

## LINKS BETWEEN THE GOSPELS OF ST. JOHN AND ST. MARK.

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THE difficulty of reconciling the events recounted in the Gospel of St. John with those related by the other three Evangelists has most commonly been met by endeavours to fit the incidents recorded in the Fourth Gospel into gaps alleged to exist in the Synoptic narrative. It is the object of the present paper to suggest that a better solution may be found by reversing the process, and inquiring whether some of the incidents recorded by the Synoptics and presumed to have occurred in Galilee, the scene to which the greater part of their narrative seems to belong, did not in fact take place in or near Jerusalem, and should be fitted into the story of the Judæan ministry, which is the special province of the Fourth Gospel.

The first question to be considered is, whether the sequence of events in our Lord's ministry as depicted in the Synoptic Gospels justifies us in concluding that these occurred at the times and places which their proximity in the order of the narrative might seem to suggest. The verdict of modern New Testament scholars upon the composition of the three first Gospels concludes: That, broadly speaking, the events of our Lord's life, as distinguished from His teaching, and excepting some passages derived from special sources, are taken by the authors of the First and Third Gospels from the narrative supplied by St. Mark. The order of the latter is on the whole preserved in both the First and Third Gospels, though more carefully in St. Luke than St. Matthew. In both of these, but in St. Matthew especially, words have in some cases been added suggesting connexion between incidents as to time and place, not indicated in St. Mark. These seem to be due to considerations of literary style, a preference for a closely knit continuous story in place of the rather jerky effect of a series of loosely connected events, characteristic of some parts of St. Mark's narrative, and it appears very doubtful whether the authors of these two Gospels, who relied upon Mark for their facts, had any ground for making these comparatively trifling additions other

than a desire to cultivate smoothness of diction. We need not here speak of the various reasons which have led scholars to the conclusion that our First Gospel was not written by an Apostle or any other eye-witness. It is enough to point out how impossible it is to conceive that anyone who had been in close companionship with our Lord, and thus had first-hand knowledge of the events recorded, would have preferred to use the second-hand record of St. Mark rather than his own personal recollection. The author of St. Luke's Gospel admittedly was not an eye-witness. As to the composition of the Second Gospel the very early well-known tradition recorded by Papias is so important for the present purpose, that it will be useful to quote it here: "Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately—not, however, in order—as many as he remembered of the things spoken or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor attended on Him, but afterwards, as I said, attended on Peter, who used to give him instructions according to what was required, but not as giving an orderly exposition of the Lord's words. So that Mark made no mistake in writing down some things as he recalled them. For he paid heed to one point, namely, not to leave out any of the things he had heard, or to say anything false in regard to them." If this description is correct, and there is nothing to contradict it recorded elsewhere, it disposes of any idea that because two incidents are found to follow one another in St. Mark's Gospel we must necessarily conclude that they occurred at nearly the same time or place; and any links which have been added by other Evangelists who followed his narrative do not carry the matter any further. It is, therefore, open to us to conjecture with reasonable probability that events, which owing to their position in the Second Gospel, have been assumed to have occurred in Galilee, did in fact take place in Judæa, if there are other circumstances which lead to this conclusion. We now have to consider whether such circumstances exist.

In John ii. 13 it is said that Jesus went up to Jerusalem to the Passover. Nothing definite is recorded in this Gospel about His doings there, except the Cleansing of the Temple, and the Conversation with Nicodemus. There is, however, a general indication of an active ministry in verses 23-25, which tell us that "when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the Feast, many believed in His Name, beholding the signs which He did." Nicodemus also

refers to "these signs that Thou doest" in the next chapter, but no particulars are given. In Chapter iii. there is a section (verses 22-30) beginning: "After these things came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judæa, and there He tarried with them and baptized." This section reads awkwardly where it stands, interrupting the Evangelist's reflections on the conversation with Nicodemus, of which verses 31-36 seem to be the continuation. It is noticeable that the word *ἄνωθεν* appears in the first sentence. "He that cometh from above," etc., which might be called the key-word of the conversation. It has been suggested that the section (22-30) has somehow got displaced. This and other supposed dislocations in St. John's Gospel are the subject of a book by Mr. F. Warburton Lewis, *Disarrangements in the Fourth Gospel*,<sup>1</sup> who proposes to insert the displaced section so as to come in before verse 13 of Chapter ii. If this transposition is made it places the commencement of our Lord's ministry—"in the land of Judæa"—earlier than the visit to Jerusalem for the Passover recorded in ii. 13, which would then occur as an incident in a general Judæan ministry, thus considerably extending the period of such ministry. But even taking the text as it stands without alteration this ministry must have covered a period of about eight months, elapsing between the Passover and the end of the year, because we read in Chapter iv. that on His way back to Galilee, when passing through Samaria, Jesus speaks of the time as being four months from the harvest, which shows that it was winter when he quitted Judæa. It seems, therefore, that this visit to Southern Palestine occupied a very considerable part, perhaps about one-fourth, of the whole period of His ministry on earth, and that as the result of it He attracted a number of adherents sufficiently large to be described, as we shall see later, as "a great multitude," and that these were collected, not only from Jerusalem and Judæa, but also from the district beyond Jordan and from Idumea. If this is true how are we to account for the silence of St. John as to the events of this period, and especially the absence of any particulars of "the signs" stated in ii. 23 to have produced so great an effect? This silence is the more remarkable seeing that the fourth Evangelist appears to be specially concerned with the Judæan ministry, and did not think it

<sup>1</sup> The subject of this book was discussed by Chancellor P. V. Smith in the *CHURCHMAN* for March, 1920.

necessary to repeat the events given in the earlier Gospels, and assumed to be Galilean? May not the answer be, that he omitted these particulars for the very same reason, namely, that he found them in the Markan record and repeated by the other Synoptists? Some recent commentators have testified to a growing opinion that most of the controversies between Jews and the Pharisees recorded by St. Mark occurred, not as has been supposed in Galilee, but at Jerusalem.

In particular Mr. Warburton Lewis has pointed to Mark ii. 18-iii. 6, recording three incidents, which he says "smack of Judæa and Jerusalem controversy." In this section there are no indications as to the time and place proper to these incidents, beyond what has been inferred from the order of their narration in the Gospel, which, as has been before pointed out, cannot be treated as a reliable criterion. There is also here no statement, as in some other passages of the same Gospel, that the Pharisees concerned had "come from Jerusalem." With regard to that phrase, where it occurs elsewhere, it may be that we must allow for the possibility that a copyist found in the text "Pharisees in Jerusalem", but being imbued with the belief that the Markan record was peculiar to Galilee, honestly thought he was correcting a mistake by substituting the other phrase in his copy.

Let us now deal with the three incidents on the assumption that they occurred not in Galilee but in the South. *First*, there is the controversy with John's disciples and the Pharisees about fasting, which may have had some connexion with the discussion in John iii. about purifying. *Second*, the complaint of the Pharisees about Jesus' disciples plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath. And, *Third*, the healing on the Sabbath of the man with the withered hand. This last caused such a violent outburst of antagonism that we read "the Pharisees went out and straightway with the Herodians took counsel how they might destroy Him." It must be evident that from this moment the neighbourhood in which these Pharisees had influence was no longer a safe place for Jesus to remain in, and it would be natural to suppose He would leave it as soon as possible. That is what we find He in fact did, because in John iv. 1 we read: "When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, he left Judæa, and departed into Galilee." This can hardly

be interpreted to mean anything else than that, owing to hostility of the Pharisees, Jesus felt constrained to quit Judæa and go to a place less under their influence, namely, Galilee, where He could rely on popular protection. If we are to believe that the incidents recorded in this section occurred in Galilee, and that the Pharisees had already taken the extraordinary step of allying themselves with the Herodians, their bitter enemies, obviously Galilee, within Herod's jurisdiction, could no longer be a place of refuge. It is, however, hardly imaginable that the Pharisees would have entered into such an alliance at the first stage of their proceedings, and the other Gospels do not mention it. It seems more probable that such a revolting expedient was only adopted as a last resource ; that the Pharisees, finding that Jesus had escaped them, as related in John iv. 1, by retiring into Herod's jurisdiction, thought it necessary in order to carry out their plans to invoke the aid of Herod's adherents. The text of Mark iii. 6 may, therefore, be a conflation of two facts happening at different dates, namely the original determination to destroy Jesus, and a subsequent alliance with Herodians. This view of the sequence of events is quite in accordance with what took place later, after the unnatural alliance of Pharisees with Herodians had been consummated. It was not till after Herod's fears had been stirred up that the freedom of our Lord's movements in Galilee becomes restricted. After this He appears to evade observation by the authorities. First he goes into the desert, next to the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon, thence to Cæsarea Philippi, and later to Decapolis, all outside Herod's jurisdiction. Subsequently, when He has to pass through Galilee, we read in Mark ix. 30 : " He would not that any man should know it." All this is quite consistent, and gives a perfectly reasonable and connected story. The opposite view is not so consistent, as we will now endeavour to show.

Immediately following Mark iii. 6, recording the hostile determination of the Pharisees, we read in verse 7 : " And Jesus with the disciples withdrew to the sea." The close connexion of these verses certainly conveys the impression that the withdrawal was necessitated by the hostile attitude of the Pharisees. This is more expressly stated in the parallel account of Matthew xii. 15 : " And Jesus perceiving it (i.e., the Pharisees' counsel how they might destroy Him) withdrew from thence." But if we are to understand

that the miracle which evoked the Pharisaic wrath occurred in Galilee, and the alliance with the Herodians had already been formed, a withdrawal to such a public place as the Galilean lake would surely have been a futile resource.

The same verse 7, with the next two, go on to describe the composition of the crowd that accompanied Jesus; they were not only Galileans, but people from Southern and Eastern Palestine, and also from the regions of Tyre and Sidon. Here and also in Chapter iii. 1, there are slight differences of reading in the Greek text, which, although they may appear trifling, are worthy of notice because they may indicate the same tendency of copyists to remove St. Mark's ambiguity about locality. In verse 1 both Authorized and Revised Versions translate—"And He entered again into *the* Synagogue"—adopting the text which has the article τῆν. But this is not found in all texts, and its authenticity is so doubtful that Westcott and Hort and others have excluded it from their texts. In St. John's Gospel the word "synagogue" occurs only twice (vi. 59 and xviii. 20), in both cases without the article, the omission implying that no particular synagogue is referred to, but merely that something happened "in synagogue"—just as we should say "in church." A copyist, imbued with the idea that the Synagogue at Capernaum was meant in Mark iii. 1, would naturally add the article to fix the place as *the* synagogue which Jesus frequented. The other doubtful reading which occurs in verse 7 is again an article—οἱ. This is rejected by the R.V., but accepted, rightly, as we should contend, by the A.V. The statement that Jesus was *followed* by "a great multitude from Galilee and from Judæa and from Jerusalem and from Idumea and beyond Jordan" implies personal contact with Jesus by the inhabitants of all these districts, and that He had carried on an extensive ministry in Southern and Eastern Palestine. If the article οἱ be retained, a distinction will appear between those who *followed* Jesus from their own personal knowledge of His teaching and those who knew Him only from hearsay—namely, "they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude hearing what great things He did, *came* unto Him." This is the A.V. translation. The R.V., by omitting οἱ links up the people who *came* from Tyre and Sidon with those who *followed* Jesus from Galilee and the South, as though they formed part of the same multitude, thus rendering the repetition of the words "a great multitude"

redundant, and ignoring the fact that the sentence has two verbs, "*followed*," which is applicable to personal adherents, Southerners being here in the same category with Galileans, and "*came*," which distinguishes a different class, namely, people from Tyre and Sidon, who had no previous experience of our Lord's teaching. The awkwardness of this construction, then, has to be relieved by inserting, quite gratuitously, a colon after the word "*followed*." The omission of *oi* in some MSS. here may have been due to the same cause as the addition of  $\tau\eta\nu$  in the earlier passage referred to, namely, a belief that Mark<sup>1</sup> had no record of an early Judæan ministry which would justify a distinction being drawn between friends made in the South and strangers from the North, who had no personal knowledge of the Master.

The conclusion here advocated is that there are a good many incidents in St. Mark's Gospel, possibly more than have been specially referred to above, which may with great probability be located in Jerusalem or Southern Palestine, without doing violence to the text, and that some apparent inconsistencies between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptists will in that case be removed, and, in particular, the difficulty that the Synoptic record seems to allow for a ministry of one year only, while St. John requires a period of three years at least. We may think of St. Mark as having treasured up in his mind many things about our Lord which were told him by St. Peter, and that his attention was chiefly directed to faithful repetition of what had been related to him, possibly on many different occasions, and he may have had no means of arranging them with the strict accuracy as to time and place, which would only be possible for an eye-witness to do. A critical examination of the text seems fully to confirm what tradition has alleged about the manner in which his Gospel was composed.

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<sup>1</sup> We may find another instance in Luke iv. 44, where the reading, "He was preaching in all the synagogues of Judæa"—found in most of the best MSS., has been altered in others to—"the synagogues of Galilee." Note also that the accusation before Pilate includes a charge: "He stirreth up the people throughout all Judæa" (Luke xxiii. 5).