

CHAPTER VI.

A GOSPEL COLLECTION—JUSTIN MARTYR.

WE proceed higher up the stream to the valuable testimony of JUSTIN MARTYR. It is likely that he was born about 100 A.D.¹ He was a native of Palestine, having been born in Flavia Neapolis in Samaria. After a long and disappointing quest for satisfaction and rest in philosophical systems, he found what he sought in Christ and His Gospel. He set himself forthwith to propagate and defend the faith which he had thus received, and he stands out as one of the greatest of the Christian apologists. In this interest he laboured at Ephesus and Rome, where

¹ The chronology of Justin is by no means certain, the data for determining it being scanty and ambiguous. Dr Hort placed his martyrdom in 148 A.D.; the *First Apology* in 146; the *Second* (if really separate from the first) in 146 or 147; and the *Dialogue* about the same time. Harnack (*Chronologie*, p. 284) gives the chronology as follows,—Conversion, 133; stay in Ephesus, about 135; Apology (he regards the two as one), a year or two after 150; the Dialogue, between 155 and 160; martyrdom at Rome, between 163 and 167, perhaps 165 A.D.

he resided for some years. Out of many writings which have come down to us under his name, three only survive which can be regarded as genuine products of his pen—the two Apologies and the Dialogue with Trypho the Jew. The First Apology, in all probability written soon after 150 A.D., is addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius; the Second, written not much later, appeals rather to the Senate, and incidentally to the Emperor. In these Apologies he challenges the attention of Roman Emperor, Senate, and people, not simply to the facts relating to Christianity and its Divine Founder, but also to the records in which they are contained. The Dialogue with Trypho the Jew is a more elaborate treatise, modelled on the Dialogues of Plato, and deals not only with the facts relating to Christianity and its Divine Founder, but also with the leading doctrines of the Christian faith. He quotes the Gospel as something known to his opponent, and cites the Memoirs as his authorities for speaking of Jesus as the Logos to this Jewish controversialist. Issuing as they do from the middle of the second century, his works are among the most precious monuments of sub-apostolic times, and afford much insight into early Christian life, instruction, and worship.

It was long held, and thought to be fully established by modern critical discussions, that

Justin, while probably knowing our Gospels, or at least some of them, seldom made use of them, but had another Gospel narrative, to which the references in the Apologies and the Dialogue were to be assigned. This view found its most reasonable and learned exponent in the great German scholar, Karl A. Credner, whose 'History of the New Testament Canon' for long exercised a powerful influence in this department of Biblical learning. When the question was asked what this Gospel work possessed by Justin was, the answer was at first, "the Gospel according to the Hebrews," and later, a peculiar form of this apocryphal work, appearing as the Gospel of Peter, or even as the Diatessaron of Tatian. Although the Gospel according to the Hebrews has not yet been recovered, the Gospel of Peter and the Diatessaron can now be examined, and their testimony does not support the theory of Credner. The question of Justin's employment of an extra-canonical document is not yet finally answered, but the present state of knowledge on the subject will be considered later in this chapter.

That Justin uses the three Synoptic Gospels is generally agreed among scholars. He never mentions the Evangelists by name, but for his purpose, whether in addressing the Roman Emperor in vindication of the character and good

name of the Christians, or in proving the transitoriness of the law by its fulfilment in Christ to Trypho the Jew, the names of the Evangelists were altogether without weight, and he did well not to encumber his arguments with them. No more does he mention the name of St Paul, to whose epistles there are undoubted references. The only New Testament book whose author he names is the Apocalypse, which he attributes to St John, but does not quote, although it contains the very title, "the Word of God," which is the foundation of Justin's doctrine of the Person of Christ (*καλεῖται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ*, Rev. xix. 13). But though Justin never names the Synoptists, it is not difficult to distinguish in his quotations references to all three. The general name by which he designates and quotes the Gospel records is the well-known name by which Xenophon describes his Memoirs of his master Socrates—*Ἀπομνημονεύματα*. The Memorabilia¹ are the records contained for us in the Gospels concerning Christ, written for us by His disciples. Behind the general designation we can distinguish the individual Gospels. The reference to the bloody sweat decisively intimates the use of

¹ Sanday remarks that the Memorabilia are historical authorities of weight, as coming from Apostles, but no more. They are not called "Gospels," but just "Memoirs," because he is not writing to Christians but to heathen.—'Inspiration,' p. 305.

St Luke, who alone records it; the reference to the sons of Zebedee, under the name of Boanerges, in the same way intimates the use of St Mark. Of St Matthew there are many clear indications,¹ even if in not a few of the quotations from his Gospel there are words also taken from St Luke—a combination which points to early harmonising. The expression used in the reference which obscurely hints at the second Evangelist (*ἐν τοῖς ἀπομνημονεύμασιν αὐτοῦ*, that is Πέτρου, where the meaning is “in the recollections which have come down in the Church from St Peter”) only goes to confirm the tradition that St Mark’s Gospel is founded upon St Peter’s preaching. The assumption that the reference is to the second Gospel is supported by what Justin says of the Memoirs as written by apostles and their companions—“In the Memoirs, which I take to have been composed by His Apostles and those who followed them, it stands written.”² This description is precisely in accord with the commonly received view that St Matthew and St John, themselves Apostles, wrote our first and fourth Gospels, and St Mark and St Luke, followers of Apostles, the second and third. It is notable that when Justin³ is quoting from St Luke, he avoids using the word “Apostles,” and

¹ See Dial., c. 78, for references to St Matthew.

² Dial., c. 103.

³ Apol., i. 35. Dial., c. 105.

in two places employs the more general expression, "they that have recorded the Memoirs" (*οἱ ἀπομνημονεύσαντες*).

This brings us to the question which has been frequently discussed, whether the fourth Gospel is to be included among the Memoirs. There is, indeed, the prior question whether Justin made use of the fourth Gospel at all. When we examine Justin's doctrine of the Person of Christ, we cannot help feeling that there is a close relationship between his Logos and that of the fourth Gospel. Semisch¹ shows by a careful analysis that it is neither to Plato nor to the Neo-Platonists that Justin owes his conception of the Logos; and while he admits that the Alexandrian and Philonic theosophy had a share in Justin's formulation of it, he claims that its substance rests on a purely Scriptural and Christian foundation. It is scarcely possible to doubt that there is some relationship between the Logos of Justin and that of the fourth Gospel. Either the fourth Gospel is dependent upon Justin, or Justin upon the fourth Gospel. It does not take long to discover that of the two, originality belongs to the Gospel, and that Justin's doctrine is a development along the same line of thought. Supposing, however, that Justin had adapted the Logos

¹ Justin Martyr, ii. 193 ff.

doctrine of Philo to the setting forth of the Person of Christ, there are still a considerable number of incidental references and allusions which point to Justin's use of the fourth Gospel. He speaks of Christ as the Word and Son of the Father, "Who was made Flesh."¹ Again he refers to St John when he says: "Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. That it is impossible for those who have once been born to enter into the wombs of those that bore them is evident"² (John iii. 3-5). In the Dialogue,³ after quoting Ps. xxii. 20 f., in which "My only begotten" (*τὸν μονογενῆ μου*) occurs, he proceeds: "For that He was only begotten to the Father of all things, peculiarly born of Him, His word and power, and that He afterwards became man through the virgin, as we learned from the Memoirs, I have before shown" (John i. 18). Altogether there are about twenty obvious references, and half as many more echoes of St John in the Apologies and the Dialogue.

It is thus in a high degree probable that Justin knew and used the fourth Gospel. But how does the admission bear upon a Gospel collection? Professor Harnack's view may be referred to.⁴ That Justin knew the fourth Gospel he

¹ Apol., i. 32.

² Dial., c. 105.

³ Apol., i. 61.

⁴ Chronologie, pp. 673-5.

holds to be overwhelmingly probable. That he classed it with the Memoirs and regarded it as the work of the Apostle John, he says, cannot be proved. He will not deny that Justin held the fourth Gospel to be the work of John the Apostle, and his judgment as to the authorship of the Apocalypse appears to him to weigh in favour of the Gospel also. "We must accordingly leave the possibility, ay, the probability, open that the description of the fourth Gospel as the work of one of the Twelve is found about 155-160, and that in Justin." Recent criticism,¹ in spite of Harnack's doubt, is favourable to an affirmative answer. As we have already seen, Justin speaks of the Gospels as "composed by Apostles of the Lord and their followers"—a form of expression which accurately describes the Gospels as we have received them, two written by Apostles, St Matthew and St John, and two by apostolic followers, St Mark and St Luke. It seems, further, to be quite possible, and of some degree of probability, that Justin, and his antagonist Trypho as well, knew not merely separate Gospels, but a Gospel collection. "In your so-called Gospel," says Trypho,² "I am

¹ Leipoldt, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons*, p. 130, n. 5.

² *Dial.*, c. 10.

aware that there are commandments so wonderful and great that nobody can be supposed able to keep them." "In the Gospel He is recorded to have said: All things have been delivered unto Me by My Father; and no man knoweth the Father save the Son, nor the Son save the Father, and they to whomsoever the Son may reveal Him" (Matth. xi. 27).¹ "The Gospel" here spoken of as a unit is evidently the same as "The Memoirs," and the identification lends probability to the view that Justin had some collection, which may have been the original of Tatian's Diatessaron. There is, in fact, a historical presumption of some weight furnished by the Diatessaron of Justin's pupil, that Justin was possessed of a collection, or a harmony of some sort himself. As has been noted already, Justin does a considerable amount of harmonising in his quotations. He weaves together passages, especially from the parallel narratives of St Matthew and St Luke, in a way which has suggested an exercise of memory, but which may be better explained by the existence of some kind of harmony, if only of the Synoptic Gospels. If the Memoirs were a kind of harmony like the Diatessaron, and its original or pattern, we should have an explanation of the absence of

¹ Dial., c. 100.

express references to the Evangelists. It has been observed that Justin has nearly two hundred references to Old Testament books, and quotes them by name, whereas he never once names the writer of a Gospel. If he were simply quoting "the Gospel" or 'Memoirs' which had taken the form of a harmony, his quotations could not well be assigned to the individual writers, merged as they were in this combined whole.

Justin's allusions to facts, and even sayings, not found in our canonical Gospels are interesting.¹ He speaks of Jesus as born in a cave, of the wise men as coming from Arabia, of Jesus as making yokes and ploughs in the carpenter's workshop. He alludes to the circumstance that "when Jesus came to the river Jordan where John was baptizing, as Jesus went down into the water also fire was kindled in the Jordan,"—a circumstance which, singularly enough, is found in certain manuscripts of the Old Latin in this form: "And when Jesus was baptized a great light shone around from the water, in so much that all feared who had come near." It is to be noticed here, however, that Justin is careful not to give apostolic authority for "the fire kindled in the Jordan," for he follows this statement on his own authority

¹ See Zahn, GK. i. 537 ff.

with the further statement that "the Apostles of our Christ Himself recorded that when He came up out of the water the Holy Spirit as a Dove lighted upon Him," where the Apostles are St Matthew and St John in whose Gospels it is. Justin is equally careful not to ascribe the heavenly words at Christ's baptism in the apocryphal form: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee," to the Memoirs, but he adds that the Memoirs of the Apostles tell how the devil came to Him and tempted Him.¹

There are two sayings of our Lord recorded by Justin which are not found in the Gospels: "For this reason also our Lord Jesus Christ said, In whatsoever things I find you, in these also shall I judge you";² "Christ said there shall be schisms and heresies."³ These references are a very slender foundation upon which to build up any theory of a rival Gospel having been used by Justin. That the Gospel according to the Hebrews may have been the source of these and other features in the numerous references of Justin is quite possible, but they may also have come to Justin by oral transmission.⁴

¹ Dial., 88.

² Dial., 47.

³ Dial., 35.

⁴ With regard to the *Ἰστορία Πιλάτου* quoted by Justin (*Apol.*, i. 35), Professor Stanton has made it probable that this is not a mere rhetorical expression such as we find in some of the Fathers appealing to authority, but a Pilate-record which may well have been

Upon a review of the evidence afforded by the references we may confidently hold that the Memoirs of Justin were a Gospel collection such as was undoubtedly known later to the Muratorian Fragmentist, to Tatian, and to Irenæus. That they included St John's Gospel is highly probable. That they included any other Gospel than our Four is very improbable, for any such Gospel would have been read along with the others in the services of the early Christians, and must have become well known. No such Gospel, however, is known either to the Muratorian Fragmentist or to Irenæus, and we may believe there was no such Gospel. We are thus entitled to trace back the collection of Four Gospels to the middle of the second century, which marks the period of Justin's literary activity. Professor Charteris has well shown the absurdity of the contention that these Memoirs were not the Gospels of our Canon. "The position, then, is," he says,¹ "that Justin used and Trypho read a Gospel which cannot be traced elsewhere or afterwards,— a Gospel

before Justin, Tertullian, and the writer of the Gospel of Peter, as well as the writer of the Letter professing to be from Pilate to Claudius, contained in the 'Acts of Peter and Paul' and the 'Acta Pilati.' The parallelisms taken singly are of insignificant account, but taken together they form an argument of considerable strength.—Gospels as Historical Documents, pp. 104-133.

¹ Canonicity, p. lxiii.

different from that which his contemporary Marcion knew and mutilated: a set of books which so marvellously disappeared that Irenæus (who had possibly known Justin, and certainly wrote within thirty years of his death), when he descanted on the four winds, the four quarters of the world, and the four Gospels, knew nothing of them; and that Justin, when he quoted the apocryphal book or books, quoted so strangely that Eusebius, with all his love of gossip and all his historical lore, and many another besides him, never knew that the quotations were not from Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. That is to say, that the Memoirs to which Justin challenged the attention of the Roman emperor, senate, and people, and which were, therefore, well known, had so completely perished from the earth that Irenæus, who was familiar with the affairs of Asia, Rome, and Gaul, appealed to friend and foe to remark how marvellous is God's great providence in giving to Christendom and to humanity the Four Gospels—the Four, neither more nor less—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John."

That these Gospels by Justin's day were already marked out as of special authority and sacredness needs hardly to be said. They were esteemed as records of the Life of Jesus, and were accounted the more worthy because they came from Apostles and

apostolic men. They were publicly read at the Christian assemblies for worship on "the day of the sun," and read alternately with the Prophets, as long as time permitted. And more remarkable still—Justin himself quotes them as he quotes the books of the Old Testament, which was the whole Bible of the primitive Church. In the Apologies and in the Dialogue we find copious quotations from the Old Testament, from the book of Genesis, from the Psalms, and from the Prophets—Isaiah being by far the most frequently quoted. In his Old Testament quotations he names the books and quotes with general exactitude, because he has the Old Testament Scriptures before him in the Septuagint translation.¹ If he quotes the New Testament with greater freedom, it is because he seems to quote from memory; and if he never names his authorities, it is because their names are of no consequence in his contentions. But that he quotes the Gospels as he quotes the Prophets shows that already in his judgment they are of the same authority, and though he never calls them New Testament Scripture, he attributes to them the qualities of

¹ Even in connection with the Old Testament he makes awkward mistakes. He miscalls the Prophets, puts Zephaniah for Zechariah, Jeremiah for Daniel, Isaiah for Jeremiah, Hosea for Zechariah, and Zechariah for Malachi, and he dovetails verses from different parts of Scripture.—Gildersleeve, 'Justin Martyr,' p. xxxiv.

Scripture by placing them on the level of the Old Testament books.¹

¹ There is good reason to believe that Marcion, while making choice of St Luke as his Gospel, with excisions to suit his views, was acquainted with all Four Canonical Gospels. As the conclusion of a very thorough examination of Marcion's New Testament, Professor Zahn (GK. i. 680) affirms that the heretic found in the Church in his day the same Gospels as Justin tells us were used in the services of the Lord's day, and as Tatian, two decades later, worked into his Diatessaron.