

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN AND THE FOURTH GOSPEL.¹

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THERE are in the New Testament five works attributed to "John," though only one of them, the Apocalypse, contains that name in the text. Traditionally all five are the work of a single author. But this view was by no means unanimously held in antiquity. Many of the leading scholars of the Eastern Church refused to identify the author of the Apocalypse with the Evangelist, and there were doubts about the Second and Third Epistles. So far as we know, however, no one doubted that the First Epistle was written by the Evangelist, and the prevailing view in modern times agrees. In this country, especially since the discussions by Charles in his commentary on the Apocalypse (I.C.C.) and by Dr. Brooke in his commentary on the Johannine Epistles (in the same series), the identity of authorship is generally regarded almost as *chose jugée*. In spite of their weighty arguments I confess myself not wholly convinced. The question may, I think, be profitably re-opened.

That the two works are, at any rate, very closely related is obvious. Most of the themes treated in the Epistle are present also in the Gospel, and in a general way the theological standpoint represented in the two writings is the same, at least in comparison with any other part of the New Testament. This point I need not elaborate.

Not only the ideas of the two writings, but their ways of expressing those ideas are similar. Dr. Brooke, whose introduction to the Epistles in the I.C.C. provides a full and judicial presentation of the evidence, enumerates some fifty phrases in the First

¹ An amplification of the lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library on 9th December, 1936.

Epistle which have close parallels in the Gospel. The best way to get a fair impression of the extent of the common material is to underline in a text of the Epistle those expressions which echo the Gospel more or less exactly. A glance at the result will then show how short are those passages in the Epistle which are free from such echoes.

The general style of the two writings also shows great similarity. Its prevailing colour is determined by the fact that neither of them makes use, with few exceptions, of the periodic structure characteristic of Greek literary prose in general. Parataxis and asyndeton prevail. Sentences are usually short. Consequently there is a regularly recurring equal stress upon the emphatic word of the sentence, in place of the gradation of stresses, moving to a climax, which determines the rhythm of Greek literary prose. In place of the period, with its structure of principal and subordinate clauses, we have very frequently a combination of two parallel clauses, the parallelism being either of the nature of repetition or, more often, of antithesis. These figures, parataxis, asyndeton, parallelism and antithesis, determine the characteristic rhythm of both writings. It is a slow, regular rhythm, with a measured beat, producing an impression of solemnity and mystery, congruous with the religious tone of the thought. Further stylistic traits common to both have been set out in Dr. Brooke's Introduction. As he says, this far-reaching similarity of style could not be accounted for by any superficial imitation. We conclude that either the two works are from one hand, or the writer of the one was influenced, not superficially but profoundly, by the other, whether that influence was due to personal discipleship, or to a deep and prolonged study of his work, or to both.

When, however, we have fully recognised the close kinship of the two writings, we must also observe that there are differences between them, both in form and content, which are by no means negligible. I will call attention to some such differences, first in style and language, and then in thought.

I. COMPARISON OF STYLE AND LANGUAGE.

In spite of general similarity, the style cannot be said to be identical in the two works. I will venture to appeal to the

impression—the æsthetic or emotional impression if you will—made upon the reader. There is surely to be felt in the Fourth Gospel a richness, a subtlety, a penetrating quality about the style which is missing in the Epistle. While the rhythm of both is slow and regular, in the Gospel it is subtly varied, within the limits imposed by its general character, but in the Epistle regularity often descends to monotony. The language of the Gospel has an intensity, a kind of inward glow, a controlled excitement, which I do not feel in the Epistle. The language of the Epistle is correct, usually (though not always) lucid, sometimes forcible and epigrammatic, but in reading it I do not feel as I do in reading the Gospel that here is a man who, with a narrow range of grammatical idiom, as well as of vocabulary, has genuine power of style. I believe many readers have this feeling, and it is often accounted for by the hypothesis that the Epistle is the work of the Evangelist in his old age, when his powers had begun to fail.

However, all this is mere impressionism. No critical conclusions can fairly be drawn from such subjective data. How then shall we find objective tests for style? It would, I think, be generally agreed that in Greek writers the use of grammatical words and particles, and of compound verbs, in both of which the language is so rich, provides a significant indication of the character of a writer's style. To these we may add certain preferred idioms and rhetorical figures.

1. Grammatical words and particles.

(a) Prepositions.

The Epistle has the eleven common prepositions without which Greek can hardly be written : ἀπό, διά, εἰς, ἐκ, ἐν, ἐπί, κατά, μετά, περί, πρός and ὑπέρ, and in addition ἔμπροσθεν, ἐνώπιον, χάριν. *Total, 14.*

The Gospel has all these except χάριν, and in addition, ἀνά, ἀντί, ἐπάνω, ὀπίσω, παρά, πέραν, πρό, σύν, ὑπό, ὑποκάτω. *Total, 23.*

(b) Adverbial particles (true adverbs, formed from adjectives, not included).

The Epistle has ἄρτι, ἔξω, ἤδη, νῦν, οὕτω, οὕτως, πάλιν, ποῦ, πῶς. *Total, 9.*

The Gospel has all these, and in addition, ἄνω, ἄνωθεν, ἀπάρτι, δεῦρο, δεῦτε, εἴτα, ἐκεῖ, ἐκεῖθεν, ἐνθάδε ἐντεῦθεν, ἔπειτα, ἔσω, ἔτι, ἐχθές,

κάτω, λάθρα, μηκέτι, ὁμοῦ, ὁμως, οὐκέτι, πάντοτε, πόθεν, πότε, ποτέ, πρωί, τότε, ὦδε. *Total*, 36.

(c) Conjunctive and other particles.

The Epistle has γάρ, δέ, ἐάν, εἰ, ἕως, ἥ ("than"), ἵνα, καθώς, καί, κἄν, μή, μηδέ, ὅταν, ὅθεν, ὅτι, οὐ, οὐδέ, ὡς. *Total*, 18.

The Gospel has all these except ὅθεν, and in addition, ἐπεί, ἥ ("or"), ἥπερ, ἴδε, ἰδοῦ, καίτοιγε, μέν, μέντοι, μήποτε, ναί, ὅτε, οὐκοῦν, οὖν, οὔτε, οὐχί, πότερον, τε, ὥσπερ, ὥστε. *Total*, 36.

It is clear that the Gospel is much richer in particles than the Epistle. The statistics thus confirm the impression that the style of the Epistle is more monotonous and less flexible. It is further to be observed that the particles common to both are used with differing frequency. Thus γάρ, which is frequent in the Gospel, occurs only twice in the Epistle; while ὅτι, which averages four times per page (of Nestlé) in the Gospel, occurs no less than 71 times in the 9 pages of the Epistle, just twice as often. The Gospel again prefers εἰ, while the Epistle prefers ἐάν. But preferences in the use of particles are an unconscious index of the way in which a writer's mind works.¹

2. Compound Verbs.

The Epistle has the following : ἀναγγέλλειν, ἀπαγγέλλειν, ἀφιέναι, ἀποστέλλειν, ἐπαγγέλλειν, ἐξέρχεσθαι, καταγινώσκειν, μεταβαίνειν, παράγειν. περιπατεῖν, ὑπάγειν. *Total*, 11.

The Gospel has all these except ἐπαγγέλλειν and καταγινώσκειν, and in addition—

Verbs compounded with	ἀνα-	10	
”	”	” ἀπο-	9
”	”	” δια-	7
”	”	” εἰς-	2
”	”	” ἐκ-	12
”	”	” ἐν-	7
”	”	” ἐπι-	10
”	”	” κατα-	9
”	”	” μετα-	1
”	”	” παρα-	7

¹ Compare the use made of such data in Harrison, *Problem of the Pastoral Epistles*, pp. 34-38.

Verbs compounded with	περι-	5	
„	„	„ προσ-	5
„	„	„ συν-	10
„	„	„ ὑπο-	2
			<hr/>
			96

Total, 105, more than nine times as many as in the Epistle.¹

This result confirms that of our investigation of the use of particles, namely that the style of the Gospel is richer, more varied, and more flexible than that of the Epistle.

3. Idioms and rhetorical figures.

A. First, while several characteristic idioms of the Gospel recur in the Epistle, it is not without significance that in the Epistle at least two such idioms are used to excess. It will be well to take as a standard for comparison passages of the Gospel which are similar to the Epistle in length and general character. For convenience I have taken the following passages :—

α. v-vi : mainly discourse, and almost the same length as the Epistle.

β. vii. 14-x. 21, omitting the *pericopé adulteræ* as a non-Johannine interpolation, and ch. ix, as having a different character. The residue is of nearly the same length as the Epistle, and is practically all discourse.

γ. xiv-xvii : almost the same length, and entirely of the nature of discourse.

The idioms in question are—

(i) The use of the participle with the article as a substantive. In α this construction occurs thirty-two times, in β, seventeen times, and in γ, thirteen times. In the Epistle, which occupies very nearly the same number of pages as each of these passages, it occurs forty-seven times, that is to say, more than twice as often as the average for these three passages, and half as often again as the highest number for the Gospel.

(ii) The articular participle strengthened by prefixing *πᾶς*—*πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν*, *πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν*, and the like. In α this idiom

¹ In reckoning I ignore vii 53-viii 11 and other passages rejected by Westcott and Hort.

occurs twice, in β , once, and in γ , once ; in the Epistle, thirteen times, the same number as in the whole Gospel.

It is, of course, natural enough that a writer should at times overwork his favourite idioms, but on the other hand it is just such mannerisms that impose themselves upon an imitator.

B. Secondly, there are idioms preferred by the writer of the Epistle which are either comparatively rare or non-existent in the Gospel.

(i) The rhetorical question. In the Epistle we find the question used as a definite rhetorical figure four times : " Who is the liar ? " (ii. 22) ; " How does the love of God abide in him ? " (iii. 17) ; " Why did he slay him ? " (iii. 12) ; " Who is the conqueror ? " (v. 5).

The Gospel does not use the question form in this way. It is doubtful if it supplies any example of the true rhetorical question if we except jesting Pilate's (xviii. 38), and this is scarcely a parallel. The usage of the Epistle is that which is common in the Greek philosophical *Diatribé*, as also in the Epistles of Paul and James.

(ii) The definition, introduced by " This is . . . " or the like, e.g. " This is the message . . . that God is light " (i. 5). There are eight examples of this figure in the Epistle, four only in the whole of the Gospel.¹

(iii) The conditional sentence. As a grammatical construction, this is very common both in the Gospel and in the Epistle. We may, however, neglect for our purpose those numerous cases where it is used in a perfectly normal way, the protasis stating a condition, and the apodosis introducing a fresh fact which is contingent upon the realisation of the condition. The Epistle, however, uses the conditional sentence in a variety of rhetorical figures which are unknown to the Gospel, though there are certainly contexts in which they might appropriately have been used.

(a) Sentences of the form, " If we know that A is B, then we also know that C is D."

Ἐὰν εἰδῆτε ὅτι δίκαιός ἐστιν, γινώσκετε ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην
ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται (ii. 29),

and similarly v. 15.

¹ The use of *οὗτός ἐστιν, τοῦ ὑπό ἐστιν*, which is common in the Gospel, and also in the Epistle, is different.

(b) Sentences where the protasis is of the form, "If we say that A is B," and the apodosis introduces no fresh idea, but is a simple denial of the statement.

Ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν, ἑαυτοὺς πλανῶμεν (i. 8), and similarly i. 6.

(c) Sentences where the fact expressed in the apodosis is not really contingent upon the protasis.

Εἰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαμβάνομεν, ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ μείζων ἐστίν (v. 9).

The real meaning is, "If we receive the testimony of men, much more ought we to receive the testimony of God, since the testimony of God is superior." The expression is elliptical.

Ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, πιστὸς καὶ δίκαιός ἐστιν ἵνα ἀφῇ ἡμῶν τὰς ἁμαρτίας (i. 9).

The meaning is, "He is faithful and just, and therefore, if we confess our sins He will forgive."

Ἐάν τις ἁμάρτη, παράκλητον ἔχομεν (ii. 1).

The expression is again elliptical. The meaning is, "Christ is our advocate : if we sin, He will intercede."

Probably iii. 20 is of the same character :—

Ἐὰν καταγνώσκῃ ἡμῶν ἡ καρδία, (ὅτι) μείζων ἐστίν ὁ θεὸς τῆς καρδίας ἡμῶν.

God is, in any case, "greater than our heart." This is in no sense contingent on the protasis. The true apodosis is suppressed.

In these cases the writer of the Epistle has used the form of conditional sentence for rhetorical purposes in a freer or looser way than is to be found in the Gospel. There is nothing illegitimate, or perhaps even very unusual, in such uses. Whether they are rhetorically effective is a matter of taste. But the fact remains that in the Gospel, a much longer work, no similar examples occur.

C. Thirdly, there is a range of idioms in the Fourth Gospel to which Burney (*The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel*) called attention as indications of Aramaism in the Greek. Not all of these can be accepted as such, since they have in part

parallels in Koiné Greek as we know it from papyri. Some of them, however, do seem to be most easily explained as Aramaisms, and of others it may be said that though they may be justified by parallels in the papyri, their over frequent use is probably attributable to the influence of Aramaic. Whether we regard them as Aramaisms or not, it remains true that they are peculiar idioms, and characteristic of the style of the Fourth Gospel. The most significant of these idioms are as follows :—

- (a) Various uses of *ἵνα* and *ὅτι*, where it may be that the Aramaic *ܐܝܢܐ* underlies, and has been in some cases misunderstood (Burney, pp. 70, 75-78, 101). There is one apparent use of such a construction in I John v. 9, where the best MSS. read *αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅτι μεμαρτύρηκε περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ*. The T.R. reads *ἦν* for *ὅτι*, and this seems to give the simplest sense. This might be explained as a confusion of *ܐܝܢܐ* as a conjunction ('that') with *ܐܝܢܐ* as a relative ('which'). But it is possible to read *ὅτι* with its proper meaning.
- (b) The relative pronoun used in the singular, where the plural seems to be called for : e.g. xvii. 2, *ἵνα πᾶν ὁ δέδωκας ἀντὶ δώσῃ αὐτοῖς ζωὴν αἰώνιον* (Burney, pp. 101-102). This might well be accounted for as an imitation (or mistranslation) of the indeclinable *ܐܝܢܐ*. This construction, common in the Gospel, is unknown to the Epistle.
- (c) The relative completed by a pronoun : e.g. οὐδ' ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ἄξιος *ἵνα λύσω αὐτοῦ, τὸν ἱμάντα τοῦ ὑποδήματος* i. 27 (Burney, pp. 84-85). This accords with Aramaic usage, but is too common in papyri to be accounted properly an Aramaism. The construction does not occur in the Epistle.
- (d) Pleonastic pronoun prefixed, e.g. ix. 18, *τοὺς γονεῖς αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀναβλέψαντος*, ix. 13, *ἄγουσιν αὐτὸν . . . τὸν ποτε τυφλόν* (Burney, pp. 85-86). This construction, unnatural in Greek, corresponds with common Aramaic idiom. It is not found in the Epistle.
- (e) Pleonastic pronoun resumptive, e.g. i. 33, *ὁ πέμψας με βαπτίζειν ἐν ὕδατι ἐκεῖνός μοι εἶπεν* (Burney, pp. 63-65).

This construction, unnatural in Greek, but corresponding to Aramaic idiom, is characteristic of the Fourth Gospel, but is not found in the Epistle.

- (f) Forms of negative expression (Burney, pp. 98-100): οὐκ ἄνθρωπος for "no one" (= Aramaic ܐܢܫܐ ܠܐ), several times in the Gospel, not in the Epistle; οὐκ . . . εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, for "never," several times in the Gospel, not in the Epistle; πᾶς . . . οὐ (or μή) for "no one," twice in the Gospel, eight times in the Epistle. But it is not clear that either in the Gospel or in the Epistle this is a true Aramaism, since in every case, unless it be I John ii. 21, there seems to be a definite intention to present the subject as a totality and then to deny the predicate, and not simply to deny the predicate of *any* member of the class.

We have therefore six conspicuous types of construction (to omit other types adduced by Burney which seem less significant) which present at least a *prima facie* case for Aramaism in the Gospel, and of these only two are doubtfully represented in the Epistle. If we should conclude that the Greek of the Gospel has indeed an Aramaic colouring—and I think it is difficult to resist this conclusion,—then it is certainly an important fact that the Epistle lacks such colouring, except to such a small extent as might be readily accounted for by the direct influence of the Gospel upon its author. Some years ago the Manchester Hellenistic Seminar undertook a careful examination of the language of the Epistle for traces of Aramaism, and had to report that no such traces were to be found, apart from the two uses noted above, unless one should regard as Aramaism the use of asyndeton and parataxis, and the somewhat excessive use of personal pronouns. But these do not require to be explained by the hypothesis of Aramaic influence in the Epistle. If they go at all beyond the usage of non-literary Koiné as represented by papyri, they are just such traits of style as might be caught by an imitator of the Gospel. And if we are to accept, with Torrey and Burney, actual cases of mistranslation in the Gospel—and I think that some of the cases they allege have much plausibility—then we must say that the Epistle affords no such case, if we accept the possibility of ὅτι in v. 9.

The bearing of this upon the question of the authorship of the Epistle depends upon the view taken of the Gospel. If we reject the view of Burney and Torrey, that the Gospel, as a whole, is a translation of an Aramaic original¹—a view which has found little acceptance, and which I believe is almost demonstrably false—then there are two possibilities. Either the Evangelist was bilingual, and sometimes thought in Aramaic while he wrote in Greek, or he was a monoglot Greek and used Aramaic sources which had been literally translated into Greek. That he may have had such sources, whether written or oral, is in itself probable enough, but although putative Aramaisms may be more common in some parts than in others, the Aramaic colouring in the style seems too pervasive to allow us to mark off portions of the work as representing Aramaic sources while attributing other portions to free Greek composition. It seems therefore probable that the Gospel is the work of a bilingual writer. There is no evidence that the writer of the Epistle was such a person.

From style we turn to vocabulary. In view of the much greater length of the Gospel, and the greater variety of its themes, we shall be prepared to find that its vocabulary is very much more extensive, and so indeed it is. It is the more striking to find that the Epistle has no fewer than thirty-nine words or expressions which are not to be found in the Gospel.² This, however, is proportionately no greater than the number of words to be found in any given Pauline Epistle which do not occur in any other Pauline Epistle.³ Indeed in most of the Epistles a larger number of such words occurs. We should, however, bear in mind (i) that the Fourth Gospel is more than twice the length of the longest Pauline Epistle, and therefore more likely to contain a fairly representative vocabulary, and (ii) that Paul has a large vocabulary, and that the Johannine vocabulary, if we take the Gospel and the

¹ If this view seemed tenable, it would be tempting to recognise in the author of the Epistle the translator of the Gospel.

² Including the phrases, πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ, ἡμέρα τῆς κρίσεως, ὁμολογεῖν ἁμαρτίας, ὀνόματι πιστεύειν, where, though the constituent words are found in the Gospel, their combination forms a distinct locution which is not found there.

³ See Harrison, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles*, pp. 20-26.

First Epistle together, is a relatively small one, so that the number of peculiar words in the Epistle is more noticeable.

As for words which occur in the Gospel but not in the Epistle, many of them are such that their absence could in no case be significant, since they belong to the narrative or other portions of the work which have no parallel in the Epistle. But there are certain words and groups of words which are either so frequent in the Gospel, or so intimately connected with leading Johannine ideas, that their absence from the Epistle is remarkable. We may classify them as follows, noting the number of times each word occurs in the Gospel.

(i) General religious and theological terms :

σώζειν 6 (+ σωτηρία once)

ἀπολλύναι 10 (+ ἀπώλεια once)

ἀνιστάναι 8

ἀνάστασις 4

ζωοποιεῖν 3

εἰρήνη 6

χάρις 4

ἀγιάζειν 4

προσκυνεῖν 11

δεῖ (of divine necessity) 8 (and δεῖ with general reference twice.)

(ii) References to the O.T. and Jewish background :

γραφή (of the Scriptures) 12 (+ γράμματα with this reference once).

γράφειν (with this reference) 10.

νόμος 14

(iii) Terms referring to the idea of Judgment : ¹

κρίνειν 19

κρίσις 11 (+ κριμα once ; in I John only ἡμέρα τῆς κρίσεως which is not in John).

¹ In spite of the extreme frequency of the theme of judgment in the Gospel, καταγινώσκειν, which occurs in the Epistle, is never used.

(iv) Christological terms :

Κύριος (of Christ) 41 (+ 3 doubtful readings)

δόξα 18

δοξάζειν 21 (+ 1 doubtful reading)

(v) Terms special to the Johannine theology :

ἀναβαίνειν 16 (in special sense, 5)

καταβαίνειν 17 (in special sense, 11)

ἄνω, ἄνωθεν 8 (in special sense, 5)

ὑποῦν 5

(vi) Other terms characteristic of the Fourth Gospel :

θέλημα 11

ἐξουσία 8

πέμπειν 32

ῥῆμα 12

φιλεῖν 13

φίλος 6

τιμᾶν 6 (+ *τιμή* once, *ἀτιμάζειν* once)

ζητεῖν 34

καρπός (always in
metaphor) 10

δοκεῖν 8

ἴδιος 15 (the Epistle uses *ἑαυτοῦ*)

These thirty-three terms are all of a kind which might have been serviceable in the composition of such a work as the Epistle, and many of them are so frequent in the Fourth Gospel that it would be somewhat surprising if the same author avoided them completely in writing upon themes akin to those which he treated in the Gospel. Is it likely, we may ask, that this author should have written a second work upon some of the central Christian themes, without using the words which came so easily to him for the ideas of being saved and lost, for grace and peace, for divine judgment, for the will of God, for the divine necessity (*δεῖ*), for "bearing fruit" in Christian living—without referring to Christ as Lord, to His glory, to His descent and ascent, or to the resurrection—without ever falling into such familiar expres-

sions as *πέμπειν*, *ζητεῖν*, or *φιλεῖν* and *φίλος*? No one can say it is impossible, but on the other hand, it cannot be said that an examination of the vocabulary, any more than of the style, leaves us without misgivings about the common authorship of the two works.

To sum up: The style of the Epistle has a strong general similarity to that of the Gospel, but is on the whole more monotonous and narrower in range, while it nevertheless uses certain idioms and figures which are absent from the Gospel; and it lacks a whole range of idioms which are characteristic of the Gospel, and are plausibly held to indicate a Semitic character from which the Epistle is free. Its vocabulary overlaps with that of the Gospel, but lacks a large number of highly significant terms characteristic of the latter. While these facts cannot be said to disprove identity of authorship, they leave it in grave doubt.

II. COMPARISON OF THOUGHT.

We turn now from form to content, and enquire how far the ideas of the Epistle, and its religious or theological standpoint, are identical with those of the Gospel, or differ from them significantly.

The extent to which the two writings, as compared with the rest of the New Testament, represent a common standpoint, need not be shown. It is obvious to any reader, and has been elaborated by many commentators. That there are certain differences is also notorious, and not surprising. A writer who exactly repeats himself in two separate works betrays an unfertile mind. Moreover, it is natural enough that some of the themes treated in the Gospel should be lacking in the Epistle, a brief work with a restricted aim.

It is perhaps worthy of note that the Epistle has no quotations from the Old Testament, only one direct allusion to it, and few indirect echoes of Old Testament language, while the Gospel has very many indirect echoes, a large number of direct allusions, and abundant quotations, as well as some arguments which presuppose Rabbinical interpretations of the Old Testament. There is thus an extensive Jewish element in the Gospel, which is almost absent from the Epistle. But this difference might be accounted

for by the difference in aim of the two writings, as well as by the fact that the Gospel purports to transmit the teaching of Jesus, which has a Jewish context. It is to be observed that those chapters of the Gospel which have on the whole most affinity with the Epistle, xiii-xvii, offer few quotations, and fewer indirect echoes of the O.T. than elsewhere.

In order to obtain evidence which might point *prima facie* to difference of authorship, it would be necessary to show that there are in the Epistle a number of divergences from the Gospel which are not isolated or occasional, but represent together a tendency of thought different from, or even inconsistent with, the thought of the Gospel. I believe that this can be shown.

1. In the first place there are several points in which the Epistle stands nearer than the Gospel to general or popular Christian beliefs, and particularly in three respects ; in respect of eschatology, of the significance attached to the death of Christ, and of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

(i) It is generally recognised that of all N.T. writings the Fourth Gospel is the one in which the eschatology inherited by Christianity from Judaism is most radically transformed. In the Epistle, on the other hand, the eschatological hope is fully alive. It looks forward to "Day of Judgment" (*ἡμέρα τῆς κρίσεως*, iv. 17), associated with Christ's "Advent" (*παρουσία*)—both terms absent from the Fourth Gospel, but characteristic of popular Christian belief. Christians must desire that "when He is manifested we may obtain a confident standing,¹ and not be ashamed before Him at His *parusia*" (ii. 28). Here the term *φανερωθῆναι* is used with reference to the future Advent of Christ, whereas in the Gospel it is used only of His historical appearance.

This second Advent or manifestation of Christ is associated with a change in the nature, or status, of believers. "We are now children of God, and it has not yet been made manifest what we shall be. We know that if He is manifested we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is" (iii. 2). The writer adds, "Everyone who has this hope in him purifies

¹ *παρηγορία*—a word used in a different sense in the Gospel.

himself, as He is pure." That is to say, the hope of a transfiguration at the second Advent is made into an ethical motive. In the Gospel there is no hint of this. There, the status of "children of God" is absolute. It is attained by "receiving the Logos" (i. 12), or (it is implied) by being "born of the Spirit" (iii. 5), and it is not suggested that there is any higher status yet to be attained. We must observe that the term "rebirth" (*παλιγγενεσία*) could be used of that transfiguration which the righteous should undergo in the Age to Come (Mt. xix. 28), when they should become "like the angels" (Mk. xii. 25), who are "sons of God" (Lk. xx. 36). It appears that this eschatological belief lies behind the doctrine of rebirth in the Fourth Gospel, since it is there connected with the eschatological idea of the Kingdom of God. The Evangelist means that the eschatological hope of "rebirth," or transfiguration, is now fulfilled, like all other such hopes, for those who believe in Christ. The author of the Epistle does not seem to have understood the doctrine of rebirth in this way. The Christian is indeed "born of God," but that is not the fulfilment, or at least not the final fulfilment, of the eschatological hope. A "child of God" now, he will be something more glorious still at the *parusia*.

The Epistle indeed shares the common conviction of all N.T. writers that the Age to Come has begun, and like the Gospel it affirms that the believer already possesses eternal life. But unlike the Gospel it remains bound to the time-scheme of popular eschatology. While in the Gospel the whole life of the Church is viewed *sub specie eternitatis*, in the Epistle the Church is living in a brief period of preparation and expectancy, on the eve of the fulfilment of its hopes.

The author has a curious proof that the Advent cannot much longer be delayed, a proof which depends entirely upon the acceptance of popular eschatological beliefs. It is a very ancient part of eschatological tradition that before the coming of the Day of the Lord we are to expect the appearance of the great Adversary, Beliar or Antichrist. The fullest exposition of this belief, in a Christian context, is to be found in the Apocalypse of John. In Paul Antichrist appears as the "Man of Sin" (II Thess. ii. 3-10), who is to commit sacrilege in the Temple. In Mark xiii. 14

Antichrist is "the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet," who is similarly to profane the Temple. Mark also knows of "false Christs" and "false prophets," whose appearance is to precede the second Advent (xiii. 22), but these are not identified with Antichrist. The author of the Epistle declares that the false prophets, whom he recognises in the heretical teachers who deny the Incarnation, are themselves "antichrists," so that the prophecy of the great Adversary is fulfilled in them. "Every spirit (i.e. every inspired person, or prophet) who does not acknowledge Jesus is not of God; and this is *τό τοῦ ἀντι-χρίστου*, the fact of Antichrist, which you have heard is to come, and which is already in the world" (iv. 3). Because the prophecy is thus fulfilled, we may know that the Advent must be very near: "As you have heard that Antichrist is to come, so now many antichrists have come: from which we know that it is the last hour" (ii. 18).

It is extremely difficult to find a place for this doctrine within the scheme of the Fourth Gospel. There the great Adversary is Satan himself, the Prince of this world, and his day is not yet to come, for by the death and resurrection of Christ he is already judged and cast out. If there is any human Antichrist, it is Judas the traitor, into whom Satan entered, and who is thereafter called, like Paul's Man of Sin, "the son of perdition" (Jn. xiii. 27, xvii. 12, II Thess. ii. 3).¹ The Gospel indeed knows (like Mark) of false Christs to come ("if anyone comes in his own name . . .," v. 43), but such a false Christ is not Antichrist. His coming does not precede the advent of the true Christ. On the contrary he comes too late, when the true Christ has already appeared and been glorified. The idea of a collective Antichrist in the persons of heretical teachers is entirely peculiar to the Epistle. The eschatological myth that lies behind it is either ignored by the Fourth Evangelist, or interpreted by him in an entirely different way.

(ii) The death of Christ is in the Epistle interpreted as an *λασμός* for the sin of the world (ii. 2), much as Paul describes it

¹ The possibility that in describing Judas as *ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας* the Evangelist was alluding to a current designation of Antichrist is a suggestion passed on to us through Professor Lightfoot.

as *ἱλαστήριον*.¹ God has provided this *ἱλασμός* (iv. 10) and thereby “forgives us our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness” (i. 9). The doctrine of the Epistle then seems clear. It is similar to that which is set forth in Rom. iii. 25, and in Hebrews *passim*, and implied in 1 Pet. i 18-19, Mt. xxvi. 28. In other words it corresponds with general early Christian belief.

In the Fourth Gospel the death of Christ is first and foremost that by which Christ is “glorified” or “exalted” (xii. 23, 32-33, xiii. 31), and by virtue of which He “draws” all men into the sphere of eternal life (xii. 32, xi. 52). It is the means by which the virtue and power of His own being—His flesh and blood—are released for the sustenance of eternal life in mankind (vi. 51). His death is a sacrifice, on the one hand as being self-dedication (*ἀγιάζω ἑμαντόν* xvii. 19), and on the other hand, as an expression of His “love to the end” for His own (xiii. 1), as a man will lay down his life for a friend (xv. 13), or a shepherd for his flock threatened by the wolf (x. 15). It is not a sacrifice for the expiation of sin.

The only passage which might reasonably be adduced in support of any doctrine of expiation is that which speaks of Christ as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (i. 29). But the precise significance of the symbol of the Lamb here is not certain. If, as is often held (though in my opinion wrongly), it is the Paschal Lamb, then we must observe that the Paschal Lamb was certainly not regarded in the first century, or for many centuries earlier, as an expiatory sacrifice, whatever may have been its original significance. Another view widely held is that the reference is to Isaiah liii. 7. Here the Servant of the Lord, whose life is made a sin-offering, is incidentally compared,

¹ The meaning of these terms I have examined elsewhere (*The Bible and the Greeks*, pp. 82-95). In pagan usage *ἱλάσκεσθαι* and *ἐξιλάσκεσθαι* most commonly mean to propitiate or placate. In biblical usage they mean to expiate sin, or to remove the taint of ceremonial or moral impurity, or ultimately to forgive sin. It might seem possible that the description of Christ as *παράκλητος πρὸς τὸν πατέρα* in a context which speaks of Him also as *ἱλασμός* (ii. 1-2) suggests the sense of propitiation; but in the same context the blood of Christ is said to cleanse, *καθαρίζειν*, a term which in the LXX alternates with *ἱλάσκεσθαι* as a translation of *כִּפֶּה*. The meaning of *ἱλασμός* therefore is probably “expiation,” i.e. a means of removing guilt, or of forgiveness.

in the LXX, to a lamb (*ἀμνός*), as also to a sheep (*πρόβατον*). *Αμνός*, however, is notoriously a mistranslation of the Hebrew *למנו* "ewe." Burney has shown that in several cases the Fourth Evangelist betrays a knowledge of the Hebrew original in quoting from the O.T. (*Aramaic Origin*, pp. 114-125), and we may doubt whether he would have based a designation of Christ upon a mistranslation. In any case it is not *qua* *ἀμνός* that the Servant is made a sin-offering. It is His patience under suffering that is the *tertium comparationis*. It may usefully be recalled that the typical sin-offering was not a lamb but a goat. It is thus difficult to suppose that the evangelist would have introduced the idea of expiation in a cryptic allusion which suggests that idea only by such a tortuous process of association. It seems more likely that the symbol of the Lamb is derived, like some other symbols in the Fourth Gospel, from apocalyptic imagery reinterpreted. The horned lamb or young ram is a sufficiently well-established symbol for the Leader of God's flock, and it recurs in the Apocalypse of John in the vision of the Lamb upon Mount Sion (xiv. 1-2). If, however, we do not interpret the Lamb of God as an expiatory offering, then the idea of expiation never occurs in the Fourth Gospel. But this is the doctrine of the Epistle, which in this respect moves on a different level of thought, nearer to that of general early Christian belief.

(iii) The Fourth Evangelist has a very distinctive doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is true that he sometimes uses the term *pneuma* in that neuter and impersonal sense which is most common in the Old Testament, and which was general in the early Church, to judge from the Acts of the Apostles and from those places in Paul which reflect popular usage. But in the closing discourses of the Fourth Gospel the Spirit is more unequivocally personal than anywhere else in the New Testament. He is, so to speak, Christ's *alter ego*, in whom Christ Himself returns to His people. *Vice Christi*, He teaches and guides them and reminds them of His words. He is the Paraclete. Where pronouns are used, their gender is often masculine, agreeing with the gender of *παράκλητος*, and not neuter, agreeing with *πνεῦμα*, as strict grammar would require.

The Epistle, on the other hand, applies the term *παράκλητος*

to Christ alone, and uses the term *pneuma* in a way which approximates to popular usage as we know it from Paul and the Acts. The two chief passages are iv. 1-6 and v. 6-8. The former passage begins: "Do not believe every *pneuma*, but test the *pneumata* whether they be of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." We may compare I Cor. xiv. 32: "The *pneumata* of the prophets are subject to the prophets." *Pneuma* is used in the neuter sense of "prophetic inspiration." The same sense is maintained in the verses which follow. There is a *pneuma* which confesses Christ, and there is a *pneuma* which denies Him. The former is of God, the latter is not. "From this we recognise," adds the writer, "the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." The expression "the Spirit of truth" is used in John xiv. 17, xv. 26, xvi. 13, but in each case this Spirit is described as Paraclete, and is spoken of in fully personal terms. In John iv. 1-6 there is no suggestion of personality in the spirit. The prophet speaks by inspiration and this inspiration may be divine or not divine in its origin and character. In the former case it inspires true utterance, in the latter, false.

The other passage, v. 6-8, is a notorious *crux interpretum*: "It is the spirit that bears witness, because the spirit is the truth. For there are three that bear witness, the spirit and the water and the blood, and these three are in unity." It is unlikely that the witness of the spirit here is the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum*, for the water and the blood must stand in some way for external or objective facts by which the true faith is confirmed, and the consentient witness of the spirit must be of the same objective character. In accordance with iv. 1-6 we might understand the reference to be to prophetic inspiration in the Church. As the false prophets, speaking by an inspiration not of God, deny that Christ is come in the flesh, so the true Christian prophets, speaking by divine inspiration, declare the reality of His Incarnation, and this confirms the witness of the historical facts of His Baptism and Passion, a witness which is perpetuated in the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. We may compare Ignatius's appeal to his own prophetic utterance in Phil. vii. 1-2. Ignatius recalls how he cried out "with the voice of God"—"Pay heed to the bishop, the presbytery and the deacons." He

adds, "The *spirit* proclaimed, speaking thus, 'Do nothing without the bishop'." If this is the meaning, then πνεῦμα is not more personal here than in iv. 1-6. It is true that the phrase τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες is in the masculine gender, treating the three witnesses as personal. But if this is a personifying of the spirit, it also personifies the water and the blood. It is no true equivalent for the expression in the Gospel: "When the Paraclete comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth which proceeds from the Father, He (ἐκεῖνος) will bear witness concerning Me" (xv. 26).

In these three points therefore the teaching of the Epistle differs from that of the Gospel. The differences have often been observed, though they have sometimes been minimised by harmonising interpretation. But the fact to which I think full justice has not been done is that the differences are not casual or unconnected. They all mean that the Epistle stands very near to the common Christianity of the early period, while the Fourth Gospel shows a remarkable and individual development from this common position. But the three points in question, Eschatology, the Atonement, and the Spirit, are central to early Christian belief and doctrine, and divergences on such points raise serious doubts about unity of authorship.

2. There are passages in the Epistle which suggest that it stands closer than the Gospel to the "Gnosticism" against which both writings are directed. I use the term "Gnosticism" as a convenient label for a tendency in thought which can be traced both within and outside Christianity, e.g. in Philo and the Hermetica, in Valentinus and other Christian heretics. It is generally recognised that both the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle are in some ways akin to this tendency, while both of them seek to undermine an illegitimate application of Gnosticizing thought to Christianity.

One of the characteristic mannerisms of the writer of the Epistle is his habit of enunciating accepted maxims or axioms of the Christian faith, either by way of definitions beginning with "This is . . .," or with the formula "We know that. . . ." These maxims are usually found to be such as could be documented out

of the common tradition of Christianity in general, or out of the Fourth Gospel in particular. There are, however, two exceptions.

(i) 1 John i. 4: "This is the message which we heard from Him, that God is light." Where is this ἀγγελία to be found? It is not in the Synoptic Gospels, nor in Paul, nor in the Fourth Gospel. On the other hand, it is a commonplace of current Hellenistic religious thought, deriving from an amalgam of Platonism and Zoroastrianism. Thus in the *Poimandres* there is a vision of unbounded light, and this is interpreted to the seer by the god Poimandres: "That light am I, Reason, thy God." (Τὸ φῶς ἐκεῖνο ἐγὼ εἰμι Νοῦς ὁ σὸς θεός), and later we have the expression, Ὁ πάντων πατήρ ὁ Νοῦς, ὦν ζωὴ καὶ φῶς (*Corp. Herm.*, I. 6, 12). Philo, in part, adopts this doctrine of God as light. In *De Praem.* 45 he argues that as all things are perceived by light, but light only by itself, so God, being His own light, is known by means of Himself alone. Elsewhere, he guards himself against too complete an identification of God with light; *De Somn.* I. 75: "First, God is light . . . and not only light, but the archetype of every other light; or rather, more ancient and higher than any archetype." And in *De Opif.* 31, he says that the "light" in Gen. i. 4 is θεῖου λόγου εἰκὼν: it stands, not for God, but for the Logos. The personal, transcendent God of his Jewish faith is not to be wholly absorbed in the concept of eternal Light which he derives from Hellenistic speculation. The Fourth Gospel is similarly cautious. For him light is "in" the Logos, or the Logos is itself the φῶς ἀληθινόν (i.e. the archetypal light), and so Christ in his incarnate life is described (in terms borrowed from Jewish language glorifying the Temple and the Law) as "the Light of the World." But God the Father is never described as Light. For the Fourth Evangelist, as for Philo in his more cautious mood, He is higher than the archetypal light. It is, therefore, remarkable that the Epistle formulates the fundamental Christian ἀγγελία in the terms, ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστίν (the exact expression which Philo accepts and then qualifies). We may observe that later Christian thought did not hesitate to make use of the idea of God as light, and of Christ as the effulgence of the light—an idea crystallised in the phrase of the Creed, φῶς ἐκ φωτός.

(ii) I John iii. 2: "We know that if He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is." How do we know this? Certain passages in the N.T. may, no doubt, be cited which might constructively be held to justify the statement, but we shall nowhere find this precise inference: we shall see Him as He is: therefore we shall be like Him.¹ It is, however, an inference readily drawn within the universe of discourse of Hellenistic mysticism, which holds as one of its fundamental doctrines that vision, or knowledge, of God as He truly is makes man divine (*Corp. Herm.*, I. 26, etc.). Translated into Christian terms, this gives us the doctrine of the Epistle; the vision of Christ as He is makes us like Him.² The Fourth Gospel, however, does not hold out the prospect of becoming like Christ through the vision of Him in His true being. The Epistle again stands nearer to thought of a Gnosticizing type.

If it be thought that a case has been made out for the view that these peculiarities of I John may be explained by reference to "Gnosticism," then we may perhaps seek here a key to some other problems in the interpretation of the Epistle.

In iii. 9 we read, "Everyone who is born of God does not sin, because His seed (*σπέρμα*) abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." There is in the Fourth Gospel no reference to the divine *sperma*. It might indeed be urged that the reference is implicit in the metaphor of divine generation. But surely there is something more here. The divine *sperma* is an element abiding within a man, which guarantees sinlessness.

Now one of the characteristic features of "Gnosticism" in all its forms, is the doctrine that there is resident in man, or at least in some men, a divine element; and if he can disentangle this divine element from the material elements with which it has become involved, it is possible for him to rise to the sphere of

¹ It might be possible to take the second *ὅτι* (= "because") in direct dependence on *οἶδαμεν*: "we know that we shall be like Him, and we know it because we shall see Him as He is." The implied major premise is then the frequently enunciated maxim of Hellenistic mysticism "Like is known by like." But this seems a less natural construction.

² In view of this remarkable similarity to Hellenistic thought, we might perhaps venture to suggest an answer to the question, What is that mysterious and more glorious destiny that awaits those who are now children of God? Is it *θεωθῆναι*? Later Christian thought did not shrink from such language.

pure being, and become immortal. In the *Poimandres* the "essential Man" (οὐσιώδης ἄνθρωπος) within empirical humanity is the heavenly Man who fell, and who after enlightenment will ascend again to His Father and be deified. In the *De Regeneratione* the divine element is the Logos formed within a man by rebirth. In *Corp. Herm.* IV, the divine is introduced into human nature by baptism in the Bowl of Reason (νοῦς). For Philo similarly true humanity (ὁ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἄνθρωπος) is the same as "purest Reason" (νοῦς καθαρώτατος), and is identified both with the heavenly Man who is an "offspring" (γέννημα) of God, and with the Logos. In less philosophical terms he speaks of Israel thus: "Their bodies were moulded of human *spermata*, but their souls grew of divine, wherefore they have become kinsfolk of God (ἀγχίσποροι θεοῦ)," *Vit. Mos.* I. 279. Similar ideas are found in the Christian and semi-Christian Gnostics. In the Gnostic Justin's Book of Baruch man is the progeny of Elohim and Eden (or Earth), and while his soul comes from Eden, his *pneuma* is the *pneuma* of Elohim, which is ultimately to be redeemed.¹ In Basilides the God-who-is-not sent forth a *sperma* from which proceeded three "sonships" (υἱοτήτες). One of these is imprisoned in matter, and its release and ascent is the redemption of man and the restoration of all things.² According to Valentinus man was created by the Demiurge, out of lower elements, but Wisdom, unknown to Him, inserted into some men the "spiritual Seed" (σπέρμα πνευματικόν, or σπέρμα τῆς Ἀχαμώθ).³ Thus there are good souls and evil souls. The former are those which are "receptive of the Seed" (δεκτικαὶ τοῦ σπέρματος).⁴ The function of Jesus as Saviour is to open a way for the *spermata* into the *Pleroma*.⁵ Final salvation comes "when the Seeds of God have been gathered together."⁶

It appears that a doctrine like that of Valentinus would account for the use of the term *sperma* in the Epistle. Those in whom the σπέρμα τοῦ θεοῦ resides are the "good souls" of Valentinus, which are δεκτικαὶ τοῦ σπέρματος, and accordingly they are sinless. It is to be observed that the writer has not fully harmonised

¹ Hippolytus, *Philosophoumena*, V. 26-27.

² *Ibid.*, VII. 20-27.

³ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, I. v. 6, vii. 2, 3; *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, 53, 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 54, 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 38, 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 49, 1.

this doctrine of sinlessness with his recognition that as a matter of fact Christians do sin, and require an "expiation" and an "advocate with the Father." It can hardly be argued that Valentinus is dependent upon this single N.T. passage for his doctrine of the *sperma*. My object in tracing the development of this doctrine in the Hermetica, Philo, and the Gnostics, was to suggest that the doctrine of Valentinus and the passing allusion in the Epistle alike presuppose a familiar background, in which the idea of the divine *sperma* was current.

Somewhat more diffidently I would suggest a similar explanation for the cryptic allusions to the "anointing" (χρίσμα), in ii. 20, 27. After referring to the false prophets, the writer goes on, "And *you*" (emphatic *ὑμεῖς*) "have a chrism from the Most High, and all of you have knowledge." Again, after a further reference to the false teachers, he says, "And as for you" (emphatic *ὑμεῖς* again, this time out of construction), "the chrism which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His chrism teaches you (and it is true and no lie), and as He has taught you, abide in Him." The chrism is a means of knowledge. It was received once in the past, and is now an immanent power, teaching the truth. What is the chrism? The accepted answer is, the Holy Spirit, and this answer is supported by passages in which the verb *χρίειν* is associated with the gift of the Spirit to Christ at His baptism (Ac. iv. 27, x. 38) or to Christians at theirs (II Cor. i. 21). It may be so. If so, we may observe, it betrays a way of thinking about the Spirit which is not quite that of the Fourth Gospel.

But the chrism is, in any case, not explicitly brought into connexion with what the Epistle teaches about the Spirit. The term is introduced, like *sperma*, as though it were a technical term whose meaning would be recognised at once by the readers. Moreover, in each case where it appears, there is a contrast between the heretical teachers and the readers of the Epistle, sharpened by the emphatic use of *ὑμεῖς*. The language, indeed, of i. 20 might equally well be rendered, "You too have a chrism." Suppose we take that meaning. The implication then is that the heretical teachers claimed a chrism, in virtue of which they possessed

gnosis and therefore competence to teach. Is there any reason to suspect that such language was used in Gnostic circles? I think there is. In the Naassene document cited by Hippolytus (v. 9, 121-122), we read, "We alone of all men are Christians, who complete the mystery at the third portal, and are anointed there with speechless chrism." Here then we have heretical teachers who claim to have a superior *gnosis* in virtue of an initiation which is described as a chrism,—exactly the situation we have postulated. That orthodox Christians could take over such language, and claim a true unction over against the false, is shown by Ignatius, Eph. xvii. : "Be not anointed with the ill-odour of the teaching of the Prince of this world, lest he take you captive from the life that is set before you. Why do we not all become wise, receiving the knowledge of God, which is Jesus Christ." The purport of this passage is similar to that of I John ii. 20, 27. To be "anointed" is to be initiated into *gnosis*. The "chrism" is the teaching communicated to Christians at baptism, by which they are initiated into the Christian "mystery." It is "the word of God" which "abides in you" (ii. 14).

I will refrain from adducing other and perhaps more doubtful examples of possible "Gnostic" influence upon the language of the Epistle. I would not be understood to suggest that the writer, in taking over such forms of expression, was intending to teach "Gnostic" doctrine. On the contrary, I conceive him to be, at least in intention, using the weapons of the heretics against themselves. The sense which he would give, for example, to the 'seed' and the 'chrism,' whatever it is, would in any case be different from that which they bear in heretical writings. But we have here evidence that the writer of the Epistle stood in close contact with that movement of religious thought out of which Christian and semi-Christian Gnosticism came. So, indeed, did the Fourth Evangelist. But in the Fourth Gospel the "Gnostic" elements are thoroughly mastered and absorbed into a unified and highly individual Christian theology, and the writer is circumspect in his use of Gnostic-sounding language. In the Epistle primitive Christian and "Gnostic" ways of thought and expression lie side by side. Set forth nakedly as they are, the doctrines of the Sperm and the Chrism, of God as light, and of

assimilation to Christ by the vision of Him, are more unguarded approximations to "Gnosticism," at least in form, than anything to be found in the Fourth Gospel.

To sum up : the doubts of unity of authorship which were suggested by the evidence of style and language are strengthened by a study of the thought. It might be possible to allay such doubts by the hypothesis that the two writings were produced by the same author at different times, if we were to allow a substantial interval during which his thought and style may have altered. We should then have to determine which of the two is likely to have been written earlier. On general grounds it might be argued that the Epistle is the earlier. The writer might reasonably be supposed to have started from a standpoint nearer to that of popular Christianity, and to have developed his distinctive theology as his mind matured. And upon a first contact with "Gnostic" thought he might have been more ready to adopt its phraseology than appeared wise upon further reflection.

But there is definite evidence to suggest that the Fourth Gospel is, in fact, presupposed by the Epistle. Take, for example, the passage on the "new commandment," ii. 7-8. Why this curious play upon "new" and "old"? It would be difficult to regard it as much more than a rhetorical conceit, unless we assume that the writer and the readers had before them the similar passage in John xiii. 34: "I give you a new commandment, to love one another." The commandment of love is a "new commandment." In what sense? Not, says the writer of the Epistle, in the sense that it is an addition to the original Gospel, "which you had from the first": but in the sense that in Christ there is a new creation; old things are passed away and all is become new; "the true light is already shining." This is the fact "which is true in Him, and (consequently) in you" (who are living in the new age which He inaugurated). This reference to the Fourth Gospel gives a clear point to the passage in the Epistle.

Again, in iii. 8-15 we have a passage where the connexion of thought is not too clear at first sight. Its gist is as follows: The child of God does not sin, for he obeys the commandment "love one another." This distinguishes the children of God from the

children of the devil. He who does not love his brother is no child of God (οὐκ ἐστὶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ), but of the devil ; for he is a murderer (ἀνθρωποκτόνος), like Cain, and no murderer has eternal life. The idea of murder is, to say the least, somewhat abruptly introduced. In John viii. 44-47, however, the ideas, "child of God" (ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ), "child of the devil" (ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου), and "murderer" (ἀνθρωποκτόνος), are brought together in a context where the reference to murder is in place, because the Jews are seeking to kill Jesus, and thereby prove themselves children of that primeval murderer the devil (viii. 40-41, 44). The thought of the Epistle seems to have been suggested by the passage in the Gospel.

I will forbear to give further examples, and will refer to the argument in Dr. Brooke's Introduction, pp. xix-xxvii, which seems to me to leave little doubt of the priority of the Fourth Gospel.

If, therefore, we take the view that the two writings are the work of a single author, we must conclude that he wrote the Epistle after the Gospel. We should then have to suppose that as he grew older he not only lost something of his power of expression (as witnessed by the inferiority of style), but also reverted in some respects to a more pedestrian outlook ; or alternatively that he wrote somewhat carelessly, or deliberately descended to the level of his readers ; or perhaps that in writing the Gospel he was lifted above his own level by the splendour of his theme. None of these suppositions can be said to be impossible, but it is perhaps simpler to conclude that the two works are by different authors.¹ If I may close, as I began, on a note of mere impressionism, I should say that the Epistle appears to me, for all its likeness in certain respects to the Gospel, to reveal a mind which thinks and expresses itself in significantly different ways ; a mind inferior to that of the Evangelist in spiritual quality, in intellectual power and in literary artistry. The writer of the Epistle has a deep

¹ Those critics who find in the Fourth Gospel evidence of the work of more than one hand might reasonably attribute to the author of the Epistle a share in its composition ; but I think the evidence we have considered makes it unlikely that such share went beyond minor editorial work. The mind that gave to the Gospel as a whole its unique stamp is not the mind revealed in the Epistle.

piety, a warm humanity, insight into the ways of the human soul, and a firm grasp of the fundamental Christian Gospel, but to speak of him as a religious genius or a philosophical thinker would be flattery ; yet no description short of this would fit the author of the Fourth Gospel.

I conceive the First Epistle of John, then, to have been written by an author who was quite possibly a disciple of the Fourth Evangelist, and certainly a diligent student of his work. He has soaked himself in the Gospel, assimilating its ideas and forming his style upon its model. He sets out to develop, commend and apply certain of these ideas to meet the particular needs of the situation. His work is therefore in one aspect our earliest commentary upon the Fourth Gospel, and has definite value as such. If he does not fully comprehend the whole range of Johannine thought, he has certainly given an effective and often deeply searching application of its main purport. Nor is his work altogether derivative. He has his own special outlook, and the Epistle represents a definite stage towards that normal or central Christianity which emerged from the New Testament period. Its specific character and significance become clearer when it is no longer read as a great author's second thoughts, but allowed to speak for itself.