

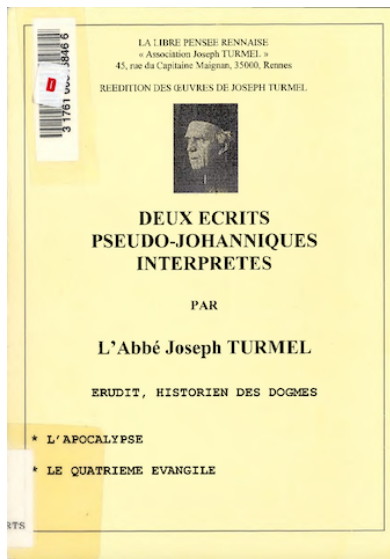
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## INTRODUCTION

Nearly half a century ago, Renan (*L'Eglise chrétienne*, p. 58) defined the Fourth Gospel as 'a writing of no value as to how Jesus spoke, but superior to the Synoptic Gospels as to the order of facts. The first part of this verdict is now generally adopted; but of the second part only a memory remains. The numerous and rigorous investigations to which the fourth Gospel has been subjected for twenty-five or thirty years establish that this book was composed without any historical concern. In the following lines the results of the criticism are assumed. It is considered proven that the Fourth Gospel is a long fiction. And we start from this fact to try to shed light on its origins 1.

1. French works to consult: Renan, *L'Eglise chrétienne*, p. 45-62; J. Réville, *Le quatrième Evangile*, 1901; Loisy, *Le quatrième évangile*, of which a first edition appeared in 1905 and the second in 1921; M. Goguel, *Introduction au Nouveau Testament*, tome II Paris, 1924. In these last books one will find all the literature on the subject. Among the ancient commentaries I will limit myself to mentioning that of Grotius, *Opera*, II, 473-574, London, 1679.

## PART ONE

### FIRST REDACTION OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

#### 1 - The Johannine Christ denies Mary.

The Johannine Christ inaugurates his public life by attending the wedding at Cana (II, 1-12). During the meal, Mary, who is also present, warns him that the wine is missing. And Jesus answers her: "What is there between me and you, woman? From time

immemorial this strange answer has troubled the faith of believers. People have wondered how an incarnate God could have spoken in this way to the woman to whom he owed his human nature. Various explanations have been proposed. But it was realised that these artificial explanations all served to confuse or displace the question. Yet faith could not fail to have the last word. Here, as elsewhere, it triumphed over the difficulty. But it only achieved its triumph by taking refuge in mystery. We closed our eyes; we gave up trying to understand. We told ourselves that God had had his reasons for speaking as he did. And these reasons were worshipped without any pretence of knowing them. Believers were not the only ones who were confused by Christ's response. The critics, too, were struck with an astonishment that they could not conceal. No doubt they were no longer dealing with a God really made man; they were only dealing with a fictitious divinity. But they had to justify this fiction. They had to explain how a writer begins by presenting the incarnate Word to us, then puts into his mouth words of denial against his mother. They did not seek new solutions: they adopted the explanations received from believers, the main one being that, in Christ, the divinity is independent of Mary and that the words: "What do I have in common with you?"

So the critics have found nothing better than the believers to account for the response of the Johannine Christ to Mary. But whereas believers, faced with a solution that they know is insufficient, give up trying to understand and take refuge in the mystery, critics do not have this convenient resource. They cannot hide behind the unfathomable counsels of Providence; they do not have the right to close their eyes; they are obliged to keep them wide open and to denounce mercilessly all that is nothing but a cover-up. Let us re-read the famous text.

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We notice three things: the thought that is expressed there, the turn given to this thought, the absence of the word "mother" in place of which the word "woman" is presented. The fundamental thought is that Christ is nothing to Mary, that Mary is nothing to Christ. The interrogative turn given to the sentence is the procedure used when a challenge is made; here it has the meaning of a provocation; and, consequently, instead of attenuating the thought, it accentuates it. Unencumbered by the questioning that surrounds it, the reply means: "I owe you nothing", or "there is nothing in common between us". With the interrogation the meaning is: "Prove, if you can, that I owe you something, that there is something in common between us! And, to complete the challenge, Mary is apostrophised with the name of a woman, which here means: "People look at you as my mother, but you know very well that you are not." I said that this word completes the challenge. It is, in fact, what closes the line. In ending it, he motivates it; and the meaning of the sentence is this: "You pass for my mother, and my

historian himself gives you this name to conform to the common opinion ("the mother of Jesus was there"); but, in reality, you are not my mother; I owe you nothing.

People will say that I am making an enormous mistake. I reply that in theological matters the only enormous ideas are those that cannot be situated in history. I will look later to see if my interpretation is devoid of attestation in the period of Christian origins. For the moment I follow my text without worrying about where it leads me. I follow it, that is to say, I walk behind it, I let myself be led by it, and I refrain from leading it myself according to my whim. The reply: "What is there in common?" contains a formal and striking denial of Mary's divine maternity. I must conclude, unless there are indications to the contrary, that this denial expresses the author's thought.

Where are these clues? It sometimes happens to speakers that they are betrayed by the intoxication of the word, and say what they did not mean to say. But we are dealing here with a piece of style that has been studied at length; we are not dealing with an oratorical improvisation. We also see every day that uneducated minds and tired old men stray into a vocabulary they never had or have lost the mastery of. But the author of the fourth Gospel knows how to clothe the highest ideas with their most delicate nuances. How can we believe that, wanting to teach one doctrine, he taught another quite different from the one he had in mind? For this is the result of departing from the letter of the text. The Johannine Christ, it is said, teaches us at Cana that Mary has nothing to do with his divinity or his thaumaturgical power. So be it. But, to express this simple truth, he used a turn of phrase which confused everything; he did not know how to say what he wanted to say.

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Others assure us that Christ's rebuke is not addressed to Mary but to the synagogue, to the old covenant. I agree with this. But I agree that the author was very unfortunate in his choice of words, and that the coarsest boor would have been less clumsy. And then, if he wanted to put words of condemnation against the synagogue in the mouth of Christ, could he not do so without charging Mary with representing the synagogue at that very moment? Wouldn't the most elementary propriety forbid him to include the mother of Christ in this odious symbolism? On the other hand, no man was foolish enough to ask whether Christ owed his divinity or his thaumaturgical virtue to Mary. No one needed to be fixed on this point. And the Johannine Christ proclaimed the most insipid of truisms if, as the critics as well as the believers claim, he did not derive his divinity and supernatural powers from Mary. In two words, the words "What is common?", as they are usually understood, not only offend the laws of language, but also contain an indecency and an unbearable banality.

## 2. - The Johannine Christ reveals God to men.

The Johannine Christ came "to bear witness to the truth" (XVIII, 37), to make "the truth known" (VIII, 32). The truth that he reveals "sets men free" (VIII, 32), makes them "pass from death to life" (V, 24), preserves them forever from death (VIII, 51). And this truth is summed up in the knowledge of him who is "the only true God", since the knowledge of God procures and guarantees eternal life (XVII, 3; V, 24). The Johannine Christ came to reveal God, the "true God", to men who, before him, did not know him. For the true God was unknown to all men until the day the Son revealed him: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son who is in the bosom of the Father has made him known" (I, 18; see also VI, 46).

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The Jews themselves are no exception to the general law. The Johannine Christ tells them that they do not know God: "You do not know him who sent me. I know him (VII, 29). You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also" (VIII, 19); "It is my Father who glorifies me, the one of whom you say he is your God and whom you do not know" (VIII, 54-55); "They will do all these things to you for my name's sake, because they do not know the one who sent me" (XV, 21, the rest of the text proves that the Jews are referred to here. "That the word written in their law might be fulfilled..."). And these repeated assertions are not without surprise. What does the author do with the text: "God is known in Judah" (Ps. LXXVI, 2)? What does he make of the texts in which the psalmist proclaims the fidelity of Israel to God (Ps. XLIV, 18, 23): "We have not violated your covenant; our heart has not turned away... For your sake they slaughter us every day"? Since the return from captivity the Jewish people had turned away from idols; they worshipped God; they wished to bring all the pagans to worship God (Ps. CXVII, 1): "Praise the Lord, all you nations. Praise him, all you peoples. Above all, he feared that the pagans would mock God (Ps. CXV, 2): "Lest the nations say, 'Where is their God? The Johannine Christ contradicts the many texts that testify to this situation. He is in opposition to the Old Testament.

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## 3 - The Johannine Christ rejects the Old Testament.

But he does not care about the Old Testament. Or, if he alludes to it, it is to reject it with contempt. In the course of his discussions with the Jews, he sometimes alleges the texts of the Old Testament in his favour. And this is the way he brings up these texts: "It is written in your law that the testimony of two men is true" (VIII, 17). The ordinance to which he refers here is written in Deuteronomy, XIX, 15; it was dictated by God himself to Moses. Its origin is sacred. But not for the Johannine Christ, who disdainfully says: "Your law". Will it be objected that the Mosaic legislation had a transitory character, that the sacrifice of Calvary was going to strike it as null and void, and that, moreover, only the Jews were subject to it? So be it. But let us listen again to the Johannine Christ.

He says (X, 34): "It is written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'"; and (XV, 25): "This happened so that the word written in their law might be fulfilled, 'They hated Me without a cause. In these two places his disdain is no longer directed at ritual or disciplinary prescriptions; it reaches the oracles emanating from the psalms. The author of the fourth Gospel quotes the psalms as we quote the books of the Iliad or the Aeneid, whose maxims we exploit without believing ourselves bound by any religious sentiment. Apart from the literary point of view, he ignores the psalms. And since the psalms and the Mosaic legislation constitute the essential part of the Old Testament, he ignores the Old Testament.

The observations we have just made give us the key to V:36-37: "The Father who sent me has testified about me, you have never heard his voice, you have not seen his face" It is often said that there is an allusion here to the prophecies of the Old Testament by which the Father would have testified to his Son. From this it is concluded that these same prophecies are the "voice" of the Father, a voice which resounded in the ears of the Jews but which the Jews refused to hear, or rather refused to believe. This is a mistake. If the voice of the Father was heard by the Jews but they did not hear it in the sense that they refused to believe in it, we must also say that the face of the Father was shown to the Jews but they refused to see it. Now the face of the Father has never been shown to anyone and, according to what we read elsewhere, I, 18: "No one has ever seen God". The Jews did not see the Father, not because they refused to see him, but because they were never able to contemplate him. Nor did the voice of the Father ever resound in the world. And the Jews did not hear it, not because they refused to believe in it, but because they were not able to perceive its accents. The Father never spoke. His testimony to His Son, therefore, does not consist in the prophecies of the Old Testament; it must be sought in the works which He gave His Son to perform. The Old Testament is full of the oracles which God gives through the mouths of the prophets, of the theophanies granted to the patriarchs and to Moses. Oracles and theophanies are null and void for the Johannine Christ: "You have never heard his voice, you have not seen his face". Non avenue is also the Ascension of the prophet Elijah to heaven in

spite of the Books of Kings (II Reg., II, 1 and 11), because we read (III, 13) "No one has ascended to heaven except the one who came down from heaven.

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#### 4. - The Johannine Christ rejects Moses and the prophets.

But the Johannine Christ has not yet given his full measure. Let us continue to collect his oracles. He says in the allegory of the good shepherd (X, 8): "All who came before me are thieves and robbers. He says "all"; he does not exclude anyone, not even the prophets, not even Moses. Appalled by this indictment, the Fathers, the apologists and the critics did what firemen do in the presence of a fire. They tried to locate it. Moses and the Old Testament prophets had to be protected from it. But how? Augustine (In Jo. tr., XLV, 8) explained that the description of thieves and robbers applied only to those who had come 'outside' Christ. But the prophets had not ministered apart from Christ, but 'in agreement' with him. The prophets were therefore not robbers. I must say that this overly fanciful argument did not convince the critics. They looked for something else. They looked and they found it. What did they find? They discovered that the word 'all' means 'some'. For this is where the critics come in when they tell us that the Johannine Christ has in mind the Jewish teachers of his time or the false messiahs (who began to appear around 50 AD at the earliest). So, in the allegory of the good shepherd, the author of the fourth Gospel has in view some of those who preceded Jesus (actually his contemporaries or even men who came after him). But if this is what he meant, why did he use the word "all"? Why did he not use the word "some"? I am stopped and warned that by insisting on taking the text of X:8 literally, I am straying into the realm of fantasy. I will examine this point later. For the moment I note that in interpreting X:8, the critics are re-editing, in a new form, Augustine's fantasies.

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#### 5. the Johannine Christ fights the prince of this world.

The Johannine Christ condemns Moses and the prophets. He strikes a higher blow; he attacks the "prince of this world", the "Devil". He came to earth to reveal God, the "one true God", to men who did not know him. But he also came to fight the devil. "The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil", we read in the First Epistle (III, 8)1. Even before this battle is over, we are informed of its outcome. The devil will put to



death the Son of God who accepts his fate; but he himself will be driven out. "Now the prince of this world will be driven out" (XII, 31); "the prince of this world is condemned" (XVI, 11); "the prince of this world is coming; he can do nothing to me, but he will still put me to death, so that the world may know that I love the Father and that I do as the Father has commanded" (XIV, 30).

1. The three Johannine epistles (/Jo., II Jo., IIIJo.) are inseparable from the fourth Gospel with which they have a common origin and whose theology they complete.

What is the Devil of the fourth Gospel? What is he in himself? What is he in relation to God and men? Considered in himself, the Devil is evil or rather "the Evil One". We know this from the Gospel where we hear Christ asking his father to "preserve his disciples from the Evil One" (XVII, 15). We know it especially from the first epistle: "You have overcome the Evil One" (II, 13, 14); "Cain was of the Evil One" (III, 12); "the Evil One does not touch him" (the Christian born of God). Being evil, he sins and lies: "From the beginning the Devil sins" (I Jo., III, 8); "there is no truth in him; when he speaks lies he speaks from his own fund" (VIII, 44).

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The Devil is the "Enemy" of God, for that is the meaning of the Greek word for Devil. This enmity was attested to by Christ when he said that he came to destroy the works of the devil. This enmity is inevitable since God is good and the Devil is evil.

What the Devil is in relation to the world, the Johannine Christ teaches us in two words when he calls him "the prince of this world". The world is his kingdom, he is its king. The same idea reappears in another form in the following text of the first epistle (V, 19): "The whole world is in the power of the Evil One".

Master of the world, the Devil is the source from which all political authority derives. To Pilate who sells himself to be able to put him to death or to deliver him, the Johannine Christ answers (XIX, 141): "You would have no power over me if it had not been given to you from above. Then he adds: "Therefore he who delivers me to you commits a greater sin. This answer contains two assertions. The first tells us that Pilate's authority comes from "above", that is, from a being superior to men, from a being whose lieutenant he is and to whom he owes obedience. According to the second assertion, it is this superior being, this being "from above" who delivered Christ to Pilate, his lieutenant; and "therefore" Pilate's responsibility for Christ's death is mitigated. The great culprit is the being "from above", who put Pilate his agent in an inextricable

situation. This being "from above", who was so determined to hand Christ over to Pilate, is the "Enemy", the Devil. He appears to us here as the sovereign holder of the political authority of which he gave a part to the Roman governor. And this is logical, since "the whole world is in the power of the Evil One" and this Evil One is the prince of this world.

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The Son of God, who has come to fight the Devil, must necessarily wrest the empire of the world from him. It is this programme that he formulates in the text XII, 31, quoted above: "The prince of this world will be driven out". And it is again this thought, which is at the bottom of the following texts (III, 17): "God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved by him"; (XII, 47): "I have not come to judge the world, but to save the world". The Johannine Christ saves the world by freeing it from the yoke of the Devil, and he achieves this freedom by throwing the Devil "out".

However, this result is to be achieved only in the future. By the time Christ is on earth, the world contaminated by its master is evil. He who came to overcome the Devil must first overcome the world; hence the words (XVI, 33): "You will have tribulation in the world; but be confident, I have overcome the world. The triumph of Christ over the world is progressive. It consists in the gradual repression of the Devil so as to restrict the domain of his empire. And this repression is accomplished by the creation of the children of God. We shall see later how the children of God are born. Let us limit ourselves here to noting that the children of God are beyond the reach of the Devil: "Whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who is born of God keeps him, and the Evil One does not touch him. (I Jo., V, 18). From this it follows that, in so far as the world is the property of the Devil, the children of God are not of the world: "Whoever is born of God has the victory over the world." (I Jo., V, 4): 'If you were of the world, the world would love what is its own; but because you are not of the world... for this the world hates you' (XV, 19; see XVII, 14, 16).

But the children of God, at least during the days of Christ's earthly life, are a very small flock. What is the condition of the rest of mankind, that is to say, of the immense majority, of the almost complete universality of the human race? The Johannine Christ teaches us in the following words (VIII, 23-44): "You are from below, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world... I say what I have seen in my Father's house, and you do what you have seen in your Father's house. If God were your Father, you would love me... you are of the devil and you want to fulfil your father's desires.

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The Jews are "of the devil"; the devil is their "father"; they are his children. From where does this appalling defect come to them? Because they are "from below", because they are "of the world". If they were "from above", if they "were not of the world", they would be the children of God; but being from below and of the world they are necessarily the children of the Devil. It remains to be seen why one is a child of God. These, our texts say, are the children of God who have received the Light that has come into the world (I, 9-13), that is, who have believed in the Son of God and who, for this reason, have eternal life (VI, 27a, 29, 35-40). On the other hand, one must believe in the Son because of the miracles he performs (V, 36; X, 25, 37-38; XIV, 11); and yet it is only those who come to the Son and believe in him that the Father has attracted (VI, 44) and has given himself to the Son (VI, 37; X, 29; XVII, 6). Let us not seek how this attraction of the Father is reconciled with the obligation which the men have to believe in the miracles; let us suppose, on the contrary, the problem solved (our author gets confused there, but the theologians until our days got confused there as much as him) and let us consider the children of God. They are not "of the world" (XV, 19; XVII, 14); they received the birth "from above" of which Jesus speaks in his interview (I, 13; / Jo., II, 29; 111, 9, see further); they are "of God". (VIII, 47; / Jo., IV, 6; V, 19). But, in order to receive these privileges, they had to first believe in the Son, and, in order to believe in the Son, they had to be attracted by the Father. How could they have been attracted to the Father and how, once attracted, could they have believed, if they had not already existed? So they did exist. The birth from above which made them children of God came only secondarily. Before obtaining it, they had received a first birth which made them men. First men, then children of God: that is the succession.

Let us dwell on the first birth, on that which the human condition gives to men. If it were from above, it would make them children of God, but it does not. We are therefore forced to conclude that the first birth is from below. Moreover, we would like to delude ourselves that we could not, since the text I, 12-13 is there which opposes the birth of the children of God to that whose principle is in blood, in the will of the flesh and in the will of man. This birth accomplished by flesh and blood and over which the human will presides, is precisely that which brings us into the world, which introduces us into the great human family. And it is this birth that I, 13 contrasts with the birth of the children of God, with that which, in III, 3, 7 is called the birth from above

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Let us therefore conclude that the first birth is from below. And, since what is from below comes from the Devil, let us resign ourselves to this other conclusion that the first birth comes from the Devil. This is where we have to come. The Jews, whom the Johannine Christ reproaches with being the children of the Devil, are so because of their human

condition. Man, by the very constitution of his nature, has the Devil as his father. What does the Johannine "Devil", the "prince of this world", the "Evil One" of the Fourth Gospel lack in order to be the author of the human race? What separates him from the creator of the universe, from the author of the six days' work? We are witnessing a duel between the God of creation - who is also the God of Moses - and another God represented by Christ. The Creator, from whom Pilate derives his authority, is going to hand over the Son of God to his agent with the order to put him to death. He will kill Christ, as he kills all men, for he is "from the beginning a slayer of men" (VIII, 44). But, in spite of this ephemeral victory, he will be defeated: "You children are of God, and you have overcome them (the devil's minions) because He who is in you is greater than He who is in the world" (I Jo., IV, 4).

## 6. - The Johannine Christ rejects the resurrection of the flesh.

The Johannine Christ reveals God, the 'one true God', to men, because the knowledge of God is, for those who possess it, a principle of eternal life. He rejects the God of creation, because this perverse being imposes on men the cruel law of death followed by condemnation to hell. In short, the ultimate purpose of the coming of Christ is to rescue men from death, to give them eternal life. This is the doctrine that emerges from the following texts: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (III, 16); "He who believes in the Son has eternal life" (III, 36); "He who believes has eternal life. This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that he who eats it will not die... Whoever eats this bread will live forever" (VI, 29-58); "If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death" (VIII, 51).

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According to what rule is this benefit of eternal life dispensed? Do we possess it now? Or do we only have the pledge of this good at present, the possession of which is postponed to a later date? Nothing can be drawn from the text XVII, 3, where we read: "Eternal life is that they know you". But the following texts are decisive: "He who ... believes in him who sent me to eternal life ... has passed from death to life" (V, 2.4); "We have passed from death to life" (I Jo., III, 14). Death is the state of the soul that ignores God, the God whose existence Christ came to reveal. This death ceases and gives way to life as soon as the soul acquires the knowledge of God, or, what amounts to the same thing, faith in the Son. The Christian already possesses eternal life: "I have written these things to you so that you may know that you have eternal life, you who

believe in the name of the Son of God" (1 Jo., V, 13). He was dead, he lives. And the life he possesses is a real life produced by a true generation. Only this generation has nothing in common with the one that brought us into this world. It is "from above" (III, 3); it is "of God" (1, 13: they are "born of God"); it is produced by "the seed of God" (I Jo., III, 9). "The seed of God abides" in the Christian (ibid.), from now on the Christian is the child of God. However, his privilege is, for the moment, hidden, it is not manifested (I Jo., III, 2: "We are the children of God and what we will be is not yet manifested").

Since the resurrection is the passage from death to life, the Christian is, from now on, resurrected. The resurrection is an accomplished fact in him; but this resurrection is of a spiritual order. The author of the fourth Gospel rejects the Jewish dogma of the resurrection of bodies; he substitutes for it the resurrection of souls which has its principle in the knowledge of God.

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## 7) The Johannine Christ is a spiritual being.

During the feast of Tabernacles the Jews try to arrest Jesus to kill him. But, says the evangelist (VII, 30) "No one laid hands on him, because his hour had not come". A few days later, a second attempt to arrest him also failed (VII, 44). Twice more (VIII, 59; X, 31) Jesus escapes, without knowing how, the torture of stoning. A few days before Passover, new measures taken to arrest him have no effect (XI, 57; XII, 36),

Nor does the law of suffering seem to reach him. A few hours before the agony of Calvary, he speaks of it with lyrical accents: "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you" (XVII, 1). From the cross, he calmly dictates his last instructions to his beloved disciple and to Mary, whom he avoids calling his mother (XIX, 27). Let us add that our physiological regime is foreign to him. To the disciples who invite him to eat, he replies (IV, 32, 34): "I have food to eat that you do not know... My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work". He dies, but only because he wants to and when he wants to. No one takes his life from him (X, 18); the prince of this world himself has no hold on him (XIV, 30). He dies only to obey the command of his Father (XIV, 31). He gives up the spirit only after having seen that his mission is accomplished (XIX, 28, 30).

The Johannine Christ has only the appearance of a human body. And now we understand why he says to Mary: "What is there between me and you, woman"; why he says to the Jews: "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not

of this world"; why the author of the Gospel discreetly fights against the common belief in the Davidic origin of Christ and in the legend of Bethlehem (VII, 42); why he does not mention the virginal conception. The Johannine Christ owes nothing to David, owes nothing to Mary. He came directly from heaven to Galilee without passing through Bethlehem, without passing through Nazareth.

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## 8. - Statement of the Marcionite doctrine

Marcion, born about 100 A.D. at Sinope on the shores of the Euxinian Bridge (now the Turkish province of Anatolia), worked for a time as a sailor (Tertullian likes to call him a pilot). But he soon gave up the sea and concentrated his attention on the Christian religion, in which he had probably been brought up from childhood 1.

Around the year 130 he preached, with ever-increasing success, first in Asia and then in Rome, where he arrived around 138, a theology whose germ he owed to Cerdon and whose aim was to solve the problem of evil. I borrow from Tertullian, whose book entitled Against Marcion is our principal source of information, the exposition of the Marcionite system that we will read 2.

1° The problem of evil can only be solved if we admit two Gods, one evil, the other good 3.

2. The evil God is the creator God, that is, the one who made the visible world. This God boasts in Isaiah (XLV, 7) that he is the author of evil. He is, in fact, cruel and warlike. He is responsible for the fall of man, which took place from the beginning. Later, in the Mosaic law, which is his work, he showed himself to be barbaric and whimsical. Moreover, if God the Creator did not foresee the evil that exists in the world created by Him, He is ignorant; if, having foreseen it, He did not wish to prevent it, He is evil; if, wishing to prevent it, He could not, He is powerless 4.

3. The Creator God, who is the author of the Mosaic Law, is also the author of the books of the Old Testament. The prophets are his agents; it is he who speaks through them 1.

1. Epiphanius, Haer, XLII, 1, says that Marcion was the son of a bishop; this information, which he undoubtedly takes from Hippolytus, can only be admitted on condition that the word "bishop" is taken in a very broad sense.

2. Justin devoted to Marcion, who was his contemporary, a few lines in his first apology, XXVI, 5; LVIII, 1. The same observation applies to Rhodon, of whom Eusebius gives us a fragment in his Ecclesiastical History, V, 13, 3. Irenaeus, who often takes Marcion to task, gives a general view of his doctrine in I, 27. See also Epiphanius' Panarion, Haer, XLII. The dialogue of Aldamantius, P. G. XI, 1716 presents us with a very evolved Marcionism.

3. Adv. Mark, I, 2.

4. Ibid, II, 14; I, 6; II, 5, 28, 15.

1. Ibid, II, 19; III, 20; IV, 16; I, 20 (The Creator announced through Isaiah and Hosea that the Mosaic legislation would one day disappear).

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4° The Creator God had his prophets announce that he would send his Christ. But this Christ, whose coming the books of the Old Testament predict, is a political as well as a religious figure. His mission is to raise the throne of David, to restore the Jewish people to their former power. He has nothing in common with Jesus. Moreover, at the time of Marcion, that is to say more than a hundred years after the coming of Jesus on earth, the Christ of the Creator God had not yet arrived 2.

5. The good God is the author of invisible beings, of these only. Having produced neither the visible world nor man, he was completely unknown in this world until the day Jesus revealed his existence. The evil God himself did not know him 3.

6. The good God is gentle, tender, merciful, compassionate, and incapable of being angry. This God, seeing man oppressed by the Creator who was doing his best to make him unhappy, took an interest in him and resolved to save him. To save him, that is to say, to wrest him from the power of the God who had created him, to free him 4.

7° To carry out his plan, the good God, under the reign of Emperor Tiberius, left his heaven, the third heaven; he passed through the heaven of the Creator situated below his own; he came to the earth in Galilee and immediately set to work. Immediately: this is why. He had only the appearance of a human body, in reality he was a Spirit, a saving Spirit. He received nothing from Mary, he was not born, he did not need to grow. But was it really the good God in person who came to earth? Did he not simply delegate someone? It was he himself who manifested himself to us in the guise of a human body

and called himself Christ. Christ is thus the good God clothed in an ethereal envelope which makes him visible. (It is this ethereal envelope, this appearance of a human body, that calls Himself the son of God and calls God His father.1)

2. Ibid, III. 21, 24; IV. 6.

3. Ibid, I, 16, 8, 11; II, 28.

4. Ibid, I 6; IV, 19, 26, 28; I, 11; II, 28; I, 14, 17, 23; III, 21.

1. Ibid, T, 19 (The Marcionite Christ, having had no childhood, descended from heaven in the year 29 of our era, just when his public life began); I, 14, 15; IV, 7; I, 24; III, 10; IV, 19, 21; I, 19, 1.4; II, 27. The spiritual Christ has a principle of life analogous to the human soul, which allows him to experience, when he wants and without being subjected to it, the psychological and physiological phenomena that we experience.

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8° Having come to earth to deliver men who were groaning under the cruel yoke of the creator God, the good God could not allow the Mosaic law to remain, which embodied in some way the barbarity of the evil God. On the other hand, He could not dispense with revealing Himself to men as their saviour. He therefore abolished the law and, with the law, the prophets<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, he made himself known to men. As Son he revealed the Father; as Father he revealed the Son, according to what he himself said: "No one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son and the one to whom the Son reveals him<sup>3</sup>."

9° The Creator, seeing Christ working against him, resolved to destroy him. And, to better satisfy the hatred that this rival inspired in him, he undertook to inflict on him the torment that his law, the Mosaic law, reserved for the cursed, that is to say, the torment of the cross. Christ was thus crucified by the virtues and powers of the Creator; he died on a cross (Tertullian notes that the death of the Marcionite Christ was only apparent, since his body was only a phantom; but the Marcionites spoke of the crucifixion and death of Christ as phenomena that were really accomplished.<sup>4</sup>)

10° Christ died; but he saved men in the sense that he freed them from the yoke of the Creator. More exactly, he saved souls, since the flesh is destined to perish. The resurrection, understood in the sense of a return of the flesh to life which would take place at the end of the world, is an illusion. However, there is a spiritual resurrection for



the soul that takes place every day. This spiritual resurrection occurs when the soul passes from error to truth, that is, when it detaches itself from the Creator God in order to give itself to the good God whose existence has been revealed to it by Christ. This conversion

2. Ibid, I, 19; IV, 9, 40, 6. Cf. Irenaeus, I, 27, 2 (the Marcionite Christ came to destroy the law and the prophets).

3. Ibid, I, 2, 8, 19; IV, 25.

4. Ibid, I, 25, 11; III, 23; IV, 21; III, 19 (here Tertullian reproaches Marcion for speaking of the death of Christ whose birth he rejected); III, 8 (same reproach of inconsistency. Let us retain that Marcion believed in the death of Christ).

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is, in fact, the passage from death to life 1.

11° The good God does not punish the guilty, he does not even judge them. His judgement is limited to declaring what is wrong. The evil God makes himself feared, the good God makes himself loved. The good God therefore has no hell. On the last day, he will be content to remove from him the guilty, whom the Creator will then gather into his hell 2. It should be added that Marcion was admitted for some time into the Roman church, but that the Roman clergy drove him out in 144 3.

1. Tertullian mentions several times in *De resurrectione carnis* (especially XIX) the spiritual resurrection admitted by Marcion. Irenaeus, II, 31, 2, mentions the same doctrine among the Gnostics.

2. Ibid, I, 26, 27; IV, 29; I, 27, 28.

3. Tertullian, *Adv. Mark*, I, 19; IV, 4.

## 9. - Origin of the Fourth Gospel.

As long as the Fourth Gospel was attributed to John, an immediate disciple of Jesus, the composition of this book was placed at the extreme end of the first century. One did not dare to go back any further out of respect for Irenaeus, who presented the Fourth

Gospel as a refutation of Cerinthus. On the other hand, one could not go any lower, for fear of making John's life implausibly long. At that time, the accounts of the fourth Gospel were considered to have historical value. When this illusion fell away, when the fictitious character of the book attributed to the apostle John was established, a completely new problem arose before the critics. It was asked whether an immediate disciple of Jesus could have transformed his master into an abstraction under the guise of telling his life story. The answer to this question was not long in coming. It was easily realized that human fantasy has impassable limits and that a witness to the life of Jesus could never have written a fiction like the one that is spread out before our eyes in the fourth Gospel. Historicity and Johannine origin are two interdependent, inseparable facts, the first of which drags the other down. Historicity, the fourth Gospel can be of the author that tradition attributes to it. But, if it is only a free composition, it cannot, in any degree, emanate from a companion of Jesus, and we must look for another origin.

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The critics have searched. And if they have not succeeded in saying by whom the fourth Gospel was written, they believe they have succeeded in fixing approximately the date of its composition. According to them the book was composed by an unknown person about the year 100; and, therefore, tradition is only partially mistaken in its account. It is wrong to attribute it to an apostolic pen; but it is right to place it at the edge of the first century. On what basis is this decision based? On the epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp. These writings, it is said, were influenced by the Johannine literature and are clearly later than it; but they are placed around the year 110; from which it follows that the fourth Gospel existed around the year 100. This reasoning, as we can see, is entirely dependent on the date of the letters of Ignatius and Polycarp; if this date is lacking, it falls to the ground; and all the correspondence of Ignatius is a fabrication subsequent to 150. As for the letter of Polycarp to the Philippians, it is - except for a few lines - authentic, but it does not go back any further than the middle of the second century<sup>1</sup>. In short, Polycarp and the false Ignatius merely tell us that the fourth Gospel existed in the middle of the second century. Let us try to find less vague information elsewhere.

1. See Henri Delafosse, *Nouvel examen des lettres d'Ignace d'Antioche*, in the *Revue d'histoire et de littérature religieuse*, VIII, [1922], 303 and 477.

To find them it is enough to put oneself at the school of the Johannine Christ and to collect his oracles. "What is there between me and you, woman?"; "You know neither me nor my Father"; "You have never heard his voice, you have not seen his face"; "All those who came before me are thieves and robbers"; "The world is in the power of the Evil One"; "You have the Devil for a father"; "He who is in you is greater than he who is

in the world"; "He who hears my word. . has passed from death to life"; "I have food to eat that you do not know". Before these and other texts, believers and critics close their eyes so as not to understand them. But it is impossible to look them in the face without seeing their origin. The author of the fourth Gospel built his edifice with stones taken from Marcion's yard.

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This is especially evident in the text V, 24, where Christ declares that whoever hears his word "has passed from death to life" and in the parallel text of the first epistle, III, 14, where the author, using Christ's expression, says: "We have passed from death to life. These two oracles bring us face to face with the spiritual resurrection, the resurrection which consists in the conversion to the Christian faith, and they reflect the Marcionite doctrine which also taught the spiritual resurrection (see above). I know what will be objected. It will be said that Marcion was dependent on the Johannine formula and abused it for his own ends. This explanation clashes with the text of the second epistle to Timothy, II, 17-18, in which the two heretics Hymenaeus and Philetus are denounced because they "have turned away from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened" and that, in so doing, "they overturn the faith of some". Theologians say that this denunciation comes from Paul himself, who wrote the second epistle to Timothy in Tan 62, shortly before his death. Critics believe that the author who wrote this is a Catholic from around 125. If Paul himself, in the year 62, forbade presenting the resurrection as a fact already accomplished, how can we explain that around the year 100, the author of the fourth Gospel did not fear to use a formula which had, according to the great apostle, "overturned the faith of some"? And if the pastoral epistles are from around 125, how can we explain that, at this date, a Catholic condemns, without any restriction, without any distinction, a formula which he could not fail to read in the fourth Gospel and in the first Johannine epistle, since the critics place these writings around the year 100? I will one day dwell at greater length on this problem, which I can only touch upon here. I limit myself for the moment to concluding that the Catholic editor of the pastoral epistles (I will prove that he places himself around 150) denounces precisely, under the names of Hymenaeus and Philetus, the Marcionite writers among whom was the author of the fourth Gospel.

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The book known as the Gospel of St. John is, in its first draft, a Marcionite product. It only came into being after the first third of the second century. This date sheds light on the text V, 43, in which the Johannine Christ, after having reproached the Jews for not receiving him, who comes in the name of his Father, adds: "If another comes in his own

name, you will receive him. The apologists and critics, who persist in remaining around 100 A.D., frankly confess their embarrassment and their inability to identify the "other" to whom the Jews should welcome. This is the meaning of the oracle: "You refuse to receive me, who have come in the name of my Father; but in a hundred and three years you will receive the charlatan Barkochba, who will arrogate to himself a heavenly mission. The Johannine Christ describes what happened in the year 132 when the Jews, led by Barkochba, rose up against Rome 1.

1. Justin mentions three times, *Apol.* XXXI, 6; *Dial.* I, 3; IX, 3 the revolt of Barkochba; see Renan, *L'Eglise chrétienne*, p., 204-213; Schuerer, *Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes*, I3. 682-698.)

The fourth Gospel reflects Marcion's theories. How, with such an original stain, did he manage to gain acceptance in the Church? This question can only be answered by conjecture. Here is what we can conjecture. Marcion was excommunicated by the Roman clergy in 144. The same action had perhaps already been taken against him and his adherents by one or other of the Asian churches in which he had sojourned before coming to Rome. Other churches later imitated the example set for them. Around 150, Marcion was abhorred in Catholic circles; he was agreed with Polycarp as the eldest son of Satan.

But let us note what happened in Rome. Marcion arrived in the imperial city around 138; it was not until 144 that he was forbidden to assemble the faithful. For six years he was able to gather followers, inoculate them with his ideas, and still maintain contact with the Church. For six years he and his followers participated in liturgical meetings without frightening the clergy. This was only made possible by strict discipline. Marcion imposed great circumspection on himself and those around him. He only expressed his ideas openly where he felt he had control over his audience. Wherever he saw defiance, he became reserved. He would rather hint at his theories than formulate them. He put into practice the maxim (Matthew, VII, 6): "Do not give the holy things to the dogs, and do not cast your pearls before swine.

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It is in this state of mind that the first redaction of the fourth Gospel was written around 135 (the allusion to Barkochba is better understood two or three years after the revolt of 132 than eight or ten years later). Its author, a disciple of Marcion, had been in Jerusalem and Palestine before the war of 132 (one can imagine a man like Justin being born in Palestine and therefore familiar with the Jewish ways and the topography of the country). The new gospel was intended to expound, by putting it into the mouth of

Jesus, the right doctrine, the doctrine of Marcion. U expounded it with great elevation, but with an equal concern to spare common prejudices. Thanks to the ambiguous formulas that he used, thanks also to his reticence, the Johannine Christ remained in a chiaroscuro. He said to the faithful: "Your doctors have painted a rough and inaccurate picture of me. And he sketched out explanations of his origin and intimate nature which aroused curiosity without satisfying it, and which themselves required to be completed in due course by oral explanations.

The fourth Gospel was born in Asia (at that time Marcion had not yet come to Rome). The church in which it appeared admitted to its liturgy the followers of the spiritual Christ, whose doctrine it knew only vaguely. When the new gospel was presented to her, she made no attempt to study it in depth; she was content to admire its edifying side; the other side escaped her. She trusted the book that one of her children had written and allowed it to be read in her congregations. Other churches followed suit. By the year 140, the Fourth Gospel - or rather, what was then available of it - was authoritative in some of the major communities of the East. Ten years later, Marcion and his followers were hated. But the tree they had planted in the Garden of Christ had had time to take root. It remained. The Fourth Gospel nourished the faith and piety of the faithful who did not understand its undertones; it continued to exercise its mission. It no longer belonged to its author, who, moreover, had launched it under the veil of anonymity. The Church, the great Church of the East, had taken possession of it by the very fact that it had been introduced into its liturgical assemblies. She kept her treasure, reserving for herself only the right to enrich it 1.

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1. Justin knew and used the first writing of the fourth Gospel. In I Apol. LXI, 4, he quotes as emanating from Christ the following words which he borrows, without saying so and without relating them exactly, from our Gospel: "Unless you are born again, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Apart from this tacit quotation, there are more or less unconscious reminiscences in the Apology and the Dialogue which imply the reading of the fourth Gospel:

I, Apol, VI, 2, adoration in truth (Jo., IV, 24); Ib.. XXXIII, 2, prophecies made by Christ so that one may believe when the events will have happened (Jo., XIV, 29); Dial, CXXXV, 6, there are two houses of Jacob, one born of flesh and blood, the other born of faith and spirit (Jo., I, 13); CXXXVII, 4, no one has seen the Father (Jo, I, 18); LXXXV, III, 7, John the Baptist says: "I am not the Christ" (Jo., I, 20); LXIX, 6, the water of life (Jo., IV, 10); CXIV, 4, the living water that gushes

out for those who want to drink (Jo., IV, 14); LXIX, 7, the Jews accused Christ of seducing the people (Jo., VII, 12).

Papias also read the fourth Gospel if it is from him, as it is commonly believed, that Irenaeus drew the statements of the presbyters from which he uses extracts. We read in *Contra Haereses*, V, 36, 2: "The presbyters, disciples of the apostles, say... that the Lord said: 'There are many dwellings with my Father'" (Jo. XIV, 2); in II, 22, 5, Irenaeus demonstrates that Christ lived nearly fifty years and he adds: "As the Gospel and all the presbyters attest" (Jo. VIII, 57). - Eusebius, III, 39, 17, informs us that Papias knew the first Johannine epistle but without specifying that he held it for the work of the apostle John.