

**THE CREED OF THE
GOSPEL OF
ST. JOHN**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649428007

The Creed of the Gospel of St. John by Anonymous

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

ANONYMOUS

**THE CREED OF THE
GOSPEL OF
ST. JOHN**

THE CREED OF THE GOSPEL
OF ST. JOHN.

The Creed

OF THE

Gospel of St. John.



Per questo la scrittura condescende
A vostra facultate, e piedi e mano
Attribuisce a Dio, ed altro intende.
Para. 4. 43.

Chi non s'impenna sì, che lasan voli,
Dal muto aspetti quindi le novelle.
Para. 10. 74.



LONDON:

BICKERS AND SON, 1, LEICESTER SQUARE.

1880.

101. f. 685.



THE CREED OF THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN.

THERE seems to be an unfelicitous half-heartedness, a curiously timid reticence, on the part of reverent-minded men in their reception of St. John's Gospel. It would be strange to them an imputation of disbelief in its authenticity. With extreme effusion, they will admit that its author was the Apostle John, the chosen confidant of his Divine Master; nay, in qualifying his authorship, they invest it with a plenary inspiration which should exhibit the Apostle as the authoritative representative of the Godhead. Nevertheless, men appear to shrink from recognizing the explicit scope, the completeness, and coherence of this primitive and self-dependent standard, which I take to be the highest and completest expression of the relations between God and Christ towards each other, and of the relations which God

and Christ permit themselves to show towards men, or require men to manifest toward them.

A few years before the close of the first century, that is, somewhat more than fifty years after the Passion, the Apostle John gave his Gospel to the world. Having completed the work, he allowed one person and another to take copies; and thus originated the circulation which now, so to say, equals the sand of the sea in number. Necessarily, the process of circulation was at first slow and almost unknown, and for many years may have continued unknown or little known. Probably in discussing the dates of the promulgation of this and other Gospels, too little consideration is given to the difficulty of multiplying copies and of generally extending the circulation of the several books in times when publication was effected by manuscript alone and not by printing. And thus it might happen that many years would elapse before St. John's Gospel became known except to a few living in a limited neighbourhood.

But in speaking of the time of the publication of St. John's Gospel, we may not be supposed to mean that the Apostle then disclosed, for the first instruction of the world, the narrative of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not endowed with the energy of St. Paul, nor vested with his special vocation to evangelize among the pagan peoples, St. John probably exercised his Apostleship in a much more limited sphere; but, we may be assured, that wherever he dwelt, with whomsoever he associated, whomso-

ever he had the opportunity of influencing, he never ceased to discourse of the marvellous life with which he was himself so intimately associated. Over and over again he would tell of the marriage at Cana, of the woman of Samaria, of the power of sight brought to the blind-born lad, and of the raising of Lazarus. Time after time would he repeat the various conversations and addresses of his Friend and Master, now of one occasion, now of another. To invite others to believe as he believed was of the very essence of his Apostleship, and what he had seen and heard, that would he constantly declare to them. Thus it need be no wonder if to assist himself in preaching, to preserve an uniformity of exposition, and to attain facility in exposition, he should have written down, at a very early period in his mission, the narrative with which he desired to attract the attention of his hearers. To describe an incident of which he was himself a witness would be comparatively simple; and however simply and ingenuously told is the story of the lad born blind, the dramatic form into which it was almost necessarily cast would probably appear to him better preserved by being written down. Much more necessary, in order to do himself justice and his subject justice, would it seem to him to put into vivid and imperishable writing memorials of the discourses of the Lord Jesus. Possibly he would not care to write them off in the succession we now have them. According to the occasion he might write out a detached paper, and gradually he would

have several papers. He might begin, we may say quite naturally he did begin with notes of his subject, which afterwards he extended, and which being extended, he afterwards revised. Certainly this is speculative: and it is quite open to any one to maintain that throughout the ministry of his Apostleship, for more than half a century, St. John as a bard recited his lays, declared verbally the whole counsel of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, and not till the close of his life thought fit to perpetuate in writing, incident by incident, discourse by discourse, the whole body of his teaching. Such indeed is the speculation of Alford, who observes that St. John, the greater colleague and successor of St. Paul, was chosen noiselessly in his peaceful old age to complete the inner and holier places; as if for half a century he had undertaken to withhold a revelation which the Lord Christ had made known to the world. Now while it is surely inaccurate and inappropriate to speak of St. John as the successor of the "Great Apostle to the Gentiles," the presumption is more akin to truth which should declare that St. John exercised the ministry of an Apostle ever after the ascension of the Lord Jesus, and that the Gospel of the persistent and unapproachable personality of the Lord Jesus which he orally taught, corresponded with the Gospel which towards the close of his life he published. Theologians of all times, those called Fathers as well as modern divines, so far as I understand, seem to have regarded the publication of St. John's Gospel too much as an afterthought, as if in

tenor it differed from the Apostle's earlier teaching, and was written to oppose and counteract the more or less heretical opinions or tendencies of men or sects on whom necessarily devolved in course of years the promulgation of Christianity. Whereas the book is in itself a primary and substantial exposition of the scheme which the term Gospel imports.

But observe the special character of the record and of the authorship of the Apostle. Mr. Maurice spoke of St. John as a theologian and of the Gospel as his theology. I should put it otherwise. I think that St. John himself would have put it otherwise. He would have disclaimed the originality conveyed by the expression, theologian, and would have asserted himself simply to be the instrument of compiling and writing out the theology of his Lord. For in truth, putting aside the introductory verses, the entire theology of the Gospel purports absolutely to be the personal utterances of the Lord Jesus Christ. I speak, of course, of the theology as distinct from the incidents like the raising of Lazarus, which the Apostle personally narrates: of this narrative St. John is original author, and with his own observations he connects the progress of the sacred life; but in recording the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, he conspicuously withdraws himself and leaves the divine authority of his Lord to alone speak. If the book had been professedly a personal exposition of Christian doctrine, we might have accepted it as the matured fruit of the thought and experience of the Apostle; but, on the con-