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ARTICLE III.

HINTS RELATIVE TO THE DATE OF THE
FOURTH GOSPEL.

BY PROFESSOR CHARLES W. RISHELL, PH. D.

It is the purpose of this article to present certain considerations bearing upon the date of the Fourth Gospel which force themselves upon the attention of one who studies the progress of Christological development in the writings of Justin Martyr, Origen, and Athanasius, as compared with some parts of our canonical Pauline and Johannine literature.

Beginning with Justin it seems clear that he belongs to the school of John, rather than of Paul. True, he unquestionably holds the main Christological views expressed in the Pauline literature. But this fact is not sufficient to place him in the Pauline school, since his Christological teachings are far more comprehensive than those of Paul. For example, he argues insistently and repeatedly for the supernatural conception of Jesus, basing his views on the celebrated Isaian passage; not, indeed, without evident reference to other sources, presumably our Matthew and Luke, though only for incidental circumstances, never for proof. Again, we find in his writings a large use of elements which are found in our canonical Scriptures only in the Johannine literature; such as the idea of the Logos, and of the Logos, or Son, as begotten and only begotten. It may be said, in brief, that the peculiar features of Justin's Christology are the miraculous conception, the doctrine of the Logos, and of the Logos as begotten and only begotten,

with the inferences he draws from these ideas. If we leave out of account the miraculous conception, then, we find that the peculiarities of Justin's Christology are those of the Johannine writings.

There is a large realm of Christological doctrine common to Paul, John, and Justin, such as the subordination of the Son to the Father and the preëxistence of the Son, both of which, it must be confessed, are taught more explicitly in the Pauline than in the Johannine writings, and much more clearly in Justin than in Paul. It might seem difficult at first sight, therefore, to determine whether Justin is following the Pauline or the Johannine writings in the doctrines of subordination and preëxistence. But the evidence is distinctly in favor of the Johannine source for Justin's doctrine, since Paul's doctrines of preëxistence and subordination are connected with the idea of the Son, while those of Justin, like those of the Fourth Gospel, are, for the most part, connected with the idea of the Logos. If, therefore, Justin is dependent upon either the Johannine or the Pauline Christology, it must be upon the former.

Justin's doctrine of God as ineffable, as incapable of revealing himself to men or of having any intercourse with them, and as remaining ever in the "supercelestial places," is taught both in the Pauline writings (1 Tim. vi. 16: "dwelling in light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see") and in the Johannine (John i. 18: "No man hath seen God at any time"). If the Timothies are credited to Paul, he teaches this view of God rather more in the form adopted by Justin than John does. Still, this would not suffice to overcome the view that in Justin the Johannine influence is, on the whole, predominant.

An attempt has been made to show that the peculiarity of Paul's Christology is the doctrine of mediation, and that Justin simply carries this out in his doctrine of the

Logos, which, in the Greek philosophy, was a mediation scheme. But it is open to serious question whether the mediation doctrine is any more clearly taught in the Pauline than in the Johannine writings. In Paul, Christ, the historical personage, is the mediator; in John, the Logos, or Son, is the mediator. It is difficult to think of Justin as a follower of Paul, since Justin, like John, emphasizes the mediatorial office of the Logos. For the same reason it is comparatively easy to think of him as a follower of John. Besides, the Logos in Greek philosophy is a mediator in an ontological sense. In Paul and John this is not the case; the mediation of Paul's Christ, and of John's Son, or Logos, being functional. So also the mediation effected by the Logos in Justin is functional, since with Justin the Logos is God. True, he is, in Justin, a second God. But he is not a secondary God. He is in no sense inferior, though he is different (*ἕτερος*). The conclusion is that here again Justin is not specially a follower of Paul on the one side or of Greek philosophy on the other, but that he is an adherent of the Johannine school. Paul, John, and Justin agree in the main as to their doctrine of mediation, though Justin is more like John than he is like Paul.

There is a fact connected with Justin's doctrine of the Word as begotten which, at first sight, seems to point to the Pauline rather than the Johannine origin of Justin's Christology. John's well-known formula is *μονογενής*, which Justin employs but three times,—all in one chapter (Trypho, 105). Paul, on the other hand, uses the word *πρωτότοκος*, which Justin employs more frequently than any other to designate the begottenness of the Logos. Other words used by him to express the same idea are *πρώτον γέννημα* (I Apol. 21), and *πρωτόγονος* (I Apol. 58). This last word, however, as well as in one instance (I Apol. 53) the word *πρωτότοκος*, apparently refers to the historical Christ. Per-

haps the same is true of *πρῶτον γέννημα*. If so, it would leave chiefly the word *πρωτότοκος* to designate the Logos as begotten. The term is unquestionably Pauline. But the thought conveyed is as distinctly Johannine. Paul uses the word three times (Rom. viii. 28; Col. i. 15, 18), in each instance so as to designate the historical Christ as the chief, that is, the preëminent among many. He never uses it to designate Christ as the offspring of God. Justin, on the contrary, never uses it in any other way (1 Apol. 23, 33, 46, 53). With him it is apparently the equivalent of John's *μονογενής* (33, *πρωτότοκος τῷ θεῷ*; 46, *πρωτότοκος τοῦ θεοῦ*; 53, *πρωτότοκος τῷ ἀγεννήτῳ θεῷ*).

This use of both Pauline and Johannine terminology with only Johannine meanings indicates, both that Justin was a follower of John rather than of Paul, and that he must have been at least as well acquainted with the Fourth Gospel as he was with the Pauline letters. It has already appeared that he was probably acquainted with the Synoptic Gospels, which, however, he never uses in proof of doctrines, but only for proof of the ethics of the Christians. Or, if any one prefer, it is clear that he was equally well acquainted with the theology and Christology of the Synoptics, Paul, and the Fourth Gospel.

It has been asserted that the similarity between the Christology of John and Justin is to be accounted for on the theory that they are two independent and practically contemporaneous developments reaching the same results. This theory is highly improbable, since the chances that two men should independently adopt from Greek sources, and adapt for Christian uses, the same phraseology about the same time, are exceedingly slight. This is especially true in view of the fact that the points of agreement between John and Justin extend beyond the doctrine of the Logos, and include the begottenness of the Logos. It is not likely that an independent development would, in

both cases, include both of these doctrines, especially as they are not necessarily connected or logically involved with one another.

There is no good reason why one should attempt to deny that the author of the Fourth Gospel drew the terms *λόγος* and *μονογενής*, at least indirectly, from heathen sources; and it may well be that one of his purposes in writing was to give what he regarded, and wished his readers to regard, as the true significance of them.

As for Justin, he uniformly professes to base his ideas on the Old Testament, wherever he may have gotten his phraseology. It is significant that he nowhere speaks to his heathen readers as though they knew this doctrine of the begotten Word; but that, on the other hand, he gives it as so much information concerning Christian teaching or doctrine well known to Christians, expressly declaring that he had been taught it as specifically Christian (1 Apol. 46). And it is also significant that, though he gives many examples of doctrines common to Greek philosophy and Christianity, he does not include among these this doctrine of the Word, nor of the Word as begotten, nor of the Word as God.

This is really inexplicable on the theory that he was conscious of drawing his material from Greek sources. For, in the First Apology (13), he is defending the reasonableness of the worship of Jesus Christ on the ground that he is the Son of the true God himself, declaring that the accusers of the Christians do not understand the mystery that is therein. How gladly would Justin have availed himself of the similarity between Greek and Christian teaching in this respect, had he been aware of such similarity! Nor would this have been dangerous to his cause, for he had ever ready his doctrine of the Spermatic Word, according to which all truth in Greek philosophy sprang directly or indirectly from the begotten Word.

The assertions of the late Professor L. L. Paine¹ that "Justin Martyr plainly draws his Logos doctrine from Greek philosophic sources," and that he "directly refers to Platonic and Stoic authorities for his Logos ideas," are not justified by the facts. Not only does he nowhere "directly" refer to Platonic and Stoic authorities for his Logos ideas, in the sense of doctrines, but he nowhere does so indirectly or by implication. The only approach to such a reference is in the First Apology (60), where he says that Plato, in the *Timæus*, "gives the second place to the Logos," and where he sees in the language of Plato a reference to the cross which he thinks was suggested by the record of the brazen serpent in Numbers xxi. 4-9. Here Justin is not making a confession of his obligation to Plato, but affirming Plato's obligation to Moses. And it is to be noted that it is an obligation of Plato to Moses which, curiously enough, implies the Johannine use of the story (John iii. 14, 15). The only suggestion concerning the Logos pertains, first of all, to the fact of a Logos, and, second, to his subordination. There is nothing whatever concerning the begottenness and his being the only begotten. The most that Justin can mean is that Greek philosophy does not contradict Christian teaching.

The *idea* of the *λόγος σπερματικός* is apparently drawn from Stoicism; but it is so changed as to be a thing entirely different from the Stoical *doctrine*. To the Stoics the *Logos Spermaticos* was the active principle in right conduct; with Justin it is the determining principle in right thinking. Again, the Stoic doctrine that God could affect the world only by the Logos is not the doctrine of John or of Justin, who agree in teaching that God does come into direct contact with the world (John iii. 16; xvi. 27; xvii. 6; Justin, 1 Apol. 60: "Moses, by the inspiration and influence of God, took brass," etc.), though in some

¹ A Critical History of the Evolution of Trinitarianism, pp. 26, 29.

places the logic of Justin's position would forbid it. The doctrine of the Spermatic Word, as taught by Justin, is much more like John (John i. 4: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men"; see also ver. 9: "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man"), than it is like the utterances of the Stoics, and is much more probably drawn from John.

Nor is the argument for the Philonic origin of the doctrines of John and Justin any stronger than for the Stoic. The best argument on this point will be found in the concessions of the advocates of the theory. Schmiedel, in his article on "John the Son of Zebedee," in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, though he argues strongly for the Philonic origin of those doctrines, is compelled to admit that the "Philonic Logos could not be made flesh"; and, what is still more remarkable, that the modification which was wrought upon the Logos idea by John was profound. And he makes the fact of this modification the basis of a plea for the acceptance of the Philonic origin. Harnack also admits that the Johannine Logos has little more than the name in common with the Logos of Philo.

It is not strange that these words and phrases were used by Christians. They were widely diffused, and most men of intelligence, among them Christians like the author of the Fourth Gospel and Justin, were in possession of them. But Christians rejected, for the most part, the doctrines that originally belonged to those expressions; and, while they did not reject the phraseology, they attached a widely different meaning to them. It is a method by no means unknown to-day to those of us who are watching the propaganda of certain new cults. But it would be as absurd to suppose that the Christians borrowed their doctrines from heathen sources as to suppose that, because Christian Science uses the language of idealism, it therefore got its doctrines from idealism. The parallel, however, is not

complete; for there can be little doubt that Christian Scientists imagine that they use the terms of idealism in the idealistic sense, whereas it is practically certain that the Christians knew that they were using these non-Christian terms in a new sense.

The only suggestion that Justin gives us as to the source of his doctrines (he says nothing about his phraseology) is that they were part of the things he had been taught as a Christian. "We have been taught," he says, "that Christ is the first born (*πρωτότοκος*) of God, and we have declared above that he is the Word of whom every race of men were partakers" (I Apol. 46). And in his Second Apology (10), he says, "Our doctrines, thus, appear to be greater than all human teaching." Repeatedly he claims Christ as the teacher of the doctrines he is promulgating, and in his First Apology (46), as just mentioned, he appears to specify the doctrine of the Word and of the Word as begotten, as among the things taught by Christ.

We have not much light on the subject; but what we have points to some oral or written Christian tradition for the doctrine of the Word and his begottenness, and not at all to Greek philosophy.

The only remaining alternative seems to be that Justin and John were independent of each other, but alike dependent upon some Christological development prior to both; or else that one of them was dependent upon the other. That they were both dependent upon some earlier Christological development is exceedingly improbable, since we have absolutely no trace of such earlier Christology, except in Ignatius, where it is evidently based on the Fourth Gospel, whether the passages be regarded as genuine, or whether we hold them to be interpolated, as is the more probable, since they all appear in the Longer Recension. There are some things in the Ignatian epistles so thoroughly Justinian that, were it not for the suspicion of

interpolation, they might show us the origin of Justin's phraseology; though, for the most part, the Ignatian epistles plainly betray an acquaintance at this point with the phraseology of the Fourth Gospel.

So, then, we seem to be shut up to the theory that one of the two, Justin or the author of the Fourth Gospel, was dependent upon the other. On this theory Justin must have been the dependent one, as several considerations will show:—

1. Both John and Justin are apologetic in tone and purpose, but in a different sense. John is a defensive statement of what its author believed with the purpose of sustaining a certain view of the person of Jesus Christ. Justin's writings (especially *Trypho*) are also a defensive statement, but they betray, as John does not, a consciousness of bitter and determined opposition to the views defended. John might have been written if there had been no serious opposition to its teachings prior to their being penned. Justin's writings could only have arisen out of the necessity of defending their teachings against previous assaults, which are often referred to and refuted in detail, especially in *Trypho*. John writes like one who expected to be believed on his own authority; Justin tries not only to establish his propositions, but also to allay irritation and to make as favorable an impression as possible. It is incredible that any one writing in the age of the apologists could have written on the topics he treats as the author of the Fourth Gospel wrote. That Gospel must have been written in the days when Christian teaching was being originally promulgated. In this respect it is on a par with the Synoptics. It betrays none of that profound sense of antagonism to Christian doctrine which characterizes the writings of the Apologists.

2. A comparison of John and Justin on the doctrine of the preëxistence of the Word leads to the same conclusion.

Any one who has the slightest familiarity with the two writers must feel at once that Justin's views on this point are much more fully developed than those of the Fourth Gospel. They are, in the first place, much more unequivocally expressed. Besides, they enter into detail. In John there are but slight hints of any preëxistent activity of the Word, and of what that activity was. In Justin there is extended information on that point. In John we seem to have the germ of which Justin is the fuller development. For such a development considerable time must be allowed.

3. This view is further substantiated by the fact, that, by the time Justin wrote, many of the implications of the doctrine of the Son or Word as begotten were felt and opposed by the enemies of Christianity, and accepted, even to the greatest extremes, by Justin.

(1) It was plainly seen, that, if the Son were begotten, then the Father must be a begetter; and so we have frequent assertions that God the Father begot the Son. This implication is not set forth either in John or in Greek philosophy. This shows a considerable lapse of time from John to Justin.

(2) Then the question arose as to whether the Father was begotten also, and this is repeatedly negatived in the use of the epithet unbegotten (*ἀγέννητος*) applied to the Father. This epithet is, indeed, applied to God by Greek philosophers and by Philo, but with a different significance. The "unbegotten" of Greek philosophy was the One who originated all things, but was himself unoriginate. The unbegotten God of the Christians was all this, but he was so called by them in contrast to the begotten God, the Word.

(3) By the time Justin wrote, it had become plain that, if the Word was in any true and proper sense the begotten of God, then the Word must be God. This is brought out clearly in the First Apology (63), where Justin says: "They

who affirm that the Son is the Father, are proved neither to have become acquainted with the Father, nor to know that the Father of the universe has a Son; who also, being the first begotten Word of God, is even God" (*ὁς λόγος καὶ πρωτότοκος ὦν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ θεὸς ὑπάρχει*). The same thing appears in Trypho (126), where Justin says: "If you had understood what has been written by the prophets, you would not have denied that he was God, Son of the only, unbegotten, unutterable God." The progress here is plain. John says, that the Word, which is God, is the begotten of the Father; Justin says, that, because he is the begotten of the Father, he is God. This conclusion is not interfered with, even if we read in John i. 18, *μονογενὴς θεὸς* instead of *ἑὸς*. For this reading merely asserts that he was a begotten God, not that he was God because he was begotten by God.

(4) Another conclusion reached by Justin, and, apparently, by all who thought of the Word as he did, was that there were two Gods, properly so called. One of them was unbegotten, impassible, called by no proper name, and remained ever in the supercelestial places, invisible to all men, holding personal intercourse with no man. The other was begotten, was subject to the Maker of all things, and manifested himself to men. This God is numerically (the word is Justin's) distinct from the Maker of all things, though not distinct in will (Trypho, 56, 62, 128, 129). The Christians worship and adore him along with the Father and the prophetic spirit (1 Apol. 6; Trypho, 126), and this worship is justifiable (1 Apol. 13). He existed as God before the ages (Trypho, 48), is God truly, not metaphorically (Trypho, 55), is expressly set forth as God (Trypho, 71), and, although he ministered to the will of the Father, is, nevertheless, God (Trypho, 125). It is evident that here we have one who feels the implications of the doctrine that the Word is truly God, and who does not shrink from ac-

cepting them, even to the very verge of ditheism. In John, on the other hand, while the doctrine that the Word is God is no less unequivocally stated, there is as yet no recognition of the possible ditheistic implications of the doctrine.

These phenomena are just what might be expected if the Christology of the Fourth Gospel had been in the minds of the Christians on the one side, and of their enemies on the other, some decades prior to the time of Justin's writing.

This conclusion is confirmed when we consider the relation of Justin to Origen, and of both to Athanasius.

That Origen is in the direct line of Christological development with Justin is clear; for his Christology, like that of Justin, centers around the ideas of the Logos,—his begottenness, and his being the only begotten. Comparing Justin and Origen, we find that the latter had passed beyond the standpoint of the former in several respects.

1. While the doctrine of the Trinity in Justin is rudimentary, in Origen it begins to come out quite fully.

2. Origen struggled with difficulties connected with the doctrine of the begottenness and true deity of the Word which were apparently unfelt by Justin. As a result, we have his famous doctrine of eternal generation. If the Word is begotten of God, and is truly God, then the generation of the Word must be eternal.

3. He brings out more strongly than Justin the idea that the only begotten Son of God is a son by nature.

4. While Justin allows the differences between the Father and the Son to stand out very clearly, Origen emphasizes the points in which they are alike. He has comparatively little to say about the subordination of the Son, which is so very prominent in Justin. On the other hand, he comes out boldly with the assertion that what belongs to the nature of the deity is common to the Father and the Son.

5. On the doctrine of the preëxistence of the Word, also, there was an advance from Justin's to Origen's time. Justin used it to prove (1) the deity of the Logos, and (2) that the Greeks were indebted to the Logos for their truth. Origen is just as sure as is Justin of the preëxistent activity of the Word; but he has gone beyond, and in some respects departed from, Justin's conception of the significance of the doctrine. Justin said the Logos was in each according to his capacity; Origen emphasizes the fact of varying degrees of the indwelling Logos, but attributes these degrees, not to differing capacities, but to differing deserts. To him, therefore, the principal interest connected with the preëxistence is its relation to the doctrine of the incarnation of the Logos, who was and is in every man according to his deserts; and, as Christ's soul was perfectly pure, he was in Christ perfectly, or in all his fullness.

It seems perfectly evident that Justin is between John and Origen in point of doctrinal development.

Passing on, now, to Athanasius, we find that he holds to the doctrines of the Logos, as begotten and only begotten, taught by John, Justin, and Origen; but that, while the Logos doctrines of John and Justin were more or less generally admitted by Christians, the implications deduced by Justin were little regarded, while those of Origen, especially his doctrine of eternal generation, had risen into prominence. We find, also, that certain implications of the doctrine of the begetting were in dispute in the time of Athanasius. This is especially true of the question of the *οὐσία*. This was not touched by John. It is but little mentioned by Justin. Trypho (128) has the solitary passage touching the problem, as follows: "This power was begotten from the Father, by his power and will, but not by abscission, as if the essence of the Father were divided." In Origen we find the incorporeality of the Father dwelt upon at length, in order to prove that the begetting of the

Son does not involve any division of the Father. In Athanasius this question of the division of the essence comes to its greatest prominence. Here it shares the space with the doctrine of eternal generation.

The line of development is clear—John, Justin, Origen, Athanasius. Justin is as much of an advance on John, as Origen is on Justin, or Athanasius on Origen.

Another consideration goes to show that all our Gospels, essentially as we have them to-day, preceded the writings of Justin by practically the same length of time. We have in Justin the full-fledged belief in the virgin birth combined with the doctrine of the only begotten Logos, or Son of God. In his writings there is the strongest evidence that he regarded both of these as equally ancient and equally well-known doctrines, demanding support against assault. Both doctrines had been before the public as Christian teaching long enough to create wide-spread and profound opposition. Justin summoned all his powers to their defense. The theory that quite late the Gospels of Matthew and Luke were tampered with by prefixing the birth and childhood histories, and that John is a late production, or that the doctrine of the only begotten Logos is late, is out of accord with the whole tone of Justin's writings, which demand that those doctrines should have been early, not recent. Besides, the theory that the doctrines of the virgin birth and of the only begotten Logos were edited into Matthew and Luke and John leaves several things to be accounted for: (1) that Matthew and Luke only, and not Mark (confessedly the earliest of the Synoptics), should have been so treated; (2) that the Synoptics contain no hint of the only begotten Logos; (3) that John contains no hint of the virgin birth. Every one of these points is cleared up if we suppose that the order of the origin of the Gospels is Mark, Matthew, Luke, John; that Mark was written before the doctrine of the virgin birth was an-

nounced; and that John was written not long after Matthew and Luke, that is, too soon after for the virgin birth to have become a subject of general controversy. This would indicate a comparatively early origin for John, such as the form and content of Justin's writings demand.

Still another consideration is that there is no early Christian literature that disputes the doctrine of the only begotten Logos on the ground that it is new. We know that there were Christians in the time of Justin who regarded Christ as a man born of men. Had Justin's doctrine been new, or, in other words, not recognized as apostolic, it would certainly have been attacked on that ground by those who regarded Christ as a man born of men, and especially by the Alogians, who arose, probably, about 170, and who, by attributing the Fourth Gospel to Cerinthus, admitted its early origin. There was every motive for proving it late if that could have been done. That it was not even suggested is striking proof in favor of an early date.

Much has been made of the alleged fact that, while Justin quotes freely from the Synoptics, he quotes but little, if at all, from the Fourth Gospel. But it will be observed that Justin does not cite even the Synoptics for proof of any doctrine. For this he relies either upon the Old Testament or upon the agreement of Greek with Christian thought. Neither his heathen nor his Jewish opponents would have allowed the authority of the Gospels on points of doctrine. His quotations from the Synoptics, therefore, are almost wholly to illustrate the ethics of the Christians, or, more exactly, the ethical teachings of Jesus. Any one who is acquainted with the contents of the Gospels will readily see that John was not as well adapted to this purpose as the Synoptics were. As a matter of fact, however, when we come to the doctrines he defends, we find him using John quite as much as he did the Synoptics. There

is as much reason for supposing that he drew his doctrine of the only begotten Logos from the former as that he drew his doctrine of the miraculous conception of Jesus from the latter.

Connected with the preceding is the suggestion that the Fourth Gospel was possibly known to Justin, but that he did not quote it because it was a gnostic Gospel. But if it was a gnostic Gospel, why should he have taken from it one of his most important doctrines? Besides, there is the strange fact that a Gospel supposed to have been utterly renounced by Justin in 150 or 160, should have loomed up in Irenæus (180 or 190) as peculiarly Christian.

To any attempt to determine the space of time between the Fourth Gospel and Justin's Christology it may be objected, that developments in thought are sometimes swift and sometimes slow, and that this may have been a case of swift development. A genius may find a fruitful thought and develop its implications very quickly. All this is, of course, freely admitted, though it must be remembered that the possible is not always the actual. But that in this instance the time must have been relatively long is probable from the fact that the problem involves more than the mere progress of thought from the Fourth Gospel to Justin. In Justin's time the Christology of the only begotten Logos was evidently so old in the thought of the Christians, that they, at least, had no suspicion that it was not apostolic. This is plain from Justin's whole manner of treating that Christology. Besides, it was so understood by the enemies of Christianity, as we are bound to infer from Justin's whole argument. They assumed that the doctrine was primitive in Christian circles, not a late conception. Furthermore, time enough had elapsed for the enemies of Christianity to become well acquainted with, and strongly to oppose, this Christology. Development may be rapid, but the facts just mentioned indicate that

in this instance the development was slow; or that, if it was swift, it was accomplished, in part at least, long before Justin's time, which, indeed, is probable. The date of the Fourth Gospel must, if the preceding line of thought is valid, be placed not later than the last years of the first century.