

NOTES ON THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

XX. SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT.

(1) HAVING collected the data in the continuous examination of the Fourth Gospel in the previous articles, the writer will endeavour in this concluding article to give a summary of his argument for the authorship, character, and credibility of the Gospel, which he has in detail been seeking to establish; and in so doing will take fuller account of contrary opinions than has hitherto been done. Briefly to state his own position, he holds that the evangelist to whom, with the exception of some additions to be afterwards particularised, the work as a whole is to be assigned was an eye-witness of most of the events he records, although in regard to events in Galilee he seems to have had second-hand reports. He was a Judæan, and probably even an influential citizen of Jerusalem, closely connected with the priesthood, if not himself a priest. His dominating interest is in the progress of Christ's self-testimony and the growing unbelief and hate provoked by it in the Jewish leaders and teachers; and he again and again shows an intimate knowledge of the conflicting currents of opinion among the people, and the secret machinations of the hostile party. In the Galilæan ministry his interest is entirely secondary, and he refers to it in the sixth chapter only to mark the contrast of Galilæan enthusiasm, even if mistaken, and Judæan unbelief; and to show how Judæan hostility pursued Jesus even into Galilee to undermine His popularity there. Probably he provided both the ass for the triumphal entry and the guest-chamber for the Last Supper, and was also able owing to his rank and wealth to offer some protection and hospitality to the company of disciples. He was not a constant companion of Jesus in His public ministry, even

in Judæa ; but enjoyed a peculiar intimacy, as did others outside of the apostolic circle, such as the family in Bethany.

As an appreciative and sympathetic hearer it is probable that Jesus laid bare to him His inner life as He could not even to the twelve. The difference of the Synoptic and the Johannine reports is, if not entirely, yet to a large extent explicable by two circumstances. In His public utterances in Judæa Jesus was urging His claim on the Jewish people through its representatives, the priests and scribes, and He exercised less reserve than in Galilee, for the peril of a mistaken Messianic movement was absent, and He gave more advanced teaching doctrinally as He was addressing Himself to a learned class, and not the unlearned masses. In His private conversations He was confiding His secrets to a companion who could understand. For some reason, which we can now but conjecture, not only did the evangelist keep in the background in the early Church, so that he is not mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline letters ; but even in his later years, when he bore his testimony to the world, he did not reveal his name, and probably it was out of respect to his wishes that the disciple who edited what he had written, or reported what he had said as an eyewitness, did not betray the secret, but gave as a tribute of affection the description of him as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." This account of the evangelist is in all particulars based on the data discussed in detail in the preceding articles ; and it offers a consistent, and to the writer a convincing picture.

(2) But it may be objected that the tradition that John the son of Zebedee was the author bars the way. Dr. Drummond, in his book on *The Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel*, after an exhaustive and searching discussion of the external evidence for the traditional belief, concludes that "the attestation is perfectly unanimous in

favour of the early date of the Gospel, for in this even the dubious Alogi are supporters of the Catholic view " (p. 348) ; but that " the second point, that the Apostle John was the author, can hardly claim the same degree of confidence." He admits, however, that " if the Gospel was issued soon after the Apostle's death by some writer who chose to keep himself unknown, and on the ground either of its own title or of internal evidence was pronounced to be John's, and generally accepted as such, the phenomena of the existing attestation would be sufficiently explained ; in other words, we have no testimony which affords us any security against an error of this kind " (349). It is true that he holds such an error not probable ; but he leaves us with a door not altogether closed, but at least ajar. The authorship by John the son of Zebedee is not a certainty, but only a probability. Dr. Sanday states the aim of his book on *The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel* as follows : " I propose to defend the traditional view, or (as an alternative) something so near to the traditional view that it will count as the same thing " (p. 3). The alternative referred to is Delff's theory that the evangelist was not the Apostle, the son of Zebedee, but the disciple whom Papias mentions separately and describes as the presbyter. While he inclines still to the traditional view, he admits the possibility of this theory. He too, therefore, allows that we are not shut up to the traditional view. The writer sees no good reason against identifying the evangelist, as described in the previous section, with the presbyter John. Against the traditional view we may place not only Papias' statement in Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, Bk. III. c. 39), but also another statement in De Boor's Fragment that " Papias in his second book says that John the Divine and James his brother were slain by Jews," and the statement of Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, in a letter written to Rome about 190

A.D., that "John . . . had been a priest and worn the High Priest's mitre." If John the Apostle at an early date suffered martyrdom, and the fact was not generally known, one can understand that another John living in Ephesus, and also bearing witness as a disciple of Jesus, might be confused with him. Without claiming that these statements are certain, we can at least appeal to them as a justification for the claims for freedom from the fetters of the traditional view to investigate the problem on *the grounds of internal evidence*.

(3) On these grounds Westcott sought to prove the authorship of John the son of Zebedee. The writer can go with him entirely in the first three steps of his argument, i.e., that the author was a Jew, a Jew of Palestine, and an eyewitness; but his next step, that he was an Apostle, rests on the assumption that the twelve and twelve alone stood in so intimate relations to Jesus as the author of the Fourth Gospel appears to stand, whereas it has been shown in the previous discussion that the twelve formed Jesus' constant companions in Galilee, but that in Judæa there were other disciples who came into close contact with Him also. "It is not on the face of it certain," says Dr. Sanday, "that 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' must have been one of the Twelve" (*op. cit.*, p. 98). But it is only by assuming this as certain that Westcott is justified by the method of exclusion in taking his last step to St. John as author. Dr. Sanday's argument for the son of Zebedee as author, that the beloved disciple is associated in the Fourth Gospel with Peter in the same way as John in the Acts of the Apostles, has been dealt with in detail, to disprove its cogency. The writer is, however, in entire accord with both Westcott and Dr. Sanday in insisting that the evangelist writes as an eyewitness, and it is hoped that throughout these notes the evidence for this conclusion has been strength-

ened. He is inclined to insist that the reason for the addition or the omission of an incident is not always to be found in the evangelist's pragmatism, but, where that is not obvious, and needs to be discovered by strained ingenuity, in the presence or absence of the evangelist from the scene. The view of Mr. Scott in the *Fourth Gospel* that "apart from its allegorical value, the picturesque detail in John's narrative can be set down, not to the accurate memory of the eyewitness, but to the fine instinct of the literary artist," appears not only intellectually improbable, but even morally offensive, as the evangelist seems far too serious and sincere to stoop to any devices such as are suggested in the following sentence. "All the more that the prevailing tenor of his work was abstract and meditative, he felt the need of relieving it with touches of livelier colour" (p. 19). What we meet with in the Gospel is reality and not realism. The intensity of religious faith excludes the artifices of literary culture.

(4) To one point adverse to the traditional view very full consideration has been given throughout these notes, namely, that the evangelist was not a Galilæan but a Judæan, even a Jerusalemite.

It is not necessary to repeat here what has been already said in describing the author of the Gospel. It seems to be altogether more difficult to maintain the historical credibility of the Gospel if we assume that a Galilæan disciple who was Jesus' companion throughout His whole ministry there was so indifferent to and ignorant of the course and characteristics of that ministry, and that a fisherman of Galilee had a dominating interest in, and an intimate knowledge of, not only the Judæan ministry, but of all the local and temporary conditions of it. It must be added that the character of the evangelist does not correspond with the impression of the son of Zebedee which the Synoptics leave

upon us. If it be urged that in his long life he was much changed, so that the fiery zealot became the thoughtful and tender interpreter of the heart of God in Christ, it has to be pointed out that his qualifications for the tender and thoughtful intimacy he enjoyed with Jesus must have belonged to his youth and not old age only. He must have already been as companion what he proved as witness, receptive of, and responsive to that inner life of Jesus which he has unveiled for us, and for which, as the Synoptic Gospels testify, the company of the twelve was so insensitive and inappreciative.

(5) While we are entitled to regard the evangelist as an eyewitness, yet the Gospel itself has characteristics which forbid our treating it throughout as historical report or record. While the partition theories which separate the source from the editorial framework are too simple a solution, we must recognise, in spite of the dominating unity, different strata which we may with more or less certainty distinguish, although we may not be able to assign each sentence or clause to one or another. First of all, in view of the conclusion reached by some scholars, which the writer himself maintains, that the Prologue does not determine the representation of the person and work of Jesus, but rather a conception of divine sonship, we may conjecture that the Prologue comes from the disciple of the evangelist, whom we may call the editor, without attempting to decide whether the evangelist himself wrote out the Gospel, or his discipline gave shape to the notes he had taken of his master's teaching in some such relation as is assumed regarding Mark to Peter. The evangelist may himself have concealed his identity under such a phrase as "another disciple," but surely he never described himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and this phrase must be assigned to the editor. Mr. Strachan, in the *EXPOSITOR* for March,

sees also "the hand of an editor" in (1) the chronological scheme of chapters i.-xii., according to which the narrative of the ministry is arranged according to cycles of Jewish feasts; (2) the very evident heightening of the miraculous element of chapter xi., superimposed on what is evidently in its original form a simple narrative of raising from the dead." "As regards (1)," he continues, "his motive may be conjectured to be a desire to represent Jesus as consistently keeping the national feasts" (p. 256). The writer himself can see no adequate reason for assigning the chronological scheme to the editor and not the evangelist. In the previous discussion he has tried to show the historic probability of a ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem just at the feasts, when the evangelist as a Jerusalemite was in close contact with Him, and so could give the account of an eyewitness. As regards the story of Lazarus its difficulties have been recognised, and it would be assuredly a relief if we could assign the heightening of the effect to the editor and not the evangelist. For the editorial activity in chapter xi. Mr. Strachan finds "an eschatological motive," namely, "that the Parousia is delayed, and many who expected to be alive at His coming are dead." But if the Gospel was written in the evangelist's old age, this motive might affect him as well as his disciple. "The same motive," says Mr. Strachan, "prompts the editorial additions in such passages as vi. 39b, 40b, 44b (*ἀναστήσω . . . τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ*, xiv. 1 ff. (which seems to me to have a very close connexion with the thought of xxi. 23)." As regards xiv. 1 ff. the writer feels no need for any such assumption; but he has already, in discussing chapter vi. in detail, suggested that the "verses 36-40 seem to contain teaching far too advanced for the multitude at the seashore," and he has applied this consideration to verses 43-46. While still maintaining the possibility that this teaching was

given to the scribes in the synagogue, he is ready to admit the probability that the eschatological reference is an editorial addition. As regards the passage v. 21-29, which Mr. Strachan finds "essentially true to the consciousness of the Fourth Evangelist as well as to the thought of Jesus," the writer does not consider it necessary to refer it to the editor; but finds that it is not appropriate to its present context, and must be regarded as either a later doctrinal development in the mind of the evangelist, or less probably an intimate communication made by Jesus to him; as a public utterance at the time and place assigned to it the passage is open to grave suspicion. It is possible that xix. 35 should also be assigned to the editor. The Appendix, as has been argued in the previous article, cannot be assigned to the editor of the Gospel, but must be regarded as from another hand, and of later date, and accordingly less trustworthy.

(6) In the evangelist's share in the work we must, as has been assumed throughout, distinguish reminiscence from reflexion, his report of what he had seen and heard and his meditation on its meaning. It must be admitted on the one hand that even reminiscences have often been affected by the evangelist's distinctive vocabulary; and that consequently it is sometimes impossible with certainty to mark the point of transition from reminiscence to reflexion. There are many cases, however, where the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus can be detected, and where we can follow the working of the evangelist's mind as memory passed into meditation. The reminiscences may be further distributed in three classes: (1) There are reminiscences of which one can be confident that they are given in their appropriate context; (2) there are reminiscences, however, which seem out of place where they are found, and for which we may conjecture a more fitting framework, such as the logion in iii.

13-15, which would be in a more suitable environment after xii. 31-32, and the passage in vi. 53-57, which, if it is authentic, can find a place only in connexion with the Last Supper ; and (3) there are second-hand reports of occurrences in Galilee, as in chapter vi., in which one feels the evangelist is not speaking as an eyewitness, and does not quite understand the situation, for only thus can some of the differences from the Synoptists be explained, and even what one may call detached echoes of the Synoptic tradition, as in xii. 25, 26, 27. In respect to the last we may assume that the evangelist remembered less vividly what had been told him than what he had himself seen and heard of the ministry of Jesus. We cannot accordingly assert that all the evangelist's reports or records are of equal historical value, because we are concerned with less or more direct knowledge, and less or more accurate remembrance ; and a searching criticism is both legitimate and necessary.

(7) In the reflexions one is justified in distinguishing two interests, the religious and the theological ; or two elements, the experimental and the speculative ; and much of the difficulty and failure to appreciate properly the value of the Gospel arises from the neglect of this distinction. The evangelist had no intention of adding his own private interpretations to the teaching of Jesus ; but as he meditated on what he remembered he became conscious of the Master's presence and of the enlightening and quickening of His Spirit to bring all things to his remembrance, and thereby to guide him into all the truth ; and accordingly he was not aware of any incongruity between his reminiscences and his reflexions, he was not conscious of any offence against historical veracity when he presented both, blended together, as his testimony to the truth and grace of the Word become flesh, or of the only-begotten and well-beloved Son. He doubtless did not distinguish

his experience in, and his doctrine about Christ; but we, with our more accurate epistemological method, cannot avoid doing so. There are many portions of the Fourth Gospel in which the most spiritual Christian piety finds itself at home as nowhere else even in the New Testament. The evangelist has in his reflexions interpreted as no other has done what Christ is to, and does for, the intensely devout soul. If in the report of the discourse in the Upper Room we cannot always claim to possess historical testimony, we have experimental evidence regarding the work and worth of Christ for the spiritual life. This element in the Fourth Gospel belongs surely to the revelation of God in Christ, and has permanent and universal value. We can provoke only contradiction if we make a like claim for the entire Christology of the evangelist. There is a self-witness of Jesus going beyond, and yet consistent with, and even necessary to complete the Synoptic representation, which we may accept as authentic. Jesus' consciousness of a unique sonship in entire dependence on, constant communion with, and perfect submission to, God as Father we may accept as belonging to the historical reality of which the evangelist is the witness. But along with this there goes a tendency to over-emphasise the supernaturalness of Jesus' knowledge and power, which does not invent its illustrations, but imposes an interpretation on facts, which these contradict. We can easily detect the instances of this tendency, and they do not depreciate the value of the Gospel historically or spiritually.

(8) It is in an interest vital to Christian thought and life that the previous investigation has been undertaken. The writer cannot agree with Dr Drummond that we "may well withhold our hands from the seamless robe"; for it does seem to him to matter whether we have only doctrinal or even experimental interpretation or historical testimony.

While the evangelist does not, as has been shown, keep the two apart, yet to him it was of primary importance that the Word became *flesh*, that men *beheld* the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And the writer cannot understand how it can be of no interest to Christian piety whether Jesus was or was not as the evangelist represents Him, whether He spake, did, and suffered as He is reported. It is because he is convinced that the view of the authorship and composition of the Gospel here advanced removes objections to, and affords reasons for the credibility of the Gospel as both historical testimony and doctrinal interpretation that he has risked this adventure of literary and historical criticism.

Note —Gathering together the conclusions or suggestions of the previous discussion, the writer offers the following tentative analysis of the Gospel. Where there is doubt, a mark of interrogation has been added. Where it is uncertain under which of two headings a passage should be put, it is given under both with this mark. The distinction which runs through the Gospels is between the evangelist's reminiscences and his reflexions. His reminiscences are in a few instances, however, not given in their proper context; and his reflexions may be divided in a rough-and-ready way into the experimental, in which he presents to us his appreciation of the truth and grace of Christ for himself and mankind, and the theological, in which he asserts his conception of the person of Christ. In dealing with the ministry in Galilee, he gives reports at second-hand; but from these we may distinguish what may be called Synoptic echoes, where sayings of Jesus are given in another context. It is possible that the disciple of the evangelist, who has been called the editor, has contributed more than it has seemed necessary to assign to him; and probable that the Appendix comes from a still later hand.

I. The Evangelist. (1) *Reminiscences in appropriate Context.* i. 19-34, 35-51 (*vv.* 41, 42, 45, 48, 49 ?); ii. 1-12, 13-20, 23; iii. 1-12, 22-30; iv. 1-23 (18a ?), 25-42, 43-45, 46-54?; v. 1-18b, 30-47; vii. 15-24, 1-14, 25-52; viii. 12-59; ix.; x. 19-29, 1-18, 30-42; xi. 17-46 (42 ?), 47-53, 54-57; xii. 1-24, 32, 34-36, 44-50, 37-43; xiii. 1-35 (or 31a), (3, 19 ?); xv. (26, 27 ?); xvi. (7-15 ?); xiii. 36 (or 31b)—xiv. 31 (16-20, 26, 29 ?); xvii. (3 ?); xviii. 1-14, 24, 19-23, 15-18, 25-27, 28-40; xix. (35 ?); xx.

(2) *Reminiscences out of Context.* iii. 13-15; vi. 52, 57, 62.

(3) *Second-hand Reports.* iv. 46-54 ?; vi. 1-59. (36-40 ?, 51c ?), 60-61, 63-65, 66-71 ?; xi. 1-16.

(4) *Synoptic Echoes.* vi. 66-71 ?; xii. 25-26, 27-28.

(5) *Reflexions Experimental.* iii. 16-21, 31-36; iv. 24; v. 19-29; xv. 26-27 ?; xvi. 7-15 ?; xiv. 16-20 ?, 26 ?

(6) *Reflexions Theological.* ii. 21, 22, 24, 25; v. 18c; xii. 29, 30, 33; xiv. 29 ?; xvii. 3 ?

II. Editorial Additions. (1) *The first Editor.* i. 1-18, the description "the disciple whom Jesus loved." vi. 39b, 40b, 44b ?; xix. 35b.

(2) *Later Redactor* xxi. and *Unauthentic* vii. 53-viii. 11.

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