

CHAPTER XV.

ST JOHN.—II.

WHEN we come to IGNATIUS we are upon the very brink of the Apostolic age. The exact year of his martyrdom cannot be determined from any data extant, and various years from 107 to 117 A.D. have been assigned to that event. But adopting the latest of these years, we are but a little distance removed from the last survivors of the Apostles, and, as we shall see, the latest of those years is even more favourable for the traditional view of the Fourth Gospel than the earliest. We may now approach the consideration of his testimony with the conviction that the seven letters of what is called the Vossian recension of the Ignatian Epistles are genuine. Lack of assurance as to the genuineness of any of the letters in their various forms for a long time prevented scholars from doing justice to their evidence. The labours of Light-foot, Zahn, and Harnack, and the more recent

investigations of Von der Goltz and Dietze,¹ have discovered a weight of testimony in the Ignatius letters not realised before.

Ignatius was undoubtedly acquainted with the Gospel history, and his acquaintance with the Gospel records and St Paul's Epistles is unquestionable. Yet though his letters abound in allusions and references, there are no express quotations, and scarcely any formula of quotations, in the references he makes.² St John's name is never mentioned, not even in the Epistle to the Church of Ephesus, so long instructed and presided over by the last survivor of the Apostolic band. But though he is not expressly named in this Epistle, it is more than likely that there is an implicit reference to him in words in which Ignatius prays that he may be found in the lot of the Ephesian Christians "who also have

¹ Lightfoot in his great edition of the Apostolic Fathers, Zahn in an early work, 'Ignatius von Antiochien,' as well as in his 'History of the New Testament Canon,' Harnack in his 'Chronologie' (p. 381 ff.), Von der Goltz in an examination of the doctrinal bearings of the letters in 'Texte und Untersuchungen' (xii. 3), and Dietze in 'Studien u. Kritiken' (1905), have done much to give us certainty on the subject. Funk in his 'Patres Apostolici' (p. lv ff.), Ramsay in his 'Church in the Roman Empire' (p. 311 ff.), and Von Dobschütz in his 'Christian Life in the Primitive Church' (p. 235 ff.), accept their genuineness. There are at the present time few scholars who question their genuineness, and the result is a greater interest in the personality and the writings of Ignatius.

² He does use the expression *ὡς γέγραπται* in Magn. xii., but in an Old Testament reference.

always agreed with the Apostles in the power of Jesus Christ."¹ Since St Paul and St John were the Apostles who founded and built up the Ephesian Church, it is natural to think of them as "the Apostles" referred to. In the very next chapter of the Ephesian Epistle he singles out St Paul for mention, calling the Ephesians "fellow-partakers of the mysteries" with him (Παύλου συμμύσται), but he does so because of the resemblance between his outward circumstances and those of St Paul the prisoner and martyr of Christ (τοῦ μεμαρτυρημένου, ἀξιομακαρίστου).² For a like reason he refers in the Epistle to the Roman Church³ to St Peter and St Paul as men with whom he is not worthy to be compared in the prospect of martyrdom. In his undoubted allusions to 1 Corinthians, and less certain references to Ephesians, Romans, Galatians, and other Epistles, he is as reticent regarding St Paul as he is regarding St John in equally sure allusions to the Fourth Gospel.

The absence of any appeal to documents, even if that had been already a customary thing, is not to be wondered at. Ignatius wrote as a man under sentence of death, held prisoner by ten

¹ Ephes. xi. 2.

² See Lightfoot, Ignatius, Ephes. xii.; and compare Harnack, 'Chronologie,' p. 675 n.

³ Rom. iv.

“leopards”—a company of Roman soldiers—who, the more generously they were treated, became the fiercer.¹ His letters were thrown off in the white heat of an intense excitement, under emotions of no ordinary power, with martyrdom as his overmastering ambition, which he implores his friends to do nothing to disappoint. Christ is his passion; His Cross and Death and Resurrection are the sure foundation of his hopes; and the faith that is in Him will carry the martyr through all. That he does not in these circumstances mention his source, and that he does not formally quote, can be no objection to his testimony. When it is suggested² that sometimes another passage than that alluded to would have been more to his purpose if the Fourth Gospel had been before him, the criticism is unreasonable. He had no documents with him and no opportunity to search for exact parallels; and when one is quoting from memory, the best does not always come at command. Prolonged verbal quotations are out of the question; and so far as the exact reproduction of the language of Scripture is concerned, it may be doubted “whether Ignatius, in whatever age he might have lived, would have strictly conformed himself to the

¹ Rom. chaps. iv., v.

² New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers, p. 83.

religious phraseology of his times."¹ It is clear from every page that he is saturated with the Evangel, and has its great facts and truths laid up in the chambers of memory and in the depths of his soul.²

When we proceed to references to St John's Gospel and Epistles in the Ignatian Letters, we find quite a large number of the kind we might expect. For example, in five of these Letters,³ and in two of them twice, the expression, "the prince of this world" (*ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου*), is found, and found in connexions so analogous to the passages in St John that we can scarcely doubt its derivation from the Fourth Gospel (John xii. 31, xiv. 30, xvi. 11).⁴ Again,

¹ Swete, *Patristic Study*, p. 6.

² Referring to at least a dozen allusions to 1 Corinthians and as many echoes of its language all through the Epistle, a writer in 'The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers' (pp. 67, 68) says, "Ignatius must have known this Epistle almost by heart. Although there are no quotations (in the strictest sense, with mention of the source), echoes of its language and thought pervade the whole of his writings in such a manner as to leave no doubt whatever that he was acquainted with the First Epistle to the Corinthians."

³ Eph. xvii. xix.; Magn. i.; Trall. iv.; Rom. vii.; Philad. vi.

⁴ There is a verbal divergence, *αἰῶνος*, which is never used in this sense by St John, who employs *κόσμος*. But as the governing word in the expression is *ἄρχων*, and as the connection is analogous, we may surely waive the divergence. The parallel more verbally exact with 1 Cor. ii: 6, 8, given by the writer in 'New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers,' is made much more remote by the plural *ἄρχοντες* and by the context.

there is good reason to hold with Zahn and Lightfoot that the passage in Ephesians (xvii. 1) is a reminiscence of St John's Gospel (John xii. 3) rather than of St Matthew or St Mark: "Therefore the Lord received ointment upon His head, in order that He might breathe immortality upon the Church."

In the Epistle to the Romans¹ there is the striking saying, "My love has been crucified (*ὁ ἐμὸς ἔρως ἐσταύρωται*); there is not in me the fire of material love, but water living and speaking in me, saying within me, 'Come to the Father.'" Lightfoot declares this passage to be wholly "inspired by the Fourth Gospel," and it is quite parallel to "Thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. . . . For the water which I shall give him shall be in him a well of living water springing up unto everlasting life" (John iv. 10, 14); and is also to be compared with, "Jesus cried and said, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii. 37, 38).

In a consecutive passage of the same Epistle (vii. 3) there is a strongly Johannine reference: "I take no pleasure in food of corruption, nor yet in pleasures of this life. I desire the bread

¹ vii. 2.

of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David, and I desire as drink His blood, which is love incorruptible." Here the phrase "food of corruption" (*τροφὴ φθορᾶς*) is a characteristically Ignatian parallel to "meat that perisheth" (*τὴν βρώσιν τὴν ἀπολυμένην*) (John iv. 32); and "the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ," strongly recalls "he that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John vi. 54). To the same great discourse of Jesus as it is recorded by St John belong "the bread of God" (Eph. v. 2), and "breaking one bread which is an elixir of immortality" (*φάρμακον ἀθανασίας*) (Eph. xx.)

In the Epistle to the Philadelphians (c. vii.) there is another Johannine passage: "For though some have desired to deceive me according to the flesh, yet my spirit is not deceived, being from God. For it knoweth whence it cometh and whither it goeth, and discloseth hidden things." The word "discloseth" (*ἔλεγχει*) is not exclusively yet peculiarly Johannine, especially when used of the Spirit (John iii. 20, xvi. 8). The whole passage recalls, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth" (John iii. 8); and also, "I know whence I came and whither I go" (viii. 14).

In this connexion also a striking saying of Ignatius may be quoted (Eph. viii. 2): "They that are fleshly cannot do spiritual things, nor they that are spiritual fleshly things, as also faith cannot do the works of unbelief, nor unbelief the works of faith." This may very well be derived from John iii. 6: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And when we read again (Eph. xiv. 2): "No one professing faith sinneth, nor does any one who has got love hate," we have Ignatian echoes of passages in St John's First Epistle.

These passages show the martyr steeped not only in Johannine doctrine, but also in Johannine phraseology. There are other passages in which Ignatius has seized upon a thought or a truth of the Fourth Gospel and clothed it in metaphors and similes wholly his own—giving it a practical application quite different from what it originally possessed. An excellent illustration is furnished by the words of Jesus: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John xii. 32). In Ignatius¹ this takes the highly pictorial representation: "Who was truly nailed to the tree under Pontius Pilate and Herod in His flesh (and we are the fruit of His Divinely blessed passion), in order that by His resurrection He might set up a banner for

¹ Smyr., i. 2.

ever for His saints and them that believe, whether among Jews or among Gentiles in the one body of His Church." And he may have combined with this the thought that "Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that He should gather into one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John xi. 51, 52). It may even be from the former passage that Ignatius has obtained the suggestion which has grown into the picture:¹ "Prepared for a building of God the Father, raised up to the heights by the engine of Jesus Christ, which is the Cross, using for a rope the Holy Spirit." Of this manner of treating his evangelic source there are not a few examples. Von der Goltz² takes exception to this unconventional treatment, and argues that because Ignatius does not use the language of St John, and gives his thought a turn quite different, therefore he cannot have been acquainted with a written Gospel. His manner of treating St Paul, however, is precisely similar, and his references to 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and other Pauline Epistles are not disputed.³

More conclusive, perhaps, than even these striking correspondences is the profound affinity between the theological teaching of Ignatius and that of St John. We find not only the

¹ Eph. ix. 1.

² Texte u. Untersuchungen, xii. 140.

³ See Dietze, 'Studien u. Kritiken,' 1905, p. 589.

key-words of St John reappearing in the letters of Ignatius, such as Life, Knowledge, Truth, Faith and Love¹ (ζωή, γνώσις, ἀλήθεια, πίστις καὶ ἀγάπη), Life and Death, God and the Prince of this World, Flesh and Spirit, and other such relations, but also the Johannine presentation of the Person, Words, and Work of Christ, and even of the Christian life. With both St John and Ignatius the Christian life is Christo-centric. Both of them exalt what Dr Chalmers called "the expulsive power of a new affection." If St John dwells upon the mystical union of Christ and His people, Ignatius speaks of Christians as Christ-bearers (Χριστοφόροι, Θεοφόροι). St John says (1 John v. 1): "Every one that believeth is begotten of God, and every one that loveth Him that begat loveth also Him that is begotten of Him." Ignatius sums up this in the words (Eph. xiv.): "Faith is the beginning of true life and love is the end" (ζωῆς ἀρχὴ μὲν πίστις, τέλος δὲ ἀγάπη). The emphasis he lays upon the Person of the historic Christ shows that his

¹ This, however, is not St John's characteristic order, which is "Love and Faith" (Rev. ii. 19). St Paul's order is that which Ignatius follows (cf. 1 Thess. iii. 6; v. 8, and other places). As regards Truth (ἀλήθεια), Grill hazards the statement that it represents σοφία, which the writer of the Fourth Gospel could not use because of its degradation by Gnostic sects, and makes this negative inference a point in favour of the late origin of the book (Untersuchungen, p. 183). E. F. Scott, in 'The Fourth Gospel,' p. 93, has the same statement with no better ground.

interest, like that of St John, is not speculative but practical; so different from the interest, for example, of Philo, who, dealing with similar themes, is abstract and metaphysical. It is not the light which the Logos sends streaming into humanity that is the salvation of men, but the Divine Christ,¹ who appeared in real human activity, that brings the knowledge of God and life eternal. It is His manifestation in the flesh that brings to men salvation. In the God-man the Evangelist has seen the fulness of grace and truth. In all this, St John's representation, as we know it in the Gospel, is closely reproduced by Ignatius. St John affirms the perfect unity of Jesus with the Father (x. 30, xiv. 10): Ignatius² speaks of the Son as perfectly joined in one with the Father (*ἡνωμένος τῷ πατρὶ*); He is the unity of God (*Θεοῦ ἕνωσις*); to Him alone the secrets of God are confided (*ὃς μόνος πεπίστευται τὰ κρυπτὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ*). Yet there is a subordination

¹ Ignatius does not shrink from speaking of "Our God, Jesus Christ," and uses this language again and again (Eph. inscription; Rom. inscription; Pol. viii. 3). This use of *Θεός* as a designation of Christ is itself Johannine. St Paul "never used the expression *Θεός* of Christ, since he has not adopted, like John, the Alexandrine form of conceiving and setting forth the Divine essence of Christ, but has adhered to the popular, concrete, strictly monotheistic terminology, not modified by philosophic speculation even for the designation of Christ; and he always accurately distinguishes God and Christ" (Meyer on Romans ix. 5).

² Magn. vii.; Trall. ix.; Phil. ix.

in St John's conception of the relation of the Son to the Father which is exactly reproduced in Ignatius. As the Christ of St John can do nothing of Himself but what He sees the Father do (John v. 19), so is it with the Christ of Ignatius. "As therefore the Lord did nothing without the Father, being united with Him, neither by Himself nor by His Apostles," he says.¹ But he adds, "Have ye all recourse as unto one temple of God, as unto one altar, unto one Jesus Christ, who came forth from one Father and is with One (*καὶ εἰς ἓνα ὄντα*; cf. John i. 1, 2, 18), and hath returned unto One" (cf. John xvi. 28). He is "an Imitator of the Father" (*μιμητῆς τοῦ πατρὸς*);² He submits Himself wholly to His Father's will;³ He was upon earth in everything obedient to His Father.⁴ Jesus is the Sent of God, the Door of the Father, both in St John and in Ignatius. The characteristic designation of Christ as the Word (*ὁ λόγος*) in St John's prologue finds a parallel also in Ignatius. Writing to the Romans,⁵ he says, "If ye should keep silence and leave me alone, I am a word of God." In the highest sense of all, only One is *ὁ λόγος*, the Word of God; but all His saints made perfect in knowledge are utterances, words of God, as being fragments of the One Word.

¹ Magn. vii 1, 2.² Phil. vii. 2.³ Magn. xiii.⁴ Smyr., viii.⁵ ii. 1.

Throughout his letters Ignatius lets it be seen that he builds his Christian theology on other than philosophical and speculative conceptions. Like St John, his interest is experimental and religious.¹

Though verbal quotations are almost entirely wanting, the whole course of the thought of Ignatius in these letters betrays the influence of St John. What is the nature of that influence? Does it come from some stream of oral tradition carrying down the teaching of the Beloved Disciple? Or does it come from the Fourth Gospel, studied and pondered till the thought of Ignatius became saturated with its characteristic doctrine? There are one or two considerations to be borne in mind in deciding what should be our answer.

1. It is remarkable how little there is in the Epistles of Ignatius substantially new or divergent from the written Gospel tradition. When we have mentioned the reference to a bodiless Spirit² (*οὐκ εἰμι δαιμόνιον ἀσώματον*), and to the star surpassing in brightness all the stars³ (*ἀστὴρ ἐν οὐρανῷ ἔλαμψεν ὑπὲρ πάντας τοὺς ἀστέρας*), we have mentioned the most important of the allusions which can be called extra-

¹ See the whole of the excellent discussion in Dietze.

² Smyr., iii. Cf. St Luke xxiv. 39. See p. 232.

³ Eph. xix. 2. Cf. St Matt. ii. 2.

canonical. If Ignatius had been dependent upon oral tradition floating downwards from the times of Christ and the Apostles, it seems very improbable that his writings would have been so free from accretions and impurities, and that he would have kept with such strictness within Evangelic limits.

2. With special reference to St John, it is scarcely less remarkable how closely he adheres to his text when, as seems so probable, he does found upon his Gospel. The direction and application which he gives to a thought may sometimes be different, but it is ultimately traceable to the Apostle, and is consistently developed and worked out from the Johannine germ. This is all in accordance with his manner. "With an aptitude for creating compounds and a happy gift of using old words in new lights, he united a power of sarcasm in which he is, to use a word of his own, ἀσύγκριτος, 'sans pareil,' and a vividness of imagination that enabled him to transform a simple word into a picture, which is often framed in true poetry."¹

3. When Von der Goltz assigns his reproductions of Johannine doctrine to some tradition of the Apostle's oral teaching, to the "influence of a community itself influenced by Johannine

¹ Montgomery Hitchcock, 'Hermathena,' xxxi. p. 456.

thought,"¹ he suggests an explanation of which there is no hint in the letters. There is, moreover, no reason to believe that the type of Gospel tradition embodied in St John's Gospel had established itself within reach of Ignatius at Antioch or in Syria for such a length of time as to give him the grasp of its contents which he displays apart from the written Gospel. It is scarcely credible that such intimate and profound apprehension of its spiritual teaching could have been obtained through an intermediate process of this character. Even if Ignatius had been such an interpreter of St John as St Mark was of St Peter, deriving his knowledge of Johannine teaching straight from St John himself, he could scarcely have done greater justice to his source. If he was acquainted with the Synoptic Gospels and St Paul's Epistles, which is generally admitted, no *a priori* theories of the origin of St John's Gospel should be allowed to depreciate the clear testimony of Ignatius to it.

4. Acquaintance with the written Gospel of St John would explain everything. It would explain the verbal correspondences such as they are, and the far more important correspondence in doctrine, in the conception of Christ's person, and in the view of the Christian life. The absence

¹ *Texte und Untersuchungen*, p. 139. Cf. Sanday, 'Criticism of the Fourth Gospel,' p. 243.

of reference to St John himself in express terms is no objection. None of the other Evangelists is named; and even St Paul, who is known to the writer, and whose doctrine also colours the letters, is mentioned apart from the references that are made to his Epistles. Those who, like Professors Harnack and Von Dobschütz,¹ attribute the Fourth Gospel to John the Presbyter are precluded from making this objection, for it lies equally against their view of the authorship. Assuming that the author is John the Apostle, we have seen that the irrelevant applications of Johannine thought are only in the manner of Ignatius. Fifteen or twenty years before he wrote these letters, Ignatius may have had access to the Johannine writings; and those years of thought and study by a mind so active and daring upon the presentation of Christ and His salvation therein contained may have yielded those views of the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, and the Life that is in Christ which are poured forth fresh and fervent from his heart as he goes forward to meet the wild beasts and to grasp the martyr's crown. We cannot tell when the Fourth Gospel first in written form was introduced into

¹ Christian Life in the Primitive Church, p. 235 ff. Professor Harnack (*Chronologie*, p. 681 n.) considers it highly probable that the Apostle John had once been in Ephesus, although the Ephesian Christians were St Paul's fellow-members of Christ (*συνμύσται*).

Syria, but it is not altogether without significance that it is Theophilus of Antioch who first of early Christian writers, about 180 A.D., gives St John as the name of the writer. If we are right in accepting the Ignatian letters from which we have quoted as genuine, we have in Ignatius a most valuable witness to the early circulation and use of the Fourth Gospel.¹

Of the less certain early witnesses it is not necessary to say much. POLYCARP has no reminiscences of the Gospel, but he has a quotation² from the First Epistle of John (1 John iv. 2; cf. 2 John 7), "For every one who shall not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is anti-christ." As the Gospel and the Epistles are held to be a unity, this quotation is probable evidence of the knowledge of the Gospel by Polycarp. HERMAS³ speaks of Christ as "the Gate" (ἡ πύλη) and the only way of access to the Father; as having cleansed the sins of His people and shown them the paths of life, giving them the law which he had received from His

¹ It is hardly worthy of mention that Kreyenbühl, in his 'Evangeli-um der Wahrheit,' makes St John dependent upon Ignatius, reversing the order of tradition and of nature. A similarly impossible view is taken by Conrady in his 'Quelle der kanonischen Kindheits-geschichte Jesu,' who maintains that the star of surpassing brightness in Ignatius, and the star of the Magi in St Matthew, are derived from a common source—the Protevangelium Jacobi. Freaks of criticism like this do not require refutation.

² Pol. ad Phil., vii. 1. ³ Sim. ix. 12. 5; v. 6. 3; Mand. xii. 3. 5.

Father; Whose commandments are not grievous (John x. 7, 18; 1 John v. 3). BARNABAS has no verbal correspondences with St John, but Johannine thought is present in the Epistle.¹ Like Justin, he has a reference to the Brazen Serpent (John iii. 14, 15); he has the words, "Whosoever shall eat of these shall live for ever" (John vi.); and there is a reference to Abraham looking forward to Jesus (John viii. 56).² The DIDACHE has phrases suggestive of the Fourth Gospel as well as ideas recalling the Johannine presentation of Christ and His words. The eucharistic prayers in chapters ix. and x. contain several such words and phrases. "The holy vine of Thy servant David" resembles the teaching of Jesus in the allegory of the Vine and the Branches, but the words may be derived from the Old Testament or Jewish apocryphal literature. "We thank Thee for the life and knowledge Thou didst make known to us through Thy servant Jesus," reminds us of John xvii. 3, and the verb (*γνωρίζω*) is one of St John's characteristic words. These expressions, however, on our view of the position of the 'Didache' in early Christian literature,

¹ Compare also *ἐλθεῖν ἐν σαρκί* (Bar. v. 10=1 John iv. 2); *φανερῶσθαι* applied to Christ (vi. 7, 9=1 John i. 2, iii. 5, 8); *κατοικεῖν ἐν ἡμῖν* (vi. 14=John i. 14).

² Bar. xii., xi., ix.

rather point to a later origin for the Didache than witness to the early use of the Fourth Gospel.

Of the actual composition of the Fourth Gospel we have an account in the Muratorian Fragment. "The author of the Fourth Gospel," says the writer, "was John of the disciples." And he tells¹ how it was revealed to the Apostle Andrew that John should write, the rest of them acting as revisers of the result of his labour. "For thus," the Fragmentist concludes, "he professes himself not only an eyewitness but also a hearer, and, moreover, a historian of all the wonderful works of the Lord in order." There is also the tradition which comes through Clement of Alexandria, preserved in the pages of Eusebius,² and the tradition given by Eusebius³ himself, to the effect that St John wrote his Gospel because there was lacking in the other three "an account of the deeds done by Christ at the beginning of His ministry." In his closing years at Ephesus the Beloved Disciple, in the last decade of the first century, placed on record his recollections of the life and work and discourses of his Master. He had completed his task when others give a final word of authentication: "This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things and wrote these things, and we know that his witness is true. And there

¹ See above, pp. 84, 85.

² See pp. 244, 245.

³ H. E., III, 24.

are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written" (John xxi. 24, 25).