

and impurity — portrayed under the names, Nicolaitans, Balaamites, and Jezebel (ii. 6, 14, 20) — are exercising their seductive power upon the harassed and oppressed Christian communities.

And now are heard the mutterings of the coming storm of judgment. When the sixth seal — one of the dread mysteries of the future — is opened, there is a great convulsion of nature; the heavens are rolled together as a scroll, and the mighty ones of earth hide themselves in caves and rocks to shield themselves “from the face of him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come, and who is able to stand?” (vi. 16, 17). Deeper roll the thunders of judgment as the last mystery is unlocked (ch. viii.). Dread portents follow one another in quick succession. The golden censer which had held the prayers of the saints is now filled with the fire of judgment and cast upon the earth (vv. 3–5). The prayers of God’s people are heard and vengeance descends upon their enemies. Woe after woe, plague after plague, is inflicted upon the wicked world. A fiery tempest overwhelms Antichrist in utter destruction (ch. ix.). The sacred city which is now “spiritually called Sodom and Egypt” (xi. 8) is doomed, and as it disappears, the spiritual theocracy, the heavenly city of God, emerges, and triumphant voices are heard to cry: “The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.” “We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, which art and which wast; because thou hast taken thy great power, and didst reign” (xi. 15, 17).

The evil world-power is more directly described in the middle chapters of the book. Without attempting to determine the meaning of the details in the description, we may point out the chief features of the apocalyptic picture of “the beast.” When the woman, “arrayed with the sun” (xii. 1), — symbol of the Jewish theocracy, — brings forth her son, the Messiah, a satanic power, pictured as a great red dragon, appears and persecutes the woman and her seed. We hear the clash of opposing forces, but “the



earth helped the woman" (xii. 16) and defeated the wicked purpose of the "accuser of the brethren" (v. 10). And now the antichristian power appears under another symbol. A beast comes up from the sea (xiii. 1), that is, from the abyss, the haunt of the demons (xi. 7; xvii. 8; ix. 1, 11). His horns, heads, and diadems represent the manifold powers of Rome and the blasphemous pretensions of its emperors. The description is modelled upon Dan. vii. 7 *sq.* where the Græco-Syrian kingdom is pictured as a "beast, terrible, and powerful, and strong exceedingly." The whole world does homage to this monster. His power seems limitless and his sway unbounded. He revels in blasphemies and reeks with the blood of God's people (*vv.* 6, 7). A second beast now comes up from the land (xiii. 11). This monster aids the first. "He maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast" (xiii. 12). We seem to have here a symbol of false prophecy acting in alliance with Roman persecution. The political power of Rome and the religious fanaticism of Judaism are conceived of as coöperating for the extermination of the Church. We have seen that the Antichrist of Paul and of the Synoptics was Jewish. We seem to have here a trace of the same idea, though it is quite overshadowed by the representation of Rome as the chief embodiment of satanic hostility to Christianity. Antichrist is primarily Rome, and Jewish hostility is a secondary and subordinate manifestation of its spirit. "The combination of the two beasts brings before us a development of the anticipations formed of Antichrist. Originally Antichrist was conceived, not as a heathen world-power, but as a false Messiah. Now the work of Satan was seen in that heathen world-power. Unwilling wholly to give up the idea of the false Messiah and his deceit, men imagined the false prophet, at least, accompanying heathenism as its servant and ally. Accordingly, the symbols, as we find them in this prophecy, represent a transition stage between the Jewish Antichrist and heathen Antichristianity."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Weizsäcker, *Apostolic Age*, II. 188 (orig. p. 515).



In chapter xvii. the Roman power is most vividly depicted. It is represented by a woman seated upon the monster which has been already described. She is tricked out in meretricious ornaments, and on her forehead is an inscription which designates her as the mystic Babylon. She is "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (v. 6). This whole description is, to a considerable extent, a repetition of that given in chapter xiii. and is probably a different version of the same apocalyptic matter. The principal differences are, that in chapter xvii. the figure of the beast representing Rome is combined with that of the "great harlot," instead of with that of a second beast from the land, and that the seer gives an interpretation of several features of the symbolism. The beast was and is not, and is about to come up from the abyss and then to be destroyed (v. 8). Here is evidently a reference to the death, or supposed death, of some Roman emperor whose return to earth, either in person or in spirit, is expected. Two interpretations of the "seven heads" are given. They are the seven hills of Rome on which the woman (the city) sits (v. 9), and they are seven kings (emperors); five have died, the sixth is now living, and the seventh is yet to come (v. 10). In the present form of the book there is no little repetition, vacillation, and incongruity in the use of the symbols. Now the beast represents the empire, and now some emperor. The symbolic woman, in turn, represents the city. The interpretation of the seven heads of the beast as representing the seven hills is apparently occasioned by the use of the symbol of the woman for the city. Here, at any rate, is an incongruity in the twofold explanation of the seven heads. The first explanation (v. 9) seems less natural than the second (v. 10) and less accordant with the general use of the symbols employed. The ten horns are ten kings, confederates of the emperor, who conspire with him to "war against the Lamb" (vv. 12-14), but who also turn upon the city of Rome and utterly destroy it (vv. 16, 17). This is probably an expression of the current expect-



tation that Asiatic nations, especially the Parthians, were likely to march against the city and to overwhelm it with destruction. Thus does God use the allies of Antichrist to destroy the eternal city: "For God did put in their hearts to do his mind . . . until the words of God should be accomplished" (v. 17).

In the Apocalypse is found embodied an idea which was, no doubt, a product of popular Jewish Messianic expectations, that of the thousand years' reign of Christ and the saints (xx. 1-10).<sup>1</sup> In precisely what relation to the great world-conflict this episode stands is not made clear. After the fall of the mystic Babylon and the overthrow of the false prophet (xix. 20), a strong angel comes down out of heaven and binds Satan for a thousand years. During this period the martyrs are raised from the dead and reign with Christ. This is the first resurrection (xx. 5). At the end of the millennium Satan again marshals the nations to war against the saints, whereupon fire descends from heaven and overwhelms them in utter and final destruction (vv. 9, 10). This is the last expiring effort of Antichrist, after which appears the new heaven and the new earth and the holy city descending out of heaven from God (xxi. 1, 2). Whether this period is conceived of as preceding or following the parousia; whether the reign of Christ and the saints is on earth or in heaven; and whether the resurrection is literal or spiritual, are questions which the passage leaves unanswered. If it is regarded as subsequent to the parousia, then there would seem to be another final coming or mani-

<sup>1</sup> "The roots (of the idea of a millennial reign of the Messiah) lie in Judaism and in its sensuous ideas of an earthly blossoming-time of the Kingdom of God. . . . It was psychologically inevitable that as the Old Testament Messianic idea completed and realized itself in Christianity, the chiliastic popular belief also passed over with it into the Jewish-Christian hope for the future. Hence the Revelation of John teaches (xx. 4) that, after the coming of Christ, his steadfast confessors will rise and reign with him a thousand years." H. J. Holtzmann, Art. *Chiliasmus* in the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirchenwesen*. The millennial idea in late Judaism is discussed and illustrated by Stanton, *The Jewish and the Christian Messiah*, pp. 310-324, and by Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*. 3te. Aufl. Bd. II. pp. 522 sq.



festation of Christ ushering in the general judgment described in verses 11-15. Interpreters have attached the most various meanings to the "millennium." Elaborate eschatological programmes have been based upon it—due, in most instances, to a prosaic reading of a highly dramatic book. To me it seems likely that we have in the passage an apocalyptic fragment which represents a survival of the Jewish belief that the Messiah would establish a Kingdom on earth.



## CHAPTER V

### CONFLICT AND VICTORY

THE Apocalypse, notwithstanding its obscurities, is an important aid in transporting us back into the thought-world of the first Christian century. In its light we trace the footsteps of martyrs, and note the progress and results of that long course of struggle, oppression, and suffering which mark the late Jewish and the early Christian periods. In this book we read the story of the real *dolores Messiae*. It resounds with echoes of the time when the Jewish nation was decimated by captivities, crushed by oppression, and rent by revolutions. The imagery of the book and, perhaps, parts of its material reflect that period of bitter struggle when the Maccabees fought and died to preserve the last spark of Jewish national life from being tramped out beneath the feet of their Græco-Syrian oppressors. These events are the birth-throes of a new age. The Messiah was born of mother Israel at a time when the skies were lurid with portents of coming storms. Satan was ready and waiting to renew his persecuting zeal against the mother and her child (ch. xii.). We know from other sources how the representative of Roman political power sought the young child's life (Mt. ii. 13), and how Roman armies desecrated the temple with their idolatrous rites and laid Jerusalem in the dust. The angel of destruction marked the sanctuary for his prey, and its enemies trod the holy city under foot. Its waters were turned to blood, and dead bodies lined the streets where also the Lord had been crucified (xi. 1-8). Allusions to these events are woven into the narrative, perhaps in part in the form in which they were found depicted in a current fund of apocalyptic tradition, without any intention of setting



forth a strict chronological order of events. All such descriptions serve but to heighten the color of that picture of the great impending world-conflict which now looms upon the seer's horizon.

In their general features our author's descriptions of the Roman power remind us of those fragments of apocalyptic tradition which we have already met with in the Synoptics. The desecration and overthrow of Jerusalem, the great tribulation, the appearance of false Christs and false prophets, the occurrence of dread portents in earth and sky, and the close connection of all these events with the parousia of the Lord, are features which the two have in common. In both, as in all parts of the New Testament, the Lord's advent is regarded as near at hand. The panorama of events described in the Revelation has already begun to unfold before the eye of the seer, and the movement will be more and more rapid. The courses of history are hastening to their close. The vision is of things which must shortly come to pass (i. 1, 3; xxii. 6, 7). Events follow rapidly, crisis upon crisis, until the great final consummation when, the first heaven and the first earth having passed away, a new heaven and a new earth emerge (xxi. 1). This conception must have been vivid, intense, and overmastering in the mind of the apostolic age. It was a view of human history which must have lent deep and awful significance to the events of every hour. Every great trial which befell the Church was the harbinger of speedy deliverance from all the woes of earth; every catastrophe in human affairs the premonition of coming doom upon an ungodly world. The veil which separated the eternal world from this was very thin and near; all eyes were watching for the moment when it should be rent and the heavenly glories should burst upon the earth, revealing blessing and honor for those who had kept the faith in patience, and destruction for the cruel and corrupt, the enemies of God and man. The apocalyptic view tended to color the whole field of history with the dark hues of the present evil age. Its tendency was inevitably somewhat pessimistic.



Of course, such a conception of the future had its disadvantages. It put men under severe limitations of view respecting the prospect of the world's progress. It could not see the future course of history as a long process through which runs the "increasing purpose" of God — the growing together of wheat and tares, the gradual leavening of the world until the whole is leavened (Mt. xiii. 33). It viewed the method of God as ictic and sudden, not as gradual and patient. But this was a limitation incidental to the age and inseparable from its modes of religious thought. The Jewish Messianic expectation which required a sign still made itself felt in Christian belief. In this respect our Apocalypse is the most intensely Jewish book in the New Testament.

But, after all, the pessimism of the book is rather apparent than real. It relates only to the conditions of the present age, and not to the general course and outcome of history as a whole. If the apocalyptic view despairs of the present, it is also able to look beyond the present. If evil is now dominant, its power is still temporary. If Antichrist now reigns, yet his reign will be short. The forces of evil, "the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (xx. 8), are massing themselves for the great final conflict, but the issue will not be doubtful. Satan shall fall like lightning from heaven. The seer's philosophy of history, taken as a whole, is optimistic, as Christian thought must always be. Hard experience has, indeed, rendered impossible the Old Testament faith that the righteous will be prosperous and happy. But a new philosophy of life has been sought and won. It is derived from the unshaken Christian confidence that, however dark the present hour, God is still mindful of his own and will both vindicate himself and reward his faithful people. Apocalyptic writing belongs to an age when it was impossible to find the reward of virtue in the present world. It must be sought in the coming age. Hence Christian hope took a predominantly eschatological tone. We hear the echoes of it in almost every New Testament book. Men reminded themselves of the persecutions which the



pious in preceding ages had experienced, and sought comfort in the prospect of a great reward in heaven. When the divine promises seemed to fail, and hopes of happiness and peace turned to ashes, they directed their thoughts to the eternal city, not made with hands, and saw it descending from God out of heaven. Apocalyptic was at once the product and the cause of this vision. It fostered a form of faith and hope without which, in the dark and troublous years of persecution, the Church could hardly have survived.

A retrospective glance at the book as a whole may help us to see how some of these thoughts and hopes come to expression. Despite all eddies and back currents, there is a general onward movement in the stream of thought which we will briefly trace as illustrating the ideas of conflict and victory. Already in the epistles to the churches we have noted traces of the conditions which have just been described. The work of persecution and of corruption has begun, with the inevitable consequence that some have lost courage and made shipwreck of faith. The apocalypse of the seals portrays the power and glory of God and shows how Christ, "the Lamb in the midst of God's throne," solves the riddle of history and secures peace and blessing for his faithful disciples, while judgment is poured out upon his enemies. The description of the seven trumpets is a picture of judgment. The angel pours from his golden censer, upon the altar before the throne, the incense of the Church's prayers, and then fills the censer with the fires of the divine judgment. The trumpets now announce the successive woes which fall upon the ungodly world. In the visions of the beasts the Roman world-power first comes clearly into view. Here are sketched in mysterious symbols the nation of Israel giving birth to the Messiah, and the persecution of both by the satanic world-power; false prophecy lending itself to serve the purposes of the great beast from the abyss, and the succession of persecuting emperors. These descriptions represent the stress of the battle between evil and good. The conflict is depicted in



a variety of forms. It is a battle of archangels with the powers of hell: "Michael and his archangels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels" (xii. 7); the beast making war with the saints (xiii. 7), practising deception, doing all manner of lying wonders, and compelling men to commit sacrilege (xiii. 13-17). This conflict is followed by another vision of judgment—the apocalypse of the bowls. The mystic Babylon is overwhelmed in utter ruin. No minstrel or trumpeter is heard any more in Rome; no craftsman plies his trade; no mill is heard grinding; no lamp shines; the noise of her revelries has ceased forever (xviii. 22, 23). So ends the world-conflict.

And then bursts forth the song of victory, the hallelujah-chorus of the triumphant and rejoicing Church. The great harlot has been judged, and the blood of God's servants avenged (xix. 2). The descriptions of victory and salvation which fill the closing chapters are the most powerful passages in the book. They reflect the intensity of the faith in the certain triumph of God's Kingdom which still survived in spite of calamity and apostasy. The blessedness of that glorious time is depicted in a variety of striking images. One is that of the marriage-supper of Christ and his Church. The bride is arrayed in pure linen,—"the righteous acts of the saints" (xix. 8),—and she is now united to her Lord in blessed and eternal fellowship. Another is a picture of Christ in the stern character of judge. He is clothed with symbols of power and majesty; heaven resounds with the march of his armies, and in his fury he tramples down his enemies as the grapes are trodden in the winepress (xix. 15). When at length Satan, after a period of imprisonment, goes forth for his final onslaught upon the Church, fire from heaven destroys his hosts (xx. 9), and the seer looks again and, behold, the throne of God's eternal judgment is set. Before it stand the dead, both small and great, and the books are opened and the destinies of men declared "out of the things which are written in the books, according to their works" (xx. 12). And now appears "the holy city, new Jerusalem,



coming down out of heaven from God" (xxi. 2), in which there is no more sorrow, pain, or death (*v.* 4).

The description of this heavenly city — the blessed goal of the Christian's longings and hopes — is probably the most magnificent passage in all apocalyptic literature. It has proved its power in the Christian life of all subsequent times by the inspiration which it has furnished to poetic thought, and by the comfort which it has ministered to the Christian heart in hours of sorrow and bereavement. Its tones will be heard at the graves of the dead to the remotest age of Christian history. The light of the city was like that of a jasper stone, clear as crystal (xxi. 11), its proportions perfect (*v.* 16), its adornments gold and jewels, its walls precious stones, and its streets pure gold, transparent as glass (*vv.* 18–21). There is no need of temple or sacrifice, since God's immediate presence is manifest; no need of sun or moon, since the glory of God lightens the city, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb (*v.* 23). Day and night its gates of pearl stand open and all nations bring their loving tribute into it (*v.* 25). Through it flows the pure river of the water of life on whose banks grows the tree of life, whose leaves dispense healing to the nations (xxii. 1, 2). God's servants render him perpetual service, and the Lord God gives them light and they reign with him for ever and ever (*vv.* 3–5).

It is an ideal pictorially described, a symbolic picture of the better day seen in prophetic vision and cherished with persistent hope and trust. Precisely how Christian faith would have defined this hope, how far such language was literally understood, and what were thought to be the exact nature and conditions of that coming age, we need not inquire. The mind of that time was aware that such descriptions were figurative and pictorial. But, none the less, did these pictures represent realities. The things which were not seen were the eternal things, and faith was a conviction of the invisible. Our Apocalypse, despite its obscurities, stands as a splendid testimony to the undaunted confidence of a persecuted Church that goodness is mightier than evil and that the Kingdom of God will at



length prevail. It is a pæan born of the faith that, though for the time being, "truth is on the scaffold" and "wrong on the throne,"

"Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Lowell, *The Present Crisis*.



## PART VII

### THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN

#### CHAPTER I

##### INTRODUCTORY

IN the chapter introductory to the study of the teaching of Jesus according to the fourth Gospel I have commented upon the advantages and disadvantages of treating the discourses apart from the other portions of the book, and have given the reasons why, in the present work, this method of separation was adopted. In this closing part of the volume, therefore, we have only to take account of the Epistles and of those parts of the Gospel which do not purport to reproduce the teaching of Jesus. Of these the most important is the prologue. While, as we have seen, the Gospel bears the impress of the author's mind throughout, yet evidence is not wanting that he distinguished his recollections of his Master's teaching from his own reflections, powerfully as the latter had shaped and colored the former. In the prologue, for example, he gives an exposition of what Jesus Christ meant to him in terms of current speech which he never puts into the mouth of Jesus. While it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the alleged words of Jesus from the statements of the evangelist, and while they should always be regarded as closely related, still the Epistles enable us to separate, for convenience, from the subject-matter of the discourses, a group of passages in which we may believe that the author was conscious of expressing his ideas in terms peculiarly his own. Let us briefly note the principal characteristics of these Johannine conceptions.



In the author's attitude towards the Old Testament, we note, on the one hand, the evidences of his own Jewish life and training, and, on the other, a certain feeling of hostility towards actual Judaism. The Old Testament is to him the word of God (x. 35);<sup>1</sup> to be an "Israelite indeed" is an honorable distinction (i. 47); the Messianic salvation issues from Israel (iv. 22); "the law was given (*ἔδόθη*) by Moses," — he introduced or inaugurated the Old Testament system of organization and worship, — "but grace and truth came (*ἔγενετο*) by Jesus Christ" — he brought with him into the world the revelation of God which is inseparable from his own person (i. 17). Thus, by right and obligation, the Jewish people were Messiah's own possession (*τὰ ἴδια*); yet they that were his own (*οἱ ἴδιοι*) received him not (i. 11). The apostle does not repudiate his Judaism, but like Paul, he has been deeply grieved and wounded by his nation's rejection of their Messiah.

Our author shows a capacity for wide generalizations. He has a few great watchwords or maxims which summarize for him all divine truths. They are such as: "God is light," "God is love," and "In him was life." He carries all religious truths up into the sublime heights of God's eternal and infinite life. Revelation and redemption are regarded as expressions of God's nature, and all temporal things are viewed under the aspect of eternity. Hence revelation is coextensive with human history, and God's gracious work of enlightening and saving men has been going on from the beginning. Christ did not first come into the world when he was born in Bethlehem, and did not commence his saving work for men in Judea and Galilee. He was the heavenly light which was coming into the world and lighting every man; he was the light of men universally. What Christ has done in his historic manifestation is grounded for the

<sup>1</sup> Passages from the fourth Gospel are referred to by chapter and verse only, thus: iv. 9. Passages from the Epistles are cited thus: I. iii. 1; II. 3, etc. The first numeral in large type indicates the number of the Epistle from which the citation is made.



apostle in what he essentially and eternally is. In like manner, what God does it is according to his nature to do. As the central Sun of love and truth he pours his boundless and universal light upon the whole world of souls. The character of God determines the nature and requirements of the Christian life. All duties are summed up in Godlikeness. To walk in the light as God is in the light (I. i. 7), is the sum of Christian virtue. To love is to be born of God and to know God, since love is kinship to God (I. iv. 7, 8).

The apostle John was an intuitionist and a mystic. He does not argue; he sees. To prove Christianity true is quite remote from his purpose. He aims rather to set forth its truths in their inherent power and beauty in the hope that others will see and receive them. He assumes that Christianity carries its appeal direct to the heart. What men need is not more light, but an eye. If the spiritual nature can be aroused to desire love and purity, the message of the Gospel will find lodgement and welcome. Hence, to the apostle, knowledge was not the result of speculation or argument. It was the heart's inner certitude respecting that which met and satisfied its longings and its hopes. This knowledge was won in experience, through obedience, receptiveness, and trust. It is through such knowledge that we enter into the conscious possession of eternal life (xvii. 3). John had embraced Christ with his whole nature, and his faith in him was a passion. He had seen and handled him, but it was not a mere external touch. About his sacred person had twined the tendrils of the apostle's spirit. In Christ he had lost and found his life, and on his inimitable charms and heavenly glory he never tires of dwelling in devout contemplation.

There can be no greater mistake than to regard our author's Christology as a product of abstruse speculation. Even in the prologue he does not lose sight of the historical Christ. It is the Word which became flesh and dwelt among men which furnishes his starting-point and remains his dominant thought. True, he traces the existence of the light-bearing Logos back into eternity, but



this is not for him a flight of speculation, since he is sure that Jesus taught his own preëxistence and eternity. The author's view of Christ is eminently historical and practical. His Gospel is a portrait which the historical Christ mirrored upon the impressionable spirit of his beloved disciple. It is the product of a mind which was under the captivating spell of Jesus; and when all due allowance is made for its subjective factors, it is still seen to be no speculative romance, but a historical picture of an all-mastering personality. On this account his mysticism never becomes extravagant and fanciful. It does not desert the solid ground of reality and experience. It never falls into indifference to history. It never becomes a mere projection of the writer's own moods and feelings, but always remains true to the idea of an objective revelation of God. He does not lay chief stress upon the inner light of man's own spirit, but upon the Light from heaven, which shines in the world's darkness and illumines the human soul with its radiance.

It is quite true, however, that our author's mind spiritualizes everything which it touches. He sees the matchless Life which he describes not so much on its outer as on its inner side. His method is to seek the soul of truth in all the events whereby God is revealed. The failure to do this is the great fault of the Jewish people, who have not heard the voice of God which has been speaking in their own history. Hence the apostle's interpretation of religion is intensely ethical and spiritual. God in his revelation has, indeed, shown men what to do, but that is because he has shown them what they are and what he is. God's revelation is his self-revelation. All the duties and demands of religion strike their roots back into the nature of God, and into the nature of man as a son of God. Hence religion is, above all things, fellowship with God and moral likeness to him in heart and life. John's teaching is at the farthest possible remove from the popular Jewish theory of piety which made it a round of observances and ceremonies. His elevated spiritualism has little concern for the outward forms of religion. True worship is from



the heart, and may be offered with equal advantage anywhere. The apostle has nothing to say, in either the Gospel or the Epistles, of the institutions of religion. The sacraments, even, are only incidentally alluded to (*e.g.* iii. 5). We need not attribute this silence to indifference to the forms of Christian organization and ritual; but that it reveals, on the part of the apostle, an overmastering sense of the inwardness of the Christian life there can be no doubt.

On the other hand, the Johannine type of doctrine is not wanting in emphasis upon practical duties. The requirement that the Christian should lead a holy life is nowhere more strongly urged than in the first Epistle of John. Men must do righteousness and keep God's commandments if they will lay claim to the Christian name. They must walk in the truth and submit to its demands. He who professes love to God and does not love his fellow-men is self-deceived. Christians must love and serve one another. Christ's own life was the pattern of service. He took a towel and girded himself and washed the disciples' feet, and this he did because he knew that he came forth from God and was going again to God. It was the consciousness of divinity out of which sprang his desire and effort to perform this act of lowly service. Hence to serve thus is truly Godlike. As Christ does what he sees the Father doing, so his disciples are to take up the life of sympathetic and helpful love among men. As the Father sent the Son into the world on a mission of mercy to the sins and sorrows of men, so does he send his disciples into the world to repeat and multiply his life and its beneficent ministries. No! our author does not lose himself in vague raptures. If, as his legend describes him, he soars like the eagle into the sun, it is not to be lost to earth, but to bring down something of heaven's light and love into the struggles and sorrows of our daily life and common experience.



## CHAPTER II

### THE IDEA OF GOD

THE Johannine concept of God is best expressed in these terms: God is love (I. iv. 8, 16); God is light (I. i. 5); God is life (I. v. 20); and God is Father (I. ii. 1; iii. 1; II. 3, 4). Let us consider each of these propositions in order.

No formal definition of love can be given, nor is any required. But it may be partially described by enumerating some of its qualities. It is a personal relation, a fellowship of life. It is a union which involves mutual delight, interest, and attachment. Love is the bond of brotherhood among men. All the closest associations and endearments of earth have their basis in love. In selfishness there is only isolation; in love alone there is unity. Civilization and society are possible only on the basis of love, that is, of reciprocal interest, sympathy, and service. When, therefore, it is said that God is love, a part of the meaning must be that God is the ground of all the higher fellowships among men; that humanity is one because it is the offspring of God; that human society itself is founded in the nature of God. Love in man is a reflection of the divine nature in him. "Love is of God, and he that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God" (I. iv. 7). Love is, therefore, a self-giving, self-imparting quality. As love, God is the great giver. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (iii. 16). To love is to give, to serve, to bless, to impart one's self. It is the great love of the Father which moved him to make sinful men his children (I. iii. 1). As love, God is the absolutely good Being whose nature it is to communicate himself. Man is the offspring of the divine love, and finds



his true life in fellowship with God and in the impartation of good to his fellows. By loving one another men show that God abides in them and that his love is perfected in them (I. iv. 12).

By an expressive and favorite figure of John God is defined as light: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I. i. 5). This truth is declared to contain the essential import of the gospel message which the apostle had heard from Christ. What aspect of the divine nature is this figure especially designed to emphasize? Some reply: The purity or holiness of God; others: His metaphysical nature; others: His revealed character; and still others: His perfect goodness. In the passage just quoted it is certain that light is set in contrast to the darkness of sin. Light is a symbol for the pure and holy life as contrasted with walking in the darkness of untruthfulness and unrighteousness. But, in itself, the figure of light is well adapted to represent moral ideas besides that of purity. It might express with special appropriateness and force the conception of God's self-revealing and self-imparting goodness. As it is the nature of light to shine, so it is the nature of God to give and bless. This idea is, at least, suggested by the opening verses of the first Epistle which leads up to the passage under review. The apostle shows how God has brought the eternal life to the world through his Son (*vv.* 1-4), and then declares that the import of this bestowment of life is that God is light. Of course, life and light are opposed to sin, as he proceeds to show; but the affirmation: God is light, stands in primary connection with the description of God's gracious impartation of life to the world through Christ. The light is "the light of life" (*viii.* 12) — the light of God's self-revealing, self-communicating life. With this view agrees the language of the prologue which speaks of the life which was in the Logos and which was perpetually shining down into the world's darkness, as "the light of men" (*i.* 4, 5).

I conclude, then, that light is a figurative designation for love. But both terms equally include purity or



holiness. This aspect of the divine nature and of the Christian life is quite as strongly emphasized in connection with what is said about love as it is in connection with the use of the figure of light. The love of God is perfected in him who keeps God's commandments (I. ii. 5) : to love one's brother is to abide in the light ; to hate a brother is to abide in darkness (*vv.* 9, 10). To love is to be begotten of God (I. iv. 7), and he that is begotten of God cannot live the sinful life (I. iii. 9). Love and sin are contraries. Love is holy, as light is pure. The import of both terms may best be given by saying that God is holy love. Both are terms for God's absolute, self-imparting goodness. But God's goodness is always true and real goodness and seeks the true and real good of its objects, and this good includes all that is the opposite of evil. But holiness or separateness from sin is essentially a negative concept and is quite inadequate as a definition of the divine light and love, which are positive. Love is more than holiness, and light is more than purity. They are terms for an absolute fulness, a positive perfection of life. God is the absolutely perfect One, and the Christian life is, ideally considered, Godlikeness. It is more than freedom from sin ; it is the positive realization of a life like that of God.

The Johannine tradition of the Lord's words represents Jesus as speaking of the Father as the absolutely living One (*ὁ ζῶν πατήρ*, vi. 57), and, therefore, as the source of all spiritual life. The Father who "has life in himself" (v. 26) sent the Son into the world to communicate the divine life to men. Quite in accord with these expressions we read in the first Epistle : "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true [God], and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This one [God] is the true God, and eternal life" (I. v. 20). By this last statement is meant that God is the source and ground of eternal life—a form of thought common in John, as in the words : "I am the resurrection and the life" (xi. 25), that is, the power of resurrection and the bestower of life.



Now life is the opposite of death, and death is defined as lovelessness: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not, abideth in death" (I. iii. 14). Thus we see that life, like light, is regarded as an ethical conception. Both are terms for that absolute goodness, that perfect blessedness and disposition to bless, which the apostle searches for words to describe. They are synonyms of love, expressing certain aspects of God's perfection. No sharp distinction should be made between them. Christ called himself both life and light. God is love, light, and life — perfect, self-communicating goodness, the source of all purity, joy, and inspiration. The writer, in these descriptions, is simply straining and bending human language to the utmost in order to make it convey some idea of the transcendent perfection of God.

The apostle also employs Jesus' favorite designation for God — that of Father. We have seen that in both the Synoptic and Johannine tradition of our Lord's teaching God is regarded as the Father of all men.<sup>1</sup> This is the view which is taken in the Epistles. God is "the Father" without definition or limitation: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God" (I. iii. 1). While it is true that in the Epistles, as in the Gospel, the fatherhood of God is most frequently applied to the relation of God to his Son Jesus Christ, it is certain that there are several passages in the former in which the application cannot be maintained (*e.g.* ii. 1, 13, 15, 16; II. 4; *cf.* Jn. iv. 23). We find here nothing inconsistent with the conclusions already reached in the study of Jesus' doctrine of the divine fatherhood. God is the Father of all men; he is the source of their being, and has made them kindred in nature to himself and capable of blessed fellowship with himself. But, on their part, men have not realized that relation and therefore do not in fact fulfil their ideal as sons of God, as he always fulfils his idea of fatherhood. Hence we read: "As many as received him, to them

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 69-73; 179-182.



gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his (Christ's) name" (i. 12). The sonship of men to God, in its true, ideal meaning, has been forfeited by sin. The relation denoted by it must be reconstituted by a spiritual renewal or transformation. The apostle John gives to this idea a special emphasis by employing the term "children" (*τέκνα*) instead of "sons" (*υἱοί*). The latter word (characteristic of Paul) is a more legal, the former a more personal, term. The latter suggests a certain privilege or status; the former a close fellowship and affectionate intimacy.<sup>1</sup>

Quite in keeping with the teaching which we have reviewed, God is declared to be invisible and spiritual in his nature. "No man hath seen God at any time" (i. 18). Yet he dwells in those who are kindred in disposition to himself. The life of love brings the soul into conscious union with God. "If we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us" (I. iv. 12). God reveals himself to the inner life; he is seen by the eye of the heart. "He that loveth, knoweth God" (I. iv. 7). But there is also a sense in which God has visibly revealed himself in the human life of his Son. His grace and truth have come to concrete expression in Christ (i. 17). In him God was, as we may say, translated into terms of human action and experience. "The only begotten Son has interpreted (*ἐξηγήσατο*) the Father" (i. 18). In him the voice of God which spoke in Jewish history and prophecy (v. 37) has attained an unexampled clearness. Through him the eternal life which was with the Father has been clearly manifested, so that men may enter into the fellowship and power of it (I. i. 2, 3).

In contrast to idols and heathen divinities God is "the true God" (*ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεός*, I. v. 20). He alone corresponds to a worthy idea of Deity. Hence all God's revelation is a revelation of divine truth, because it is his self-disclosure. Through Christ the truths of God — the

<sup>1</sup> "Nach Paulus bekommen wir um Christi willen Kindesrecht, nach Johannes durch Christum Kindeswesen." Haupt, *Der erste Brief des Johannes*, p. 133.



realities of his life and love — have been disclosed to men in their proper meaning and power, and through him men may know the truth and be made free by it (viii. 32). Their life may be illumined, enriched, and ennobled by a knowledge of God as he truly is, through living contact and renewing fellowship with him. Hence the truth — life as seen in the light of God — becomes something intensely real and practical. The truth is something to be done (iii. 21; i. 6). It is, as it were, an atmosphere in which one must live. To walk in the truth (II. 4; III. 3) is to live the life of fellowship with God and of likeness to him. It is synonymous with “walking in the light” (I. i. 7) or “abiding in the light” (I. ii. 10) which, in turn, is explained as obedience to the commandment, at once old and new, that men should love one another (I. ii. 10; iii. 11; II. 5).

God's perfect knowledge of what is in the human heart is asserted in the passage: “Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him, whereinsoever our heart condemn us; because God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things” (I. iii. 19, 20). Interpreters are divided in opinion respecting the sense in which God is said to be “greater than our heart” — whether greater in severity or greater in leniency. On the former view the meaning would be that since God's knowledge of our sinfulness is greater than ours, he must condemn us much more severely than we condemn ourselves. On the latter view the thought is: Those who truly live the life of love have this comforting assurance, that God will freely forgive the sins which still beset them, because he is greater in compassion than their own accusing consciences are. I confidently adopt this view of the meaning.<sup>1</sup> God knows and takes full account of the sincere intention, the right central purpose and main direction of life, the weakness of human nature and the strength of men's temptations, and where the man is really “of the truth,” that is, sincerely desiring and striving to conform to the demands of the life

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Johannine Theology*, pp. 68-70.



of holy love, God judges his faults more mercifully than he himself does. There is, however, no failure in the Johannine writings to recognize the holy displeasure of God against sin and the severity of his condemnation of it. Although the word "righteousness" is not employed in a judicial or penal sense (see I. i. 9; ii. 29), the law and penalty side of the divine nature is frequently emphasized. We have already seen how this is done in connection with the teaching, that although the direct object of Jesus' coming into the world was to save and not to judge the world, yet a process of judgment was inevitably involved in his work, and that God's condemnation stands against those who love darkness rather than light (iii. 19). The necessary reaction of God's holy nature against sin is amply brought out in connection with the doctrine of love. Since love, in the sense in which John uses the word, and sin are incompatible (I. iii. 9), it is evident that God, whose nature is love, must repudiate and condemn sin. Love is thus seen to be essentially righteous. It is no mere benevolence or good nature. Only he who loves can abide in the light of God (I. ii. 10). The sinful world has no understanding or appreciation of the life of those who live in the fellowship of the divine love (I. iii. 1), because evil is as contrary to love as darkness is to light. Love of the world, the supreme choice of the pleasures and possessions of this temporary order, is inconsistent with love to the Father, that is, with moral likeness to God (I. ii. 15). Every one who has been born into the life of love sets his hope on attaining a purity like that of Christ. "Every one that hath this hope set on him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (I. iii. 3). To "do righteousness" and to love one's brother are inseparable elements of the life which is begotten of God (I. ii. 29; iii. 10). Sin is lovelessness, and "he that loveth not abideth in death" (I. iii. 14). The possession of love is eternal life. How evident it is, then, that love, in the thought of the apostle, includes not only the self-imparting impulse in God but also his self-assertion as against sin—the energy of his holy nature in repudiating its opposite.



Love includes both benevolence and righteousness. The exercise of the divine love is regulated by the demands and standards of absolute holiness. Thus love is seen to be the most adequate definition of the moral nature and the best compendium of the Christian idea of God.

These considerations show us how God is to be known. "Every one that loveth knoweth God, for God is love" (I. iv. 7, 8). How obvious it is that we have to do here with something more than an intellectual knowing. It is the knowledge which is possible only in living fellowship and through kinship of spirit. It is the knowledge which comes from welcoming the divine light which shines down into this sinful world (i. 5) and from walking therein. Such a knowledge Christ has opened to men. He has shown them the way to fellowship with God. "The Son of God hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true" (I. v. 20), and such knowledge of God is the indispensable condition of realizing the eternal life (*ib.*; *cf.* xvii. 20). It is a knowledge which involves the whole nature. It is man's entire grasp of God. John's doctrine is something more than mysticism. It involves the will as well as the intellect and feeling. The knowledge of God is attained only by love, and love requires the doing of God's commandments. Such knowledge is attained only on the path of obedience. The doctrine is practical. He knows God who lives a Godlike life. He knows Christ who walks with him and keeps his commandments. The apostle's mysticism never loses itself in mere devout ecstasies or subjective phantasies. It deals with men's every-day cares and labors, not to degrade the knowledge of God to the level of other knowledge, but to exalt all religious duty by showing how it leads to the heights of Godlikeness and to the consequent realization of the eternal life.



## CHAPTER III

### THE LOGOS

THE Logos-idea has its roots in the Old Testament and in post-canonical Jewish literature. The word of Jehovah is the fiat of his almighty will :

“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made;  
And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.”  
(Ps. xxxiii. 6.)

This word is often poetically personified, as when it is said that God's word shall accomplish that which he pleases (Is. lv. 10). By a natural extension of the meaning of the term the word of God easily becomes a name for the revelation or message of Jehovah to men. In this sense the prophets are said to see the word of the Lord (Is. ii. 1). More distinctly still is the word of God personified in passages where divine attributes, such as rectitude (Ps. xxxiii. 4) and power (Jer. xxiii. 29), are ascribed to it.

In the wisdom-books this personification proceeds a step further. There wisdom becomes an agent of God in the accomplishment of his gracious will and purpose. In Job wisdom is the secret of life, securely hidden from the common observation of men. It is “that path which no bird of prey knoweth, and which the falcon's eye hath not seen” (xxviii. 7). But God knows where it dwells and he has searched it out and declared it unto men :

“Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;  
And to depart from evil is understanding” (v. 28).

In Proverbs wisdom is God's messenger who lifts up her voice in the street and at the city gates and bids men walk in her pure and pleasant ways :



“Unto you, O men, I call;  
And my voice is unto the sons of men” (viii. 4).

Before the world was made Jehovah formed her and established her from everlasting (*vv.* 22, 23). Wisdom was his companion when he settled the mountains, established the heavens, and gave the sea its bound:

“Then I was by him as a master-workman:  
And I was daily his delight,  
Rejoicing always before him;  
Rejoicing in his habitable earth;  
And my delight was with the sons of men” (*vv.* 30, 31).

These are poetic forms of thought in which the idea of God's active energy, his self-revealing nature is set forth. They are ways of describing the living God who does not remain shut up within himself, but expresses his nature in acts of power and in works of benevolence and grace.

In the apocryphal wisdom-literature we may trace the development of the Logos-idea a step further. In Ecclesiasticus the personification of wisdom found in Proverbs is more fully elaborated. She is the first creation of God, and becomes the friend of all who fear and love him (i. 4, 10). She issues from the mouth of God and inhabits the remote places of earth and heaven. But in a special manner she dwells in Israel and has established her throne in Zion (xxiv. 3-12). She makes her instruction to shine as the morning, and sends forth her light afar off; she pours out her doctrine for the benefit of the most distant generations (xxiv. 32, 33). In the Book of Wisdom the origin and nature of wisdom are most vividly described. She is one to be loved above health and beauty and to be chosen instead of light (vii. 10). She is “the artificer of all things,” a holy and subtle spirit, “more mobile than any motion,” and penetrating all things “by reason of her pureness” (vii. 22, 24). The description continues:

“For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure effluence from the glory of the Almighty; therefore no defiling thing falls into her; for she is a reflection of the everlasting light, and an unspotted mirror of the efficiency



of God and image of his goodness. And though but one, she can do all things; and though remaining in herself, she maketh all things new; and from generation to generation entering into holy souls, she equippeth friends of God and prophets. For God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom. For she is more beautiful than the sun, and above every position of stars; being compared with the light, she is found superior" (vii. 25-29).

In the Targums or Aramaic paraphrases of the Old Testament, which were in current use among the Jews in the apostolic age, a similar personification of the word (Memra) of Jehovah is found. The word of God was conceived of as a kind of intermediate agent between the transcendent Deity and the world. The anthropomorphic acts of God, especially, were ascribed to the divine Word. Jehovah expresses himself and executes his will through the Memra, who stands in the popular thought in the place of the Almighty himself. This popular personification of the Word is closely connected with that of the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Philo, who flourished about the middle of the first century after Christ.

Philo sought to bring together and to harmonize the Old Testament and Greek philosophy. His system was a composite of the most diverse elements. He shared the ideas current in late Judaism respecting the absolute transcendence of God and his entire separation from this finite and sensible world. Judaism bridged this gulf between the world and God by its doctrine of angels. Philo accomplished the same object by resort to the Platonic theory of ideas. The word of Old Testament Scripture became for him the sum or chief one of the ideas or powers through which God mediated his communication with the world. Sometimes the Logos denotes the immanent reason of God; sometimes his active, self-revealing energy and wisdom. In this latter sense the Word is the agent through whom God creates and administers the world. He is the highest angel, the first-born Son of God, the second God (*ὁ δεύτερος θεός*). How far this personification is poetical and how far real, it is not easy to say. The language of



Philo on the subject is not clear or self-consistent. It is probable, however, that the Logos was conceived of as a person distinct from God. But as such he was not eternal. He was the first created Son of God, and was a second God only in a figurative sense.

This brief sketch of the development of the Logos-doctrine in Judaism will serve to show how natural it was for John to employ the term "Logos" in application to Christ, and will point the way to its right explanation. The apostle seized upon a word which had long been in use among his countrymen as a name for the principle of revelation in God, and to which a wider meaning had been given by its contact with Greek speculation. It is not necessary to suppose that John borrowed the term directly from Philo. He took it rather from the usage to which Philo's speculations had done so much to give currency. His use of it is not to be explained without reference to the influence of Philo, who, however, had simply elaborated in his Logos-doctrine an Old Testament conception. The view that John's doctrine has its basis in the Old Testament alone, and that which ascribes it directly and solely to Philo, are both extreme. Remotely it rests upon the Old Testament conceptions of the word and wisdom of God; more directly it has its occasion and ground in the combination of those ideas with Greek thought in the Alexandrian philosophy of religion. We shall see, however, that John's doctrine has marked characteristics of its own. His Logos-idea differs from Philo's more than it resembles it. Our author is simply using for his purpose a term of current speech, giving to it a new application and filling it with a new content. The history of the term "Logos" does not fully explain its meaning in John. He employed it for a purpose which went quite beyond its previous uses. He put his own stamp upon it, and thereby gave it a new significance and value.

Turning now to the prologue of the fourth Gospel, we find that the apostle employs the term "Logos," or "Word," to denote the preëxistent Son of God, who became incarnate in Jesus. His first assertion is: "In the beginning



(ἐν ἀρχῇ) was the Word" (i. 1; cf. v. 2). It is hardly open to doubt that the apostle here means to assert the absolute eternity of the Logos. Even if the parallel with Gen. i. 1 be insisted on, and ἀρχή be taken to mean the beginning of the world, it would still be affirmed that the Word existed when the world was created. Christ is, then, pre-mundane. Now when the writer in the immediate connection speaks of that which came into existence by creation, he uses both a different word and a different tense (πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, κτλ. i. 3). All things came into existence through his agency, but he was in the beginning. When the testimony of Christ to his preëxistence, which the Gospel proceeds to record, is considered, we think the only natural conclusion to be that the author here means to affirm the absolute eternity of the preëxistent Son of God. The next statement is that the Logos was in relation to God (πρὸς τὸν θεόν, i. 1), that is, existed in a living, dynamic fellowship with the Father (ὁ θεός). With this should be compared the phrase: "Who is in the bosom of the Father" (ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς, i. 18). The prepositions πρὸς and εἰς, implying motion or direction, are evidently used to denote a living relation of the Logos to God, in the fulfilment of which the life of the Son goes out *towards* the Father.

Having asserted the eternity of the Logos and his active relation to the Father, the author adds: "And the Word was God" (καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος, i. 1). It should be noted that θεός is here emphatically prefixed in order to lay special stress upon the divine nature of the Logos. Thus far the Logos has received a threefold characterization: he preëxisted in eternity; he was distinct from but in living relation to the Father (ὁ θεός); he is included within the category of Deity (θεός). The careful distinction which the author makes between ὁ θεός and θεός must not be overlooked. The former is used to denote the Father specifically; the latter to designate the divine nature or essence. From ὁ θεός the Logos is distinct; within θεός the Son, equally with the Father, is included. The author thus affirms a distinction of persons, but a



community of essence, between the Word and the Father. This view of the meaning of the words is maintained by most interpreters, whatever be the estimate which is put upon the theological value of the ideas themselves.<sup>1</sup>

The author's next statement is that the creation of the universe was mediated through the agency of the Logos. "All things came into being by means of him (*πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο*), and apart from him (*χωρὶς αὐτοῦ*) no single thing came into existence" (i. 3; *cf. v. 10*). He is also the giver of life and the dispenser of light to men (i. 4, 5). He was the "true light" who came into the world and lighted every man (i. 9).<sup>2</sup> The Logos is a source of light

<sup>1</sup> Beyschlag's handling of the subject is quite in accord with his treatment of the Christology of the New Testament in general. He says that no one will contest the view that John "imagined the preëxistent Christ as a person distinct from God" (II. 424; Bk. V. III. ch. ii. § 5). He seeks, however, to deprive this "theologoumenon" of all value and importance for our Christology by advancing two considerations. He intimates, first, that it was something quite far-fetched and foreign for the apostle. It was simply a "help taken from the thought of the time," something which he borrowed and "did not overrate the value of." It was taken only half seriously by the apostle himself. His other reason is of a wholly different order. Being an "imaginative thinker," and entertaining "defective views of personality," the apostle could easily confuse a "hypostatized principle" with a person without any consciousness of the confusion. First, then, the idea of the personal, eternal pre-existence of Christ was not regarded by the apostle as very essential in his theology; but, second, his adoption of it was due to his naive confusion of an idea with a person. Certainly, if either of these objections to the value of the Logos-idea is valid, the other is quite needless. If the author was only semi-serious, it is hardly necessary to show that his imagination was confused, and if he mistook an idea for a person, it seems excessive to urge that he did not mean very much by so doing. We have here another example of the way in which Beyschlag provides for all contingencies. If one argument will not carry the point, another and a wholly different one is ready.

<sup>2</sup> Three constructions are possible for the participle "coming" (*ἐρχόμενον*) in this passage: (1) It may be connected with "man" (*ἄνθρωπον*), as in A.V.: "Every man *that cometh* into the world," that is, absolutely every man. This has been the more common view. (2) It may be combined with "was" (*ἦν*), making a periphrastic form: "The true light, which lighteth every man, *was coming* into the world." So R.V. marg. (3) It may be joined with "which" (*ὃς*), whose antecedent is "light" (*φῶς*), thus: "The true light, which lighteth every man, *by coming* (or, *on coming*) into the world." So, apparently, R.V. I prefer this third construction as expressing the most forcible and appropriate idea: The



and life to mankind universally. Throughout the whole course of human history his light has been shining down into the darkness of the world's ignorance and sin. The eternal Son has been the agent of God in revelation and salvation from the beginning.

These statements of the nature and functions of the Logos (i. 1-5) are followed by a sketch of his historical manifestation in Jesus Christ (vv. 6-18). John the Baptist, the last Old Testament prophet, announced the advent in a human form of this heavenly bearer of light and life to men (vv. 6-8). The author is careful to exclude the supposition that he first began to be or to work for men when he thus appeared among them (vv. 9, 10). When he thus came in visible form he offered himself first to his own peculiar possession (*τὰ ἴδια*), the Jewish people; but although they were his own (*οἱ ἴδιοι*), they received him not (v. 11). They were his own because he had been specially operative in their history, which had been the divinely appointed means of preparation for his coming, and because he had appeared as a member of the Jewish nation. Repudiated by his own people, he offered his saving benefits to all who would receive him; all who would believe on him as the true Messiah and Saviour might thereby obtain the privilege (*ἐξουσία*) of becoming God's children (v. 12). Their acceptance should turn upon no terms of birth or lineage but solely upon an inward, spiritual transformation (v. 13). Thus did the Logos assume human nature and dwell among men (v. 14),<sup>1</sup>

light of the Logos comes into the world in such a way and degree as to enlighten every individual man (*πάντα ἄνθρωπον*).

<sup>1</sup> Beyschlag, *N. T. Theol.* II. 425 (Bk. V. III. ch. ii. § 5), although he has just admitted that John "imagined the preëxistent Christ as a person distinct from God" (p. 424), maintains that we cannot attach a definite doctrinal meaning to his "elastic" notion of the Logos because, in doing so, we should have to make *ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο* mean: The personal Logos transformed himself into sensuous substance, which is "simply absurd." Logos can mean an idea, a principle, an impulse in God, or a person, as the elasticity of the thought may require, but *ἐγένετο* cannot mean *assumpsit* but only *exstitit, factus est*, and *σὰρξ* cannot mean human nature, but only material flesh. We have already noted similar examples of the combination of freedom and severity in Beyschlag's exegesis. The phrase



manifesting forth the glory of his nature and the fulness of his grace, and revealing and interpreting to men the truth of the invisible God (*vv.* 15-18).

If the Logos-doctrine of John be compared with that of Philo, the comparison will show that while the two have points of contact, they are radically different in character and rest upon different presuppositions. Both, indeed, introduce the Logos as a mediator between God and the world; but with Philo this mediation is part of a metaphysical theory of the universe, while with John it is a method of revelation and salvation which is grounded in the self-imparting love of God. For Philo the world is inherently evil, and God is wholly separate from it. The Logos is a means of resolving the resulting dualism. The apostle takes up the term whose use had become common, as a convenient means of emphasizing the truth that Jesus Christ is the true agent of God's self-revelation and the true Mediator between God and man. The motives of his doctrine are historical, rather than speculative. The starting-point of his thought concerning "the Word of life" is the fact that he had been manifested in human form: "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled concerning the Word of life" (I. i. 1).<sup>1</sup> The term "Logos" as applied

in question must be explained in the light of the Johannine phrases: "to tabernacle among us" (i. 14) and "to come in the flesh" (I. iv. 2; II. 7), whose meaning it epitomizes, as denoting the consummation of the mysterious union of divinity with humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. Cf. Clement, 2 Cor. ix: ὧν μὲν τὸ πρῶτον πνεῦμα ἐγένετο σὰρξ, "though he (Christ) was at first a spirit, he became flesh." Holtzmann, *Hand-Comm.*, in loco: "Er kam im Fleisch, oder wurde Fleisch." If the phrase in question necessarily meant what Beyschlag says it must mean (in case Logos denotes a person), it would not only be "simply absurd" but would be quite contrary to everything which the apostle has elsewhere written of the nature of the Logos or the eternal Son.

<sup>1</sup> Some commentators, indeed, understand "the Word of life" (ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς) in this passage to mean: the message of life or the gospel. So DeWette and Westcott. But the great majority regard it as a designation of the personal Logos or eternal Son. So Huther, Haupt, Weiss, Dwight, Briggs, and Plummer. In what is said above I take this view of its meaning.



to Christ, was especially adapted to express both his agency in creation and revelation and his personal preëxistence and essential unity with the Father.

In John we have what we do not find in Philo—a clear and consistent personification of the Logos. Philo's conception of the Logos is wavering and unclear. Now the term denotes immanent reason, and now the uttered word; now he seems to be only a poetic figure, and again appears as a distinct hypostasis. Various synonymous titles are used, such as the Wisdom of God, the Son of God, the Archangel, and the Man of God. But in John the title has one clear meaning. It is a name for the eternal Son of God, who came into the world in the historical person, Jesus Christ. The apostle's doctrine of the incarnation of the Logos is radically opposed to the dualistic principles of Philo. The assertion: *ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο* (i. 14), would have been abhorrent to the Jewish philosopher. The Logos of John is the Christ of his own experience in that eternal existence and activity which the apostle knew that his Master had claimed for himself.

The historical interest dominates the prologue not less than the rest of the fourth Gospel. If the book opens with words which have a vague and abstract sound, the writer at once translates them into concrete and historical terms. If he begins with eternity, it is only to obtain a starting-point from which the revelation of God in Christ can be adequately accounted for. The Logos-idea was fundamental for the apostle. He grounded the whole gospel in the essential nature of God and the eternal being of Christ. But this was because the historical facts known to him and the testimony of Christ concerning himself required these presuppositions, not because he had taken them up as abstract principles in order to deduce from them his interpretation of Christ and his teaching. The Logos-doctrine of the apostle is a reading in terms of current philosophical language of that great conclusion respecting the nature of Christ to which he had been led by the facts of his teaching and work.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE WAY OF SALVATION

SALVATION is from sin unto righteousness. Sin is described by our author as lawlessness (*ἀνομία*, I. iii. 4), a violation of the divine order and a state of disharmony with it. He also describes it as moral darkness in contrast to light, which is the symbol of goodness, love, and life. The sinful man "walks" and "abides in darkness" (I. i. 6). The apostle describes sin, now as an act and now as a state. Accordingly, *ἁμαρτάνειν* sometimes means, to commit an act of sin, as in I. i. 10: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." Again, the word means to sin habitually, to lead a sinful life, as in I. iii. 9: "Whosoever is begotten of God does not commit sin (*ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ*), because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin (*ἁμαρτάνειν*), because he is begotten of God." The phrase *ποιεῖν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν* regularly means, to lead an habitually sinful life. It is important to bear this in mind for the right understanding of the statement that the Christian "does not" and "cannot sin" (I. iii. 6, 9). The meaning is that the Christian life and sin are, in principle, contrary to each other, and that the true disciple of Christ cannot, in the nature of the case, lead a life characteristically sinful, although he still commits acts of sin (I. i. 9, 10).

Apart from the salvation wrought through Christ the world is sinful. "The whole world lieth in the evil one" (I. v. 19). In its moral blindness it did not apprehend the light of the divine Logos which was always seeking to penetrate its darkness (i. 5). In the world the impulses which prevail are "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life" (I. ii. 16). The world



is the sphere in which Satan rules. Wicked men are "of the devil," "children of the devil" (I. iii. 10), that is, kindred in their disposition and actions to him who "sinneth from the beginning" (I. iii. 8).<sup>1</sup> So far as the sinful world assumes the attitude of direct hostility to Christ and his saving work, it is designated as "Antichrist." "The spirit of Antichrist" (I. iv. 3) is found in the denial of the messiahship of Jesus; more specifically, in the denial of Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh (I. ii. 22; II. 7). It is probable that, though John speaks of "many Antichrists" as being already in the world (I. ii. 18), he looked for the appearance of some individual who should embody in a preëminent degree the spirit of antichristian denial and opposition. Still, the essence of his doctrine, when all the expressions of it are compared, is that "Antichrist" denotes a principle, tendency, or spirit in which many men share. The apostle looked for no individual "Antichrist," who should be such to the exclusion of many other Antichrists, or who should wholly sum up in himself the spirit of hostility to the Messiah.<sup>2</sup> This sinful hostility to Christ and his work may prove to be "sin unto death" (I. v. 16, 17) — the utter desertion and repudiation of Christ, to which the speculations of Gnosticism, on the one hand, and the fanaticism of Judaism, on the other, were in danger of leading some of the apostle's readers.<sup>3</sup>

Now, Jesus Christ "was manifested to take away the sins" of men (I. iii. 5), and to "destroy the works of the devil" (v. 8). This saving work is described by John in various terms. Although a process of judgment is inseparable from the Messiah's mission, yet "God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him" (iii. 17; cf. I. iv. 14). He saves men by cleansing them from sin. If we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus "cleanseth us from all sin"

<sup>1</sup> On the author's doctrine of Satan, see *The Johannine Theology*, pp. 140-145.

<sup>2</sup> On this subject, cf. *The Johannine Theology*, pp. 145-149.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *The Johannine Theology*, pp. 149-155.



(I. i. 7). Here it is evidently the cleansing of the Christian from the sin which still cleaves to him, which is referred to. The saving significance of Christ's death is certainly implied in the reference to the "blood of Jesus." That his death is regarded by the apostle as a means of taking away sin is also evident from the exclamation of the Baptist, which he reports: "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away (*ὁ αἴρων*) the sin of the world!" (i. 29). The use of *αἴρειν*, alike in the Septuagint and in the writings of John, favors the view that it here means to bear away, rather than to bear as a sacrifice (*cf.* I. iii. 5). Now, whether the phrase "the Lamb of God" be an allusion to the paschal lamb, or a reminiscence of Isaiah liii. 7, or a reference to a sacrificial victim, as seems more probable, the idea that a saving significance attaches to his sufferings and death is involved in it. None of these phrases, however, are definite enough to yield us any conception of the way in which his death is held to avail for the salvation of men.

Christ is also called an Advocate with or before the Father (*παράκλητος πρὸς τὸν πατέρα*, I. ii. 1). These terms describe him as one who is summoned to the side of the Christian to aid him in the matter of deliverance from his sins and who represents him in relation to (*πρός*) the Father. The Christian may rest assured of the perfect sympathy and help of the sinless Saviour, who having himself passed through a career of moral trial, is able to deal gently with the erring and to plead their cause before God. Of course, the term *παράκλητος* is a figure drawn from human relations, and does not carry us beyond the general expressions already noticed, in the direction of a definite doctrine. In I. iii. 16 we seem to find a more explicit reference to salvation through Christ's death: "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life on our behalf" (*ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν*); but the apostle continues: "and we ought to lay down our lives on behalf of (*ὑπέρ*) the brethren." Undoubtedly the death of Christ is here said to be for the benefit of men, but it is defined in no different terms from those which are also used to express



the way in which one man may give his life for the benefit of other men. None of the passages thus far reviewed yield the elements of any theory concerning the saving import of Christ's death.

In but two passages in the writings under review do we meet with any of the technical terms by which the New Testament expresses the ideas of atonement, reconciliation, or propitiation. These passages are: "He is the propitiation (*ἵλασμός*) for our sins," etc. (I. ii. 2); and: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation (*ἵλασμός*) for our sins" (I. iv. 10). No explanation of the sense in which Christ is a propitiation is given, and the language of our sources where other terms are used, furnishes us but little aid in determining the meaning of the word *ἵλασμός*. Referring to the Septuagint we find that *ἰλάσκεσθαι* is most frequently used to translate *כָּפַר*, to cover, that is, atone for, sin. God is represented as graciously covering over or expiating the sins of men; but God himself is not said to be propitiated. God and sinful men are reconciled upon terms and by means which God himself appoints and provides. Sacrifice does not render God favorable or propitious in the sense of transforming him from an avenging into a merciful God or of making him disposed to forgive, as if he had not been so before. Expiation rather expresses the terms and conditions of forgiveness and sets forth the truth that the divine forgiveness is conditioned upon a manifestation of the inviolable holiness of God and an assertion of the ill desert of sin. It thus represents the divine self-consistency in forgiveness. God forgives in ways which express his judgment upon sin. Expiations are a testimony to the hatefulness of sin in God's sight and are expressions of his just displeasure against it. They are propitiations in the sense that they express the conditions on which his grace must operate in the salvation of sinners. We are to see some such conception in the word *ἵλασμός* as used by John. Christ fully represented and embodied in his work for men all the truths which the Old Testament sacrifices had partially and pic-



torially expressed. He had perfectly shown what God is and how his holy love secures man's salvation. He had paid supreme homage to the righteousness of God and to his just condemnation of sin. He had perfectly understood the relations of the holy God to sinful men and the terms on which men may find peace and pardon. Christ was the Mediator who brought God and man together. He showed men the way in which God becomes favorable to the sinner, namely, by making sin appear hateful and contrary to his law and his love, in the very process of cancelling it and cleansing it away. The apostle probably carried over from the Old Testament some such idea of the import of sacrifice as I have mentioned. Sacrifice expressed the sinfulness of sin, as well as man's thankful devotion to God; it portrayed his righteousness as well as his grace.<sup>1</sup> All this Christ has done yet more perfectly.

Our author is more explicit in his statements of the way in which salvation is realized in the believer than he is in his teaching concerning the method of God in providing for man's salvation through Christ. He is fond of describing the realization of salvation by the figure of a divine begetting, the impartation of a spiritual life from God. "Every one that doeth righteousness hath been begotten of him" (I. ii. 29); "Every one that hath been begotten of God . . . cannot sin (lead the sinful life) because he is begotten of God" (I. iii. 9). The phrase *γεννηθῆναι ἐκ θεοῦ* uniformly means, to be begotten of God. Our older English version rendered it, to be born, in all cases except two (I. v. 1, 18). The Revised Version has corrected this rendering in all the passages except i. 13.<sup>2</sup> The first Epistle dwells at length upon the nature and results of this divine begetting. It means a new life for the soul. He who receives this spiritual life becomes a child of God and is transformed into an increasing like-

<sup>1</sup> See W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites* (1894), pp. 393, 394, 416-419.

<sup>2</sup> In Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus (iii. 3-8), however, the context shows that the kindred phrase *γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν* means, to be born from above, or anew.



ness to God. The proofs and tests of his having received the new life are such as the doing of righteousness (I. ii. 29), loving the brethren (I. iv. 7), confessing Jesus as the Christ (I. v. 1), overcoming the world (I. v. 4), and forsaking the life of sin for the life of holiness (I. v. 18). The import of all these various expressions is essentially the same. He who has become a child of God by the impartation of spiritual life from God has been transformed into likeness to God. The character and action of God are now the ideals of his character and action. His life becomes a life of holy love because God is love. This is the apostle's favorite way of putting his doctrine: "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth hath been begotten of God, and knoweth God" (I. iv. 7); "Whosoever loveth him that begat (that is, God), loveth him also that hath been begotten of him" (I. v. 1). Love to God, the source of spiritual life, carries with it love to those whom he has begotten — all the children of his fatherly love.

Closely kindred to the phrases just noticed is the description of believers as children of God. The *locus classicus* is the oft-quoted passage from the prologue: "As many as received him, to them gave he the privilege of becoming children of God, even to them that believe on his name; who were begotten, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (i. 12, 13). To be begotten of God is to become a child of God, and the condition, on man's part, of realizing this sonship is faith. Thus we find here, expressed in terms peculiar to the apostle John, the same doctrine which meets us everywhere in the apostolic writings, that salvation has its procuring cause in the gracious love of God and that faith in the condition of its appropriation.<sup>1</sup> The most noticeable peculiarity of John's language at this point is his employment, already noted, of the word *τέκνον*, instead of *υἱός*. By means of that word he is able to carry out more perfectly his figure of a divine imparta-

<sup>1</sup> On the Johannine conception of faith see my *Johannine Theology*, ch. ix, entitled, *The Appropriation of Salvation*.



tion of life ; since the term emphasizes, not so much the legal position of a son as the intimate, personal relation, the close and growing fellowship of him who is begotten of God with his spiritual Father. Childship to God is a relation of obedience and love to God, and necessarily involves mutual love among all who share this relation. The child of God must love his fellow-believers ; not to do so would be a contradiction of the very nature of the Christian life (I. iii. 10). Other marks of the new spiritual life are: abiding in Christ, imitating him, and partaking of his Spirit. He who professes to abide in Christ "ought also to walk even as he walked" (I. ii. 6). The consciousness of fellowship with Christ is imparted to the believer by the Spirit (I. iii. 6) whose bestowment is likened to an anointing (*χρῖσμα*), consecrating the believer to God's service (I. ii. 27).

We have in this teaching a view of salvation which is at once practical and profound. The duties and demands of the Christian life are most strongly urged, but the motives by which they are enforced are the highest possible. Likeness to God is the sum of them. Men are to do righteousness and to walk in love, because it is God-like so to do. Christ has perfectly interpreted God to men, and revealed and vindicated his nature. It is the duty and privilege of men to accept this interpretation and to live and work in the light and joy of it. "God is love," "God is light," is the burden of this gospel. The divine love has offered itself to men and has poured out its treasures for men's free possession and enjoyment. In Christ God has called men into the fellowship of his own blessed life and made them partakers of his own perfection. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God : and such we are" (I. iii. 1).



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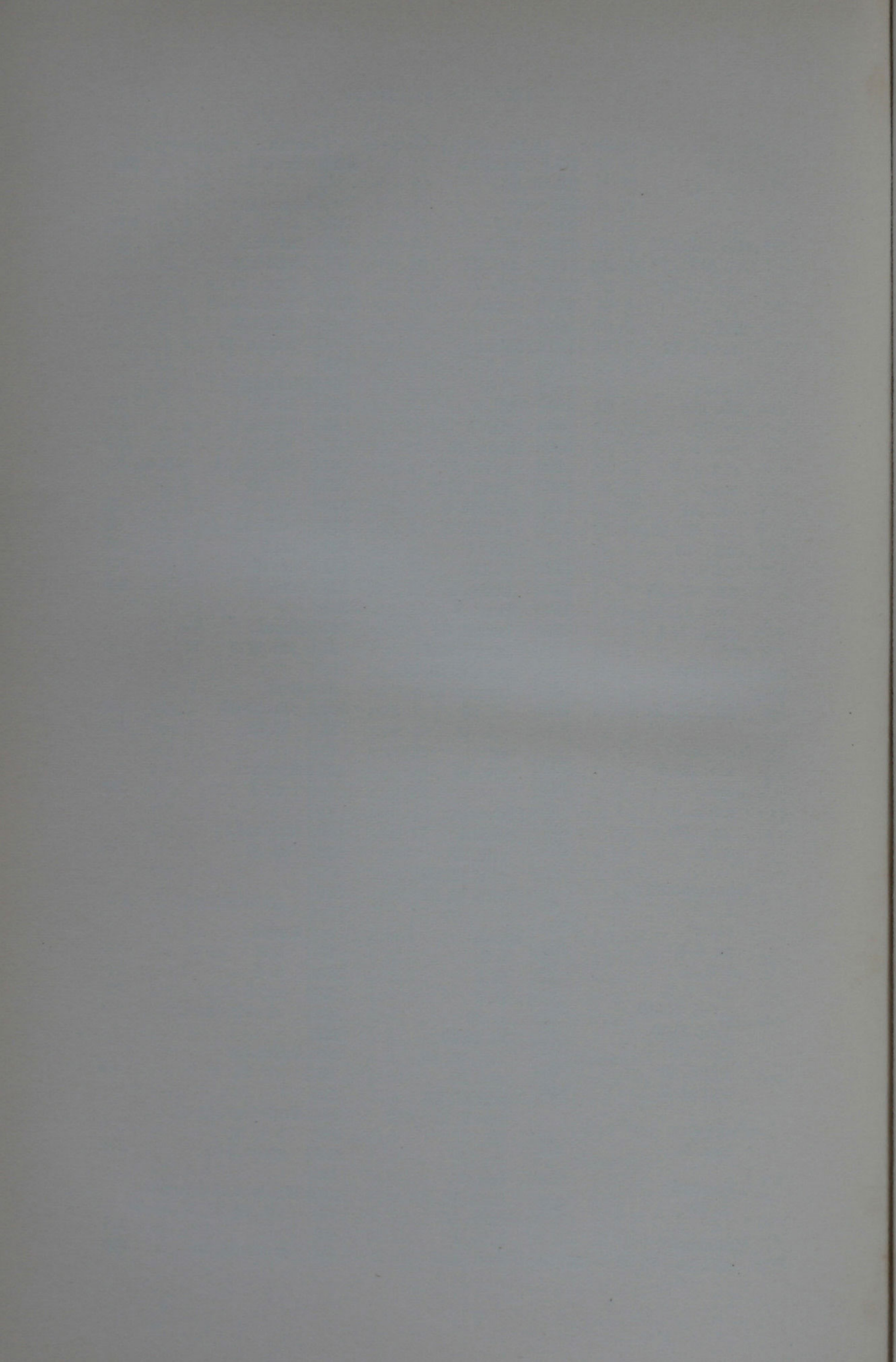






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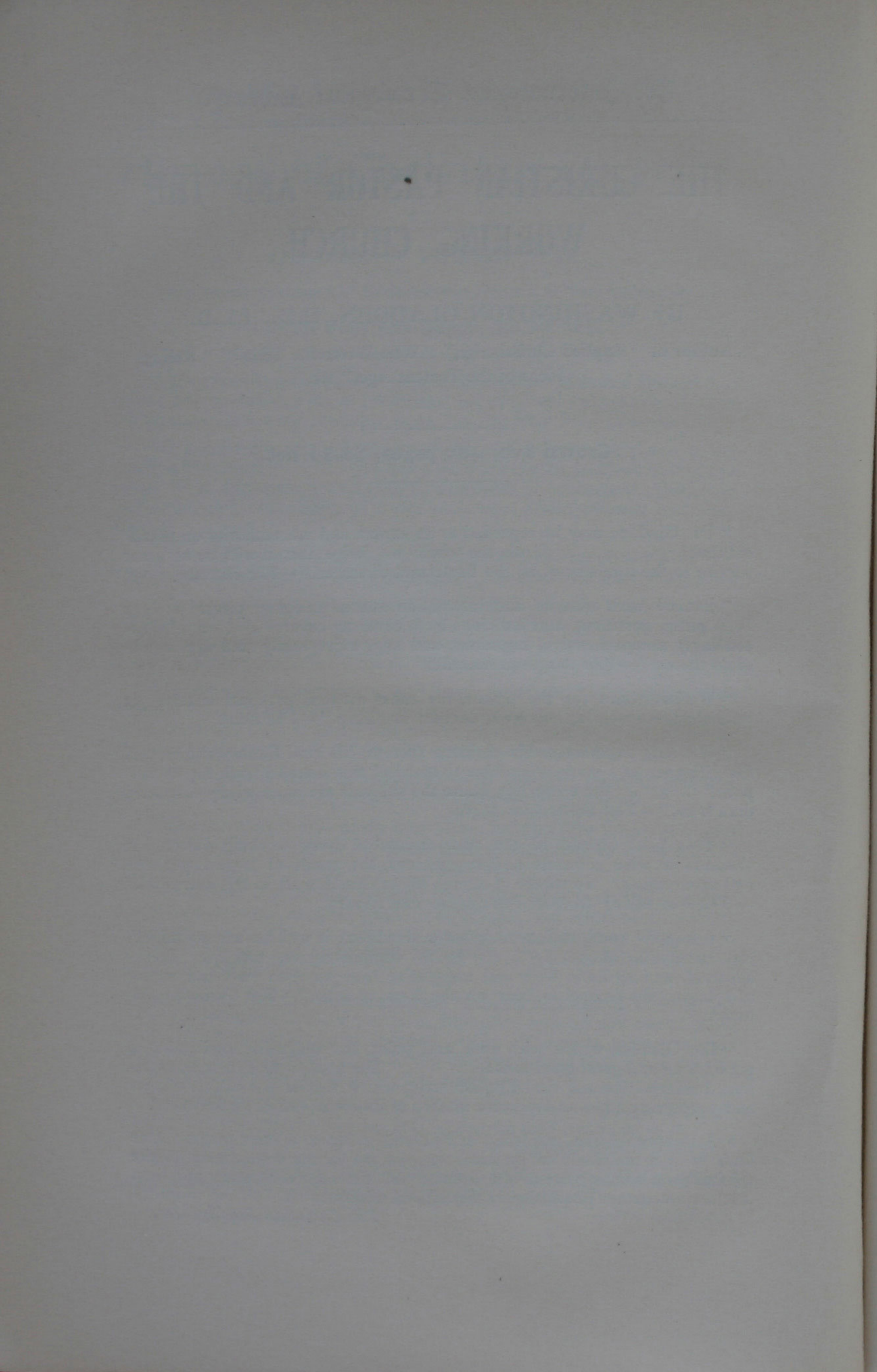
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