to expect something different from what we actually find in the book. The majority of the apostles are scarcely named, and, apart from a few notices as to the rest, only two actually play a conspicuous part; in the first part Peter, in the second almost exclusively Paul. Besides them some others are

alluded to who do not properly belong to the apostolic circle: Stephen the first martyr, Philip the Evangelist, who was active in Samaria, and Barnabas, for a while the companion of Paul. So it has been supposed that the author was not intending to write a history of the apostles, and his plan then has been defined in various ways. For example, it has been said that in fact his design was to record the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem to the chief city of the world, Rome, for the book breaks off with the imprisonment of Paul in Rome. In this there is truth. It is certain that the author is conscious of relating a joyful history, a history of victory and triumph. But his special design is not suitably expressed by that statement. For how the Gospel came to Rome the author does not really relate, but only how Paul came to be there as prisoner. And in the first part of his work he relates much that has nothing directly to do with this spread of the Gospel, e.g. on the state of the Church in Jerusalem. An earlier phase of criticism sought to arrive at the solution by a different path. The critics who recognised their leader in the famous Tübingen professor Ferdinand Christian Baur considered that the author pursued in his whole work a definite aim, and this regulated his plan. His design, namely, was to reconcile and to conciliate the antagonism between the Jewish Christians and those Gentile Christians converted by the ministry of Paul,—an antagonism which

these learned professors considered to be extremely deep—and that he would accomplish this by making his picture of the apostle of the Jews, Peter, designedly similar to that of the apostle of the Gentiles, Paul. Appeal in support of this was made to the fact which in and for itself is correct, that is to say, that in the representation of Paul and Peter many resembling features are found. Both awaken the dead, both perform miracles in punishment, both have to combat a sorcerer, both are marvellously freed out of prison, and much more of the same sort. At present this idea is recognised as untenable. The whole method of the narrative of the Acts is much too simple and naive to be a book with this kind of design. And the marked similarities of the picture of Peter and Paul are not to be explained by any design, but are partly accidental, partly are to be traced to the fact that the author no longer had a clear knowledge of the difference of the two men, and so painted his pictures in the like colours.

Accordingly the name "Acts of the Apostles" is still quite the best designation of the character of the book. If the author relates in detail only of two apostles, this is to be explained, on the one hand, by the fact that it was just these two who were really of special importance, and on the other, that his traditions and sources only gave full information about these two—of the rest he himself had no further knowledge. And happily it did

not enter his mind to supply his lack of information by his own fables, like the authors of later Acts of Apostles. However, in one respect it is still possible to speak of a certain design in his method of treatment. The author seeks in his narrative to defend in various ways Christianity against the reproach of being a danger to the State. For instance, he emphasises the point how the Jews represent Paul and his associates as rebels, as agitators dangerous to the State, and how then the Roman officials testify to the innocence of the apostle and his companions. Nevertheless, this is only a subordinate purpose occasionally followed, and the character of the whole book is not defined by this statement.

In the Gospel of Luke we plainly recognise that the author has used different sources; his own statements point at that. It is natural to think that he acted similarly in his Acts of the Apostles, and investigation confirms this, at least to a certain degree. Very clearly does one source reveal itself in the second part of the work. In chapter xvi. and then again in chapters xx. and xxi., and finally in chapter xxvii. and in the beginning of chapter xxviii., there suddenly appears a change from the third person to the first, elsewhere always used of Paul and his companions, "*we* were going," "we" did that and the other, and indeed without any explanation of this change. Weighty reasons are adverse to

the idea that the author of the book was himself the eye-witness who speaks in these "we" sections. Then he must have here incorporated in his work the information of some source, and that so literally on the whole that he also adopted by an easy-going literary method the "we" itself found in the account. This "we" source can only originate in an actual companion of Paul's as witnessed by the remarkable vividness of the account, the accuracy with which the stages in the journeys and the localities are specified. The sketch itself, although it is not exactly to be regarded as a journal, which was filled up at the time and place, must have been made when the impression of the occurrences was still fresh to the author. It must have contained more than these few items, which do not form a really connected account. And thus there spontaneously arises the supposition which has been held by many, that the author drew from this source for other parts of chapter xvi. and onwards, but only more changed and less copiously.

In recent days investigation has been zealously seeking sources also for the first part. That the author also possessed such here is very easily credible, only the numerous attempts have in my opinion scarcely had a definite result as yet. We are not now in the position to separate the several constituents of the sources. And in no case can these sources or possibly oral traditions be put for value

alongside the "we" sections. Now this very question as to the sources leads us at once to the problem into which in the end almost all the other questions run up—how ought we to judge as to the historical value of the accounts which this book transmits to us?

The answer turns out to be very various in reference to individual parts and portions of the book. The discourses which the author ascribes to Peter, Paul, Stephen, and others are to be considered separately and by themselves as a matter of course. There is a special reason for that. They are of quite a different stamp from the discourses of Jesus in the synoptic gospels. These are evidently composed of transmitted sayings or even still smaller fragments. The discourses of the Acts of the Apostles are, on the contrary, connected remarks on definite ideas on the death, the resurrection of Jesus, and other subjects. The direct impression we gain at once tells us that these elaborate discourses cannot have been transmitted by memory. Nor have they even with traditions as their basis been further elaborated, at least not in the main. The question is rather one of the author's own material. This may be recognised by the different stylistic peculiarities which recur, and also by other tokens, as that quite the same manner of proof is put into the mouth of Paul as in other passages into that of Peter; or that Stephen again brings

forward Old Testament history in a wholly analogous way to that of a speech of Paul's. Now additions of that kind to speeches freely put together are quite intelligible from the literary usages of the period. That is to say, it is quite in accordance with the style of ancient historians occasionally to put speeches into the mouths of their heroes with which they are rather furnishing oratorical adornment for their recital than giving historical documents. The historian Livy and the Greek historian Thucydides are known to have done this. We cannot be surprised that our author, too, made use of the same plan. For his gospel has already shown him to be a man who was more familiar with the literary usages of his time than most of the other New Testament writers. These discourses of the Acts of the Apostles have accordingly their value, not because they instruct us in the ideas of Peter or Paul, but because they mirror the personal views of the author.

As far as concerns the proper historical accounts, the question of credibility stands essentially on a different footing as to the first twelve chapters to which the fifteenth belongs than the second part of the book.

A little reflection teaches that the notices on the beginnings of the Church in Jerusalem and on its first spread from Jerusalem are, to say the least, very incomplete. But what the author tells us shows in part the signs of being legendary.

It is also plain to be recognised that the author only possessed a very faint idea of the actual circumstances of the apostolic period. According to his account, e.g., Peter had, from the very beginning, recognised the designation of Christianity for the heathen, and their freedom from the law, with the same clearness as Paul. That is, however, not possible, for the Epistle to the Galatians teaches us unmistakably that Peter at first was far removed from the free attitude of Paul. At the same time this first part of the Acts of the Apostles still preserves a series of good and valuable accounts of which without this book we should know nothing—even if it is often only single notices, as, e.g., that Barnabas gave up his whole possessions for the good of the poor; that in Jerusalem seven—whose names are given—were appointed as guardians of the poor; that a Gentile Christian Church was first formed in Antioch—the like traditions endure the sharpest test, and if the history of Stephen is probably strongly depicted after the pattern of the passion history of Jesus, there is yet at the base a historical core. Stephen really was the first martyr for his faith, and his murder gave rise to a dispersion of the believers in Jesus who carried the Gospel into wider regions.

From the historical point of view, the second part of the work is, on the whole, to be estimated far higher, which tells us of the journeys and fortunes of Paul. Of course also here are found

parts which are marked out from the remainder in which the facts are no longer very vividly presented to view, or which betray a certain mechanical method of presentation. But in the main it is impossible to overestimate the value of this part. It is only this connected narrative that really enables us to arrange the scattered notices in the Pauline epistles in the places to which they belong, and to approximately put them in chronological order. The "we" sections do, without question, form the climax of the whole. For instance, the description of the voyage of Paul and of the shipwreck before his arrival in Rome is a real masterpiece of exact description, connecting fact with fact, and giving evidence in every detail of personal observation. He who in a quiet hour meditates deeply on these chapters xxvii. and xxviii. will recognise that without difficulty. Besides, here Paul, the great apostle, comes very close to the reader in a way that is striking and sympathetic. We gain the distinct impression that he is the only one who in the great danger which threatens the vessel and its crew does not lose his head, who by the superior style of his bearing, by his repose and reasonableness, makes a striking impression even on the heathen crew.

The author does not give his name in this book any more than in the third gospel. Tradition calls him Luke, the fellow-traveller and disciple

of Paul. There is yet no united opinion prevailing among critics as to whether this tradition is correct. Not a few judge that a confidential companion of Paul could not very well have written much that is in this book, since it is too remote from the actual occurrences. It is very conceivable that Luke wrote the " we " sections, and that this explains the tradition which assigns to him the authorship of the book. The Acts of the Apostles was at any rate written somewhat later than the Gospel of Luke. Accordingly from this, as well as from other indications, it was scarcely composed before the year 100, and also not much later.

Next to the Acts of the Apostles we rank the eight epistles which the New Testament contains besides the genuine and the unauthentic epistles of Paul. Among these latter the greatest and in many respects the most important is the EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS, and it must at all events be taken quite apart by itself. The principal content of this treatise is theoretical and didactic in style. The author's purpose is to exhibit the glory of the revelation in Christ, the greatness and dignity of the new Covenant. This he does by bringing in for the purpose of comparison a store of Old Testament ideas and institutions. Moses, the Old Testament priesthood, especially the high priesthood, the sacrifices of the Old Testament, and other matters are discussed, and everywhere

is it shown how these are only shadows and types of all that was realised in Christ. He is the true sacrifice. He is the true High Priest, the eternal High Priest who is the author of eternal redemption. It is not to be wondered at that to the modern reader these comparisons appear exceedingly strange, and frequently also difficult to understand. For all these sacrificial usages, these statements concerning the high priesthood which were then used for the explanation and illustration of the Christian religion, themselves need explanation and illustration now, because for the modern reader they are drawn from too remote a source. However, these almost learned disquisitions which the author gives on the relation of the old to the new Covenant are not the only things that the epistle contains. It is also not wanting in powerful practical piety, as, e.g., we may see in reading what the author says on Christian firmness and patience or on tribulation as a divine discipline and education.

The superscription which was later added or rather prefaced " to the Hebrews " is calculated to lead the reader astray. The treatise is in no way destined for Palestinians, nor was it written merely for Jewish Christians. Appearance certainly seems in favour of this, because there is so much said of Jewish worship. But in recent days it is beginning to be recognised that, as a matter of fact, nothing whatever points to born Jewish

readers. For the author in no way speaks of the Jewish arrangements and usages of his time, and is entirely silent about the Temple; he has rather solely before his mind the statements of the Old Testament scriptures, and among the Gentiles there was an existent interest in these. But if he warns against apostasy, it does not follow that he is supposing that his readers were inclined to return to Judaism; he has rather simply before his eye that which the times of persecution in which the author lived usually brings, namely, the danger of giving up and denying the Christian faith.

The person of the author is unknown to us. In the East at an early period Paul was regarded as the author, but for many reasons he cannot have written this epistle. A Western tradition, which is demonstrated as existing about the year 200, names Barnabas the author. This is, of course, only a conjecture, and, as it seems to me, not a probable one. Luther conjectured Apollos, mentioned in the 1st Corinthians and the Acts of the Apostles. Others named Luke or Silas. All pure hypotheses. Very lately Harnack would make plausible that Priscilla, frequently mentioned in the New Testament, was the authoress. But this idea has met with no approval, it has even been refuted; in fact the treatise bears not the stamp of a lady's letter. We must here be satisfied to be ignorant. But so much may be absolutely asserted of the author that he must have been a highly

educated Christian. Not merely on account of his extraordinary acquaintance with the Old Testament and the masterly way in which he uses it, but also by reason of his style and his whole performance. The Epistle to the Hebrews exhibits the best and most elegant Greek of all the books of the New Testament. There are also found plain indications that the author had a literary and oratorical training. We may well suppose that he laboured as a distinguished teacher in a church, and edified believers with his discourses. But there is something more that we can assert of him with certitude, and it is just that which has a peculiar interest for theological science.

There existed, so to speak, in that day a twofold sort of Judaism. The one is a Judaism such as is represented by the Pharisees and scribes of the gospels, and a Judaism bound firmly to the law of ceremonies and the numerous additions thereto, made by the Rabbins, thoroughly pervaded by the idea of the election of Israel, and so far national, which had its head-quarters in Palestine. Besides and outside this in the Diaspora there had arisen another Judaism, and one in which its peculiarities were softened and strongly modified; which, properly speaking, had only a belief in one God, in morality, and the recognition of the Old Testament, in common with genuine Judaism, but otherwise widely open to the influences which emanated from Greek culture, such as then pre-

vailed in the world, and which therefore was usually distinguished as Hellenistic Judaism. Alexandria was the most important seat of the propagation and cultivation of this Hellenistic Judaism, then a centre of culture of the very first rank. And here dwelt approximately at the time of Jesus the Jewish political writer and philosopher Philo, and in him the philosophical ideas of the Greeks were blended with the elements of Judaism in a particularly unique and characteristic way.

We can now plainly see that the author of our Epistle to the Hebrews had breathed the air of this Alexandrine philosophy or theology, and had also probably read the works of Philo. The speciality of his treatise consists partly in his uniting the ideas thus derived with his Christian faith. Certainly his ideas are not of themselves properly philosophic, his faith is, as a matter of fact, essentially the faith of contemporary Christians. But the colour of his thoughts shows Alexandrine influence. For example, he makes quite similar assertions to those of Philo of the divine logos of the " cosmic reason " which, so to speak, forms the bridge between God and the world. The view that the author wrote his epistle for the Christians of Jerusalem has of late, as already intimated, been quite given up; the majority think that it was designed for Christians in Rome. I do not share this opinion, but rather

am disposed to think that this treatise is not a letter at all, but in fact a learned and edifying treatise. It is only the last chapter that is epistolary in form—there is no address at all—but even here, in my judgment, the epistolary ending is merely formal, merely the wording in the same way as we have noted in the unauthentic epistles of Paul. At the end there is a remark on the freeing of Timothy and also of that of the author himself. These statements and also a few other points lie very close to the thought of the imprisonment of Paul. I am disposed on that account to conjecture that the author desired to close his epistle in the style of Paul. The date is to be put at the earliest in the years A.D. 85–95. It cannot fall later, since an epistle which dates in the years 96–8, of the Roman Church to the Corinthian, which we still possess under the name of the First Epistle of Clement, made use of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The seven minor epistles, which, in addition to those already spoken of, are still to be examined, form a group within the New Testament, and are usually classed together under a common name. To employ, first of all, the usual names, we are concerned here with the two epistles of Peter, the Epistle of James, that of Jude, and the three epistles of John. The common designation of these is the CATHOLIC EPISTLES. We must not here think of "Catholic" teaching or the

"Catholic" Church. The name rather affirms—catholic, of course, means universal—that those letters were not addressed to an individual church, but to the whole Church, or the professed title "Catholic" is intended to describe a circular letter.

In fact a glance at the opening salutations of these letters shows us that by this title "Catholic" a real peculiarity at least of most of these letters is specified. The Epistle of James, for instance, is directed to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, that means to the whole of Christendom spread through the world. Similarly general are the salutations in the Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude; the First Epistle of Peter enumerates in the greeting at least a multitude of great provinces in which his readers were to be found. Only in the case of the three epistles of John are the circumstances special. The First Epistle of John has no address at all, but might on that account easily appear to be a circular letter; the second of John is directed to an "elect lady" and her children; the third to a certain Gaius. For the present we will exclude these three Johannine letters from consideration. In the other four we, in any case, easily recognise that the inclusiveness of the greeting is not merely an external mark of the letters, but at once gives us a key to the contents. Letters which are addressed to the whole of Christendom, or to pro-

vinces greater than the German empire, could never be delivered, in other words, they are not real letters intended for a definite public, but writings which only assume the form of letters, and therefore, so to speak, literary epistles, addresses, sermonic expositions, or, like 1 Peter, pamphlets in the style of letters. To this idea corresponds the content of the epistles. The genuine letters of Paul show everywhere a great abundance of allusions to concrete circumstances, definite persons, special occurrences. These are not present here. Only matters are touched on throughout which are of interest to the whole of Christendom, whether the uprise of false teachers, or the appearance of dangers such as the persecution of Christians brought with it. We have already made acquaintance with such treatises, e.g. in the Epistle to the Hebrews itself and also in that to the Ephesians, in the epistles to Timothy and Titus.

This peculiarity of the documents, this certainty that they are not properly letters, leads at once to the further presumption that all that belongs to the epistolary form is in fact mere form, in other words, that they do not really originate with the apostolic men whose names they bear. They are pseudonymous productions; in this, in fact, all unprejudiced experts are to-day agreed. Only we must here again recollect that such pseudonymous authorship, according to the notions of the

period, is not simply to be put under the category of forgery. We have, in fact, already seen that this represents for that period a widespread usage, which is only to be judged according to its special ideas; the authors themselves, however, were not of the opinion that they were guilty of forgery when they published their treatises under the name of Peter or John, and in this way assured for them a heightened respect. If we are not wholly deceived, the fact itself that actual epistles of Paul were then extant, and spread quickly in Christendom, was the exciting cause why also later Christians began to address the Church in the same form as the great apostle had done.

Closer examination of the various epistles abundantly confirms the idea that the names of the authors which stand at the commencement do not inform us of the actual authors. This opinion very early and most commonly prevailed with reference to the SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER. This epistle was written in order to oppose those people who maintained that the prophesied and expected return of Christ had not happened, that everything had remained as it had been in the times of the fathers; and that it was therefore folly to count further on the second advent of the Lord. This certainly plants us in a later period, for in the early days the hope in the coming of Christ was vivid. To this must be added that a chapter of this epistle is almost

entirely a copy and repetition of the short Epistle of Jude. The Epistle of Jude is a sharp attack on certain false teachers, in fact, the Gnostics with whom we have already met in the Pastoral Epistles of Timothy and Titus—a tendency of thought which threatened to dissolve Christendom, and was mingled with all kinds of strange speculations which in addition also endangered Christian morality, maintaining, as it did, that to those who have true " knowledge "—this is the meaning of the name Gnostic—all is permissible, whatever he may do or allow. This Gnosticism was the most dangerous enemy of the Church probably since the beginning of the second century, and all the more dangerous as it did not stand quite outside the Church, but raised the claim to the name of Christian, since it frequently had its roots firmly fixed in the soil of the Church. The conflict with it was for long decades the chief trouble of the Church. The short Epistle of Jude had its origin in this conflict, and the probability is that it was not written before the years A.D. 110 to 140. If the Second Epistle of Peter copied it, then it must have originated somewhat later. In favour of this another supporting fact lies before us: this epistle knows of a great collection of epistles of Paul, and from the manner in which the author speaks of these epistles we recognise that he already sees in them a kind of sacred scripture. Accordingly its

composition before the year 150 is rather improbable, and very possibly the epistle falls somewhat later. We have here, therefore, most likely the latest portion of the New Testament before us, perhaps about 100 years after the earliest, the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, was extant. It is worthy of note that this epistle most clearly and diligently seeks to awaken the impression that Peter was actually the author. For example, the writer asserts that he was an eye-witness of the transfiguration of Christ.

The FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER is certainly older, and, we may add, a writing of far higher religious value. The most important fact for our knowledge of this epistle is that the author was living in a period when Christians were severely threatened from outside. A cloud has gathered over their heads, they are persecuted on account of the name of Christian, and they have no mere private scorn, calumny, hostility to fear from the heathen; but, as we can plainly recognise from the epistle, the heathen government has interfered, hales Christians before its tribunals, and threatens them with penal consequences. It is this situation that gives to his whole writing its colouring, and pervades nearly every sentence. The author, in view of sufferings, points to the glorious hope of the Christian, which promises for this present light affliction a great recompense; but he is not content with that:

above all he feels deeply concerned to remind his brethren that it is incumbent on them to disarm their foes by a blameless walk, and so convince them of their wrong-doing. Besides, they are to show to the authorities all lawful obedience, so as not to irritate them. The author thus appears as a man who, however firmly he holds to his faith, judges his period with true common sense, and knows how to advise the Christians of his day really for their best interests; as a man in whom the power of faith and hope and moral conviction stand in fine balance. Now a persecution of Christians so general and widespread did not occur in the lifetime of Peter. On this account certainly, but of course also for other reasons besides, Peter cannot be the author. A period of persecution such as the epistle presupposes cannot be shown to have occurred until the last days of the reign of the Emperor Domitian, who reigned from A.D. 81–96, and then subsequently for the reign of the more famous Trajan from A.D. 98–117. The First Epistle of Peter was probably written in one of these two reigns.

The EPISTLE OF JAMES exhibits an essentially different character. The author's personality recedes into the background. The only thing which reminds us that the pamphlet purports to be an epistle is the greeting and the frequently recurring address, "Brethren." There is even no epistolary conclusion. As to content, we are

dealing with a homiletical exposition, carried on in epigrammatic form; the central idea is that Christianity must be proved by action and good works, and that a faith in which this proof is wanting is only a vain and hollow pretence. Luther judged this epistle unfavourably, and frankly designated it an "epistle of straw." This judgment is anyhow unfair; Luther measured the epistle one-sidedly by Paul's doctrine of justification by faith; and as it does not represent this teaching, as some of its utterances are even not to be agreed therewith, he was out of sympathy with it. We cannot, however, fail to recognise that the author proclaims in a thoroughly worthy and frequently even nervous and pithy way a Christianity that is practical. On the other hand, Luther was quite right when he supposed that this epistle was not written by an apostle, but by some good pious Christian man. One of those we know by the name of James cannot in fact be the author, neither one of the two apostles of that name, nor the more famous brother of the Lord, who, with the highest probability, is meant in the greeting. The reasons of this are not few. For a dweller in Jerusalem the author certainly writes much too excellent Greek. But it is possible to show that he had already used the First Epistle of Peter. Further, he is not really opposing Paul himself, but probably people who excused the defects of their morality by his

teaching on justification; and of the law of freedom he speaks in a way which is related with that of writers of the second century. Thus he may belong to the second century. He probably falls in the period between A.D. 110 and 140.

In the beginning of the second century, but probably somewhat earlier than the Epistle of James, fall, finally, THE THREE EPISTLES OF JOHN. On these only a few remarks. The first and longest epistle is, without doubt, by the author of the Gospel of John, and the two shorter ones also apparently. This is at once saying that the Apostle John was not the author. The first epistle contains many beautiful thoughts, as that "God is love" and that he only participates in the love of God who loves his brother and keeps the commandments of God. At the same time he does in no wise merely preach these truths generally, but it is in a certain sense just as much a polemical treatise as, according to our former statement, the Gospel of John is. Only the gospel is directed against opposing Judaism. The epistle has, on the other hand, to do with false teachers within Christianity, and, in fact, likewise with Gnostics; in particular with such who were maintaining that the Christ, who descended from on high, had not really appeared in the flesh, and was only seemingly identical with the historical person Jesus Christ. The epistle does not bear the name

of the author. On the other hand, in both the smaller epistles of John, strikingly similar in style, there stands as designation of the other: "the elder or the Presbyter." Many find in this the Presbyter John spoken of above who lived in Asia Minor, and ascribe to him both the gospel and also these epistles as well; others again think that also here the epistolary form is only formal.

Besides these three epistles and the Gospel of John there is in the New Testament another fifth Johannine writing, bearing at its top the name of John, without designating it, of course, as a work of the *apostle*, which it is also not likely that it can be. But, according to its whole manner, style as well as content, it is extraordinarily different from the other writings of John, so that to the majority it passes for a matter of fact that it does not originate with the same author: I mean the REVELATION OF JOHN, the last book of our New Testament Canon, the last also which we have to dwell upon.

It is a work of the very greatest peculiarity, as every reader immediately feels; not a single one of the other books of the New Testament has any close affinity with it. Only single portions of the gospels, which refer to the last things, and some passages of the epistles of Paul breathe the same spirit. But even they are in their main content to be distinguished from the Revelation. The chief impression for a modern reader is that

of a strange and wild fancifulness. Here appears imagery which strikes us as so unintelligible and curious as nothing else in the New Testament;—of a dragon which with its tail "draweth a third part of the stars of heaven," and which persecutes a heavenly woman, who has borne a son; of horses with women's hair, of locusts which rise out of an abyss; of an angel who swallows a book; of the son of man who has seven stars in his right hand; of a beast which rises up out of the sea, with ten crested horns on his head and seven heads, of which one is mortally wounded. Luther said: "My soul cannot reconcile itself to this book," and to most readers of to-day that is spoken from the heart. Only isolated glorious sayings will they except, such as, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: Yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (xiv. 13), and in addition, perhaps, a greater section, the seven epistles to the churches of Ephesus, Sardis, Laodicea, etc., which the prophet asserts to have received from the risen Christ by dictation, and in which in praise or blame a judgment on these churches and their work is pronounced (chaps. ii. and iii.). Nay, we may say without exaggeration that, except in the early days, this book has always been one for which its readers felt little sympathy, and theologians least of all. Only for the sects it has ever been a favourite book, especially for those who looked for signs of the end of the world;

and altogether for those Christians whose piety assumed fanatical forms, or to whom the mysteriousness of this picture-world afforded the welcome nourishment for their fancy. Historical inquiry has, of course, for long devoted a lively interest to it; it needs must feel compelled and incited to try to penetrate its meaning, in all its many dark places and enigmas, and in the last centuries it has expended in this way much trouble and ingenuity, and has indeed reached something real. Certainly to-day we are still far away from understanding all details, and also the book as a whole still conceals many enigmas. But if there is any point on which honest inquiry brings forth fruits, it is to be found here. To-day we are in the position in some measure to bring this remarkable book nearer to the intelligence of lay folk, and, as I believe, to make it even more valuable. I can, of course, here only attempt to develop some foundation principles which are of quite special importance for understanding it.

Of fundamental importance is first of all the view that this book, little as it has its like within the New Testament, in truth is not after all absolutely unique. It, too, belongs to a distinct species of literature, and one particularly widespread, and a class which has its offshoots in many centuries. This had its rise in the sphere of Judaism as the offspring, so to speak, of genuine Israelitish prophecy; a child which of course

does not exhibit the grand growth of the parent, and, in many respects, leaves behind the impression of artificiality and degeneration, but which yet has preserved somewhat of the old prophetic spirit. The first book of this family, the first apocalypse (that is to say " revelation "), that we possess is the Book of Daniel, which in the Old Testament is reckoned among the prophets (a class to which it does not properly belong), and which did not originate until the years 167 to 165 B.C., but which in any case was of great influence for the whole of the succeeding apocalyptic literature, and on which, for example, our New Testament apocalyptic author has been nourished. After this there are works like the Book of Enoch, the Ascension of Moses, the so-called Fourth Book of Ezra, the Apocalypse of Baruch, and others. This kind of literature is, then, as it were, directly continued in Christianity. Our apocalypse is again not the only single example of this kind; at a very early period the apocalypse of Peter was famous, of which a few years ago a greater fragment was again discovered, and lastly the products of this literature stretch far into the middle ages. What is the purpose of these books? what do they contain? The name Apocalypse or Revelation gives us a direct hint. They are intended to impart knowledge of hidden things, of heavenly mysteries. To this appertain many various things, e.g. even

questions that concern the creation of the world; but quite in the foreground stand the secrets of the future. And here it is immediately clear that they are really religious needs which find expression in these books. Many "Revelations" certainly give us the impression that their only design was the contentment of that religious curiosity, which would like to lift the veil from all kinds of things of which man can know nothing. But the real kernel is of a really nobler kind. These books were for the most part written with a feeling of severe pressure, and of a comfortless present. The oppression of the people of Israel by heathen potentates, the attack on all that was sacred to it, lies like a burden on the soul, and so their yearning hastened on to a better future, a future of which the ancient prophets prophesied; this they depict, this they seek to interpret; its nearness they endeavour to determine. For they believe that a transformation of things and a mighty interference of God were at hand. The loadstar is the belief in the faithfulness of God, and in the truth of His ancient promises, and thus the soul of the author, as that of the reader, experiences a religious exaltation in these prospects. Along with this content there exist quite distinct formal peculiarities. Above all things the preference for a mysterious, half-veiled, half-revealing kind of speech, for a peculiar kind of picture-language, which shall

both stimulate and satisfy the interest of the reader. That the communications are made in the form of a vision belongs in particular to the clothing of the ideas. The author poses as a seer, he views hidden things under the form of symbolism, or tells how an angel showed him or revealed or explained this or that. Certain numbers of obscure character from ancient prophets are interpreted, new numbers are added, and thus the answer is attempted to the question, " Lord, how long ? " From all this we see that it is a kind of artificial form which this style of writing exhibits. Not every one can write thus, there belongs to it some sort of study, a certain learning, an acquaintance with the world of prophecy, with the formation and interpretation of visions.

Such a book is our Apocalypse of John. He who knows the Jewish apocalypses sees at the first glance its consanguinity with them. Nay, a good bit of Judaism is found in it, and it is in this sense the most Jewish writing of the New Testament, just as the half-barbaric Greek points out the author as a Christian Jew. Meanwhile it is now above all necessary to put the question : What, then, is the special purpose of this Apocalypse ? or is there nothing at all special, except, perhaps, that it merely adds some Christian colouring to the picture of the future set in Jewish form ? No, there is no doubt that, with all its dependency on proto-

types, and with all its relationship to them, it is a work which, on its part, has its own point of view. That we recognise if we describe the situation out of which it arose.

The Apocalypse depicts in good part the things which shall precede the end, the advent of the millennial kingdom, one may say the drama of the last distress and tribulation. This distress is portrayed as dreadful, but in the background there rises the figure of the Conqueror Jesus, who will triumph over all His enemies; the picture of the New Jerusalem, the city with the golden streets in which the Messiah will then reign. We see the glance of the seer grasps with true ardour this coming time. "And, behold, I come quickly," it is said of Jesus (xxii. 12), and the author gives at the conclusion of the book, as an echo of this saying, the yearning, heartfelt prayer: "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus." This burning hope of a sudden change of things is explained by the fact that the author writes when Christianity has to endure persecution to the death, when martyrdom threatens it. The author so regards the situation,—the whole of Christianity has to face martyrdom. That is a proof that it was not written before the Emperor Domitian, but apparently under him; the book was most likely produced in the nineties of the first century. In this situation the seer writes to comfort his brothers, he

desires before all things to strengthen them, so that they may remain firm in their faith. He preaches patience and faithfulness to them in his whole book. He enkindles their ardour through the glorious things that he says of the martyrs. He depicts them as conquerors. They are they who have " come out of great tribulation," arrayed in white shining garments; they carry palms in their hands (vii. 9). He speaks of the promises which beckon to him who endures to the end.

So regarded does not the book become immediately more humanly intelligible? Do we not feel how the mighty power of faith speaks out of it? Do we not understand why the author looks so wistfully for the end? Now he sees the time of the final trouble has broken out. Are not many of the sayings of the book thus filled with a much more vigorous import? " Be thou faithful unto death, then I will give to thee the crown of life " (ii. 10). That is a word which more deeply impresses us when we know that death is no mere phrase, but is actually threatened.

But besides, we comprehend in this way another side of the book, the glow of hate which speaks out of it, hatred of the Roman empire. This hate, too, is an heirloom of Judaism, but it is afresh enkindled by the situation of Christianity. For Rome, and at its head the emperor, shows itself as the foe of Christianity, and persecutes it

to the death. And it punishes not merely the confession of Christ, but it seeks to seduce Christians to something which in the eye of the seer is the greatest of horrors, that is, to the worship of the emperor's image. That was at that time really the requirement. Oriental rulers had long made themselves objects of religious veneration. That cult had propagated itself in the Roman empire; the so-called Emperor-worship was a part of the Roman State religion, and was specially cultivated in Asia Minor, where our book originated. So that the author now sees in the Roman kingdom and in its emperor the foe of God, the truly anti-Christian power, the " beast which rises out of the sea " and " blasphemes the name of the Most High," but is itself supplicated by men, and so, according to his opinion, the time of antichrist has come which must precede the reign of Christ, and he does not shun saying as much (intelligible enough, even in his metaphors) to his readers. The Apocalypse is a consolatory and warning treatise for Christians, and, at the same time, a most violent polemic against the Roman State.

If thus the whole of the book breathes actual life, yet on the other hand the author did not simply write it down from the bottom of his heart, in an off-hand way; it is rather, for all that, a product of apocalyptic learning and art. And here again the question emerges how, then, this whole peculiar symbolism of the book is to be taken.

Most persons will think that the author simply gave free course to his fancy, and invented all himself, and even theologians have for the most part accepted this. However, that is not a practical solution. Even human imagination is bound by laws, and here they appear to be wanting. Besides, the author without doubt believes in his own prophecies. How is that explicable if he gave himself up to the arbitrary play of his own fancy? It has been supposed that we can get to the bottom of the matter as soon as we interpret everything by definite occurrences. This is certainly possible in some passages, and those in particular where the Roman empire and the emperor, the beast with the horns and heads, is concerned. But in most cases these attempts miscarry. It is not until recent days that we have here arrived at definite knowledge. Especially Professor Gunkel has the great merit of having paved the way. He has recognised that in all this symbolism old and often quite ancient traditions are incorporated. The individual apocalyptic writer does not as a rule invent his matter, but he passes on these traditions, alters them, makes additions of his own, but in the main he draws out of sources of older knowledge, and opinion of future things in which he on his part reverences divine wisdom and prophecy. This makes clear why it is that this symbolism is for the most part so unintelligible. It originally meant something definite,

and then lost this significance, and notwithstanding this is again carried forward with another meaning. Let us speak more definitely. The symbolism of apocalyptic writers was already extant in Judaism; but the Apocalypse contains much which cannot originally have been produced on the soil of Judaism, because it, properly speaking, contradicts its religious ideas. It thus appears that certain things have their final origin, quite apart from Judaism, in heathen religions; and in particular in the Babylonian religion, as well also as the Persian. Certain mixed forms which arose from them are also of importance. I give an example or two. The author says at the outset (i. 4): "Grace and peace be with you from him who is and from him who was and from him who is to come, and from the seven spirits which are before the throne, and from Jesus Christ." What does he mean by the "seven spirits"? That is primarily not intelligible according to Christian ideas. But further we read of seven angels, seven lamps, seven lampstands, seven stars which are the eyes of God. That, to begin with, is obscure. But it is easily recognisable that this Christian number seven is related to the number seven which Judaism recognises in speaking of the seven archangels. These seven archangels are most likely to be the seven spirits. But how did Judaism come by its seven archangels? These were taken over by it, and in fact they were originally

the seven planets which among the Babylonians were looked upon as gods. In Judaism the reality of their existence was not called in question, but gods could not for them exist alongside the one God, so they were reduced to the position of archangels before God's throne. The author of the Apocalypse took this over, but at the same time it is clear that the Babylonian idea influenced him in other ways besides. That these seven spirits are found alongside seven torches, lamps, seven eyes of God, which, as it were, look down from heaven, is at once explicable from the fact that they were originally the planets. Not that the author still knew this origin of his metaphors, or that he himself had the intention of speaking of them as such. But we now understand how it happens that he uses this peculiar imagery. He owes it to a tradition propagated through many generations.

In chapter xii. a woman is spoken of who is *in the sky* clothed with the sun, and under her feet the moon, and a diadem of twelve stars on her head. This woman gives birth to a child, which then is persecuted by a dragon. By the child the author understands the Messiah. The woman, therefore, was his mother. But how did any one even with the boldest imagination come to depict Mary as a woman in the sky, and put her alongside the sun and moon and stars ? This metaphor points to the fact that we have here

to do with a mythological idea. The woman is a celestial goddess, and the dragon is likewise a mythological creature. At the bottom of this there originally lies an ancient Oriental story of the gods, and we can trace such stories. These have come to the author by tradition, and in fact through the channel of Judaism, and he has then given to this material an interpretation which was originally quite alien from it, and which helps him to express his own religious ideas. It may also be shown that the representation of the heavenly Jerusalem had originally a mythological idea at its base. Heaven itself is conceived of as a city of the gods. Consequently, for instance, the idea that the city is equal in height, in length, and breadth; and therefore also the idea of golden resplendent streets which run through it, or also of a stream which flows through the midst of it, which, in fact, is the "Milky Way." This method of explanation helps us really to understand, it shows us how to comprehend much of the symbolism of the Apocalypse, while it teaches us to recognise its source.

Lastly, one more point may be mentioned. A theological student some years ago made the discovery that portions of the Apocalypse must have originally been written by a Jewish author, and only sparingly altered by our author. From about that time and onward the sources of the Apocalypse have been diligently investigated.

And in this way one hypothesis has followed on another. And the attempt has been made to prove that the final author merely put together different works. But he was not a mere editor; in spite of its variegated character, the whole work is too much of a unity. The connection will of course remain that he has in this book adopted and worked over, here quite ancient, and there less ancient sources, and in particular also Jewish elements.

Taken altogether so much will, I hope, become plain, that this book contains for the expert the most interesting problems, and that it must also be worth the layman's attention, on account of the energy of the faith with which the author in a period of the severest distress seeks to strengthen Christianity and vivify its hopes.

IV

THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

MY final task is to show in some brief words at least how these twenty-seven writings, whose origin we have followed, grew together into a unity, forming the New Testament Canon, i.e. into a book which came to be treasured as the chief rule of Christian faith, and the Christian life, and was regarded as the inspired word of God.

The beginnings of a collected New Testament are perhaps to be set about the year A.D. 150. Previously to this the Church did not possess any New Testament, and had no expectation that it would hereafter come. It does not follow that this earliest period until A.D. 150 is without importance for the origin of the Canon; it is rather a time in which its existence was gradually being prepared for.

We must first of all ask, what were the standards which existed in the beginning for the life and faith of the churches, what the authority which they recognised, on which they leaned, and to which they appealed on debated points?

THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

First of all must be mentioned the Old Testament, the Scripture, as it was called, or the Holy Scriptures. The Old Testament passed quietly over into Christianity. The Church was, therefore, so to speak, born in possession of a written authority. Since the Church came forth from the womb of Judaism, that is really easily intelligible. Gentile Christians received the Old Testament from Jewish Christians, and held it in the same reverence; and belief in its infallibility was from the very first an important feature of Christianity. The Old Testament remained in part in Christianity what it had previously been to the Jews, the great book of devotion, the book of divine practical teaching for life and morals, the book of religious truth. But it is more important to note that the book in another respect essentially changed its significance. The chief aspect under which Christianity regarded it became more and more that of prophecy. All was taken—not merely the prophetical books, but also the law, and the Psalms as a collection of prophecies of Christ and the "last time" that arrived when He came. With this interpretation the Old Testament became as it were a Messianic apocalyptic work.

Along with the origin of the Church there arose another authority, the words of Jesus. At first, however, we have not to do with written gospels, but with the handing down of the sayings of

Jesus by free oral tradition. From Paul we can see how he decides certain questions of Church life with these words of the Master. But they had, generally speaking and to begin with, their essential importance as rules of life, while for questions of faith they were not prominent. These words of Jesus were, of course, in the early days still quite in flux; a firmly fixed text as in the Old Testament did not yet exist.

In addition to these examples, we can name a third—there were, so to speak, living authorities in the Church, that is, the men in whom they saw the Spirit of God working, and in particular the "prophets" who foretold the future, and, so to speak, went about as travelling apocalyptic seers. It was believed that what they said, particularly in their ecstasies, was inspired by the Spirit.

All this is true of the earliest days. But when Christianity became conscious that it already had a past, then a fourth authority arose, that is, the apostles. Originally they were not dogmatic authorities, but they soon grew to be so, and then took the position of representatives of the true doctrine of Christ, and, at the same time, as the deciding warrants of it. The twelve apostles are mostly looked upon as a homogeneous body. It is not their writings, though, which are concerned to begin with. They represent an unwritten and, on that account, still indeterminate authority.

Evidently we have in these facts certain germinal elements of a later New Testament. We feel that the development tends to a special valuation of the gospels, on the one, and of the apostolic writings on the other hand. At the moment when the gospels became the depositaries of the tradition of Christ's life, they were, of course, first of all only the receptacles in which the costly jewel was stored away, but we feel that finally the receptacle would even be regarded as the jewel. On the other hand, the apostolical authority could not always remain as indeterminate as it was at the commencement. As soon as an apostolic literature existed, it was bound to be treasured extraordinarily. The high respect for Christian prophets further proclaims for the future a special esteem for prophetical, i.e. apocalyptic writings. Finally, one thing more requires to be emphasised, that while the Old Testament was treated with reverence, there existed from the first a guiding line along which the whole subsequent development must unconsciously proceed; that is to say, when once Christian writings generally began to enjoy a higher value than others, the goal was not reached until they were placed on a complete equality with the Old Testament, and they were deemed as equally infallible and inspired with it.

Meanwhile the period up to A.D. 150 is still in another respect a time of preparation. Before

Christian writings were treasured as canonical, and distinguished above others, they must be collected. Such collections were made in this period in various ways, although we know proportionately little on the subject. Certainly the epistles of Paul were collected somewhat early. In the case of the gospels we must assume that originally each church when it possessed a gospel at all had only one. In time this would become known to other churches. How exactly those four gospels which we have were brought together has not yet really been explained. Besides, the collection and interchange was not merely a matter of private activity. A main point is rather that Christian writings began to be read in divine service, and were provided for this very purpose. For this reason men naturally and gradually grew accustomed to put a special value on these writings.

Alongside this first period we place a second, which reached from about A.D. 150 to 200. This is the period during which the main trunk of the New Testament was developed, and therefore in this respect the most important period.

We have indeed testimonies from about A.D. 150 that the gospels were read in divine service along with the Old Testament, but they themselves did not yet pass for inspired writings, they were valued for their content, and not as scriptures. Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, explains quite

ingenuously that he sought for the oral tradition of the words of Jesus because for him that oral tradition appeared of more value than that handed down in writings. As early as A.D. 150 the apocalypse of John emerges as a writing of high repute. On the other hand, the epistles of Paul in the same Justin Martyr, who gives us information on the reading of the gospels in divine service apparently do not stand on the same level as the gospels, they keep quite in the background. We find another state of the case in the writings of another man of this period whom the Church most bitterly hated: he had started from being its member, but decided later on to form a church of his own. Without question a man of mark, with much affinity with the Gnostics and much not so related. His name was Marcion. In his works we light for the first time on a proper Canon, and this includes two portions: (1) our Gospel of Luke in, of course, an altered form—it is simply regarded as *the* gospel; (2) ten epistles of Paul. The Pastoral Epistles are not included. Marcion honoured Paul in opposition to the rest of the apostles.

That is the position of things about A.D. 100. How different the circumstances are about A.D. 200. Here we find in the great Church teachers, Irenæus of Lyons, Tertullian of Carthage, Clement of Alexandria, a new Testament already in existence, which is here and there, of course, of different

inclusiveness. In Alexandria, for example, the limits are wider, and some writings which to-day are not in the Canon, were valued just as highly. Out of the same time we have also already a proper list of New Testament books in the so-called Muratorian fragment. Here four gospels are enumerated, the Acts of the Apostles, then thirteen epistles of Paul. To these are added the Epistle of Jude, and two epistles of John; the Epistle of James, and the Epistle of Peter are not found; whereas the First Epistle of Peter passes as canonical elsewhere. To this there is in addition the Apocalypse of John, and by the side of it the Apocalypse of Peter has in many places a canonical value; and we see plainly that a third apocalyptic writing, the so-called Shepherd of Hermas, enjoys in some quarters this position, although it already begins to lose some of its honour. In the midst of this enumeration there is also found the Wisdom of Solomon, which now stands in our Old Testament apocrypha. *On the average* we may say, about this time, and in the principal churches, all our present New Testament writings are generally included in the Canon, with the exception of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Second Epistle of Peter, the Second and Third Epistles of John, and the Epistle of James. But now and then also other writings stood in the Canon, such as in Cilicia the Gospel of Peter about A.D. 200 was in use as a canonical writing,

in Syria the so-called Diatessaron—a harmony of the gospels, not our four gospels.

Now how in this period from A.D. 150 to 200 has such development been able to complete itself? We have seen that the value put on the words of the Lord and the writings of the apostles had within itself a tendency towards this end; but this does not explain everything. A chief point here was the battle of the Church against Gnosticism and other tendencies antagonistic to the Church. In this battle the Church needed firm means of proof, secure documents from which they could prove themselves right and confute the errors of their opponents. This has essentially contributed to raise the value of these books. For the Old Testament alone did not afford the necessary weapons. It was necessary to be able to show what the teaching of Christ and His apostles was, and it was needful to be able to reject much that was put forth as apostolical. To this is added the fact that the opponents themselves probably set the Church an example. At least Marcion appears to have taken the lead by forming a canon.

There still remains a third period—up to the conclusion of the Canon. This was reached earliest in the West, and that about the end of the fourth century. It lasted longer in the great Eastern church, still longer in the separate churches of the Orient, as in the Syrian. Here, for example, the *four* gospels were not recognised

before the fourth century, and not without conflict.

The content of these periods is not of equal interest with the former, as it essentially concerns merely the completion of extant constituents, the exclusion of a certain amount of writings which for a while passed as canonical, and the reconciliation of differences in the various churches. Nevertheless, this period also shows many remarkable phenomena, e.g. in the East the Revelation of John was within a hair's-breadth of being again extruded from the Canon in the fourth century. On the other hand, the Epistle to the Hebrews now first gains canonical authority in the West. And it is not until this time that such writings as the Second Epistle of Peter, the short Epistle of John, and the Epistle of James, are actually admitted. But in the Canon new writings are always cropping up, e.g. the Acts of Paul for a time enjoyed great consideration, a Third Epistle to the Corinthians (a quite late compilation) gains authority in some quarters. The Church judges, of course, in no way by historical standards on these writings, but, properly speaking, merely asks as to the teaching which they contain. Still that which did not crop up until later could not any more become the common possession.

This whole history of the Canon palpably teaches us, therefore, that it is the Church which

created the New Testament. And the Church is here by no means the community of all believers, but in truth the governing theologians and bishops, it is they who were the proper framers of the Canon. That shows us once more that we have a right to make the writings of the New Testament a subject of unbiased research. For the judgments of the theologians and Church fathers of the second up to the fourth century cannot be decisive for us, and all the more as we know that these judgments were often at variance. Meanwhile there is one thing quite certain. Of course there are some old Christian literary remains which are older than or just as old as a series of New Testament books; there are also some, e.g. the so-called Teaching of the twelve Apostles, which have just as high or higher religious value, as, perhaps, the Epistle of Jude or the Second Epistle of Peter, or the epistles to Timothy and Titus. Nevertheless, it is on the whole true that among the oldest Christian writings which were then extant those of most religious value, and among those religiously valuable those which were earliest, have found their way into the New Testament. And he who to-day from the whole number of the books then extant should form a collection of perhaps twenty of them, would on the whole be bound to make choice of the same as the Church then chose.

I am come to the end. I have attempted with compulsory conciseness, and often merely

with hasty strokes, to set before you the way in which present-day theological research thinks on the origin of the New Testament writings. It ought to be a matter-of-fact account, and I hope I have presented nothing else. At all events nothing has been further from my intention than the design of hurting any one's feelings. Just as little would I help by this work an inconsiderate dogmatism on these matters.

Certainly it is true that science compels us to correct many an inherited opinion on the New Testament. But I believe that science also yields us something; I mean that it makes the writings of the New Testament anew interesting and fresh, for it teaches us how to understand them as products of actual religious history, as documents in which the actual life, faith, and thought of the first Christian generations are deposited. The breath of life blows over us; there here speaks a rich, moving, struggling, and striving period of progress; out of it speak men who gave themselves up with their whole soul, with fervency, nay, with passionate zeal, to the new gospel, which was to conquer the world, and who were inspired by the deep earnestness which genuine religion demands.

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