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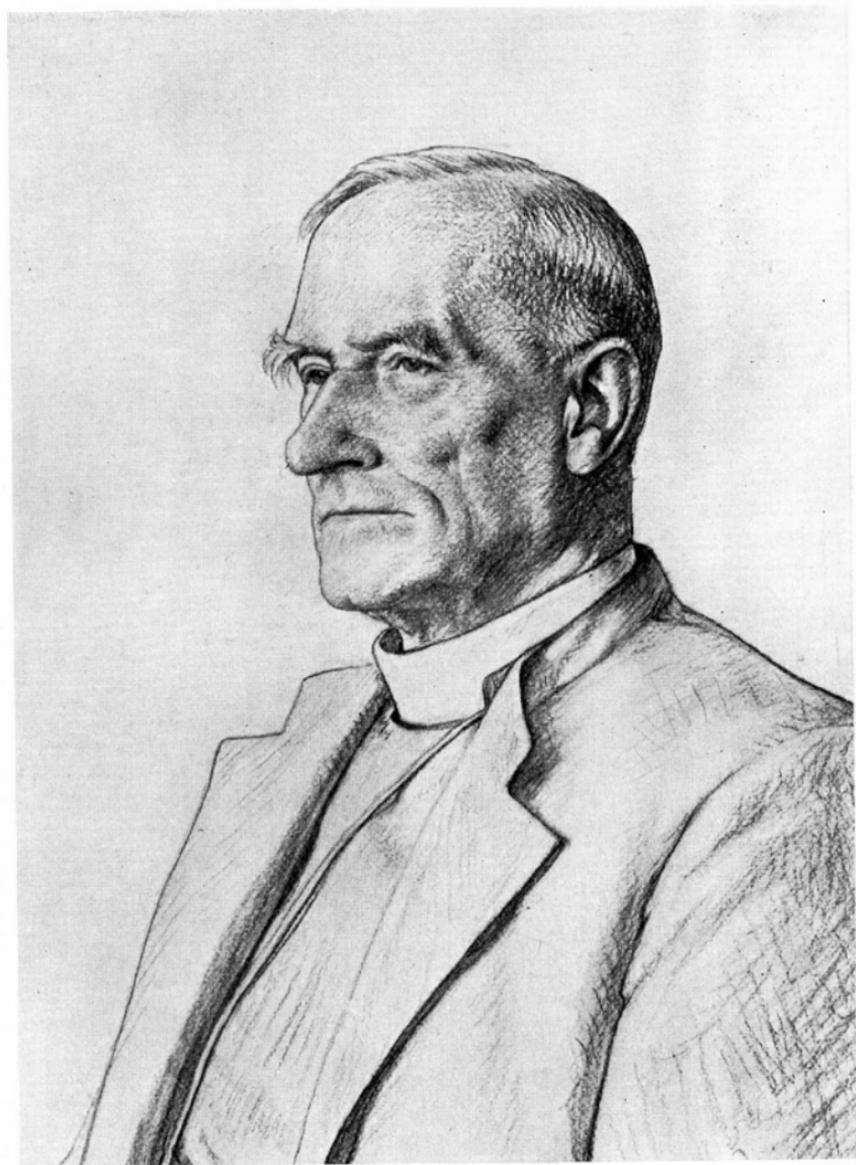


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THE FOURTH GOSPEL AS HISTORY

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WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY BY
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THE FOURTH GOSPEL AS HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

I DO not think it any exaggeration to say that the various critical questions that have been raised concerning the Fourth Gospel, literary, historical and theological, are among the most difficult and important in the history of literature. They are difficult not only because the work is anonymous, and the information about it somewhat scanty, but because there are few who are able to discuss it without being influenced by theological presuppositions. That the whole inquiry is important may be illustrated by the following statement of Archbishop Temple:

'It is only necessary to say that for as long as I can remember I have had more love for St. John's Gospel than for any other book.'¹

For nearly two thousand years there are many of the greatest men who would say the same. Everything therefore concerning such a book is important, and all discussion and investigation must be carried on with the consciousness of that importance. We must remember, too, the difficulty of our task, and refrain from excessive dogmatism. Our conclusions will be a matter of judgement and not of demonstrated truth. We have to ask ourselves what solution of the problems presented to us is most probable.

I propose to discuss these problems under the following headings:

- (1) The aim and purpose of the Fourth Gospel.
- (2) The historical value of the incidents recorded in the Gospel.
- (3) The authorship of the Fourth Gospel.
- (4) The teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Fourth Gospel.

¹ William Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel*. Macmillan & Co.

I

THE AIM AND PURPOSE OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

It is the custom of many critics, especially of those who are designated as orthodox, to treat the Fourth Gospel as an historical work, giving us a biography of Jesus which may be looked upon as of the same nature and character as the Synoptic Gospels and should be treated as such. In particular it is used to construct a chronological scheme, which it is claimed is more correct than that of other Gospels. The Gospel is a rival biography.

When we come to examine the historical character of the narrative we find that there are considerable difficulties involved in this theory. For example, if I turn to Professor Turner's article on the New Testament Chronology, in the *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, I find that there are great difficulties in interpreting the chronological notes and in constructing a scheme out of them. Again, I find that Dr. Bernard,¹ following other critics, finds many signs of disarrangement and wants to rearrange the order of chapters and sections. I always distrust theories in New Testament criticism which demand rearrangements and alterations of the text for which there is no external authority. The authorities for the text are so early and so varied that it is most unlikely that errors of this sort would exist without any trace of them being found in these authorities. Moreover, we often find a difficulty in harmonizing any constructions that we make with the narrative of St. Mark.

I think that these facts may suggest that the mistake which has been made is to treat the Gospel as a biography. It does not

¹ Bernard, 'St. John.' *International Critical Commentary*. T. & T. Clark, 1928. Introduction, vol. 1, xvi et seq.

claim to be a biography, but an apologetic and theological work. 'These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name.'¹ The purpose of the work also is to be found in the Preface, which gives in the philosophic language of the time a statement concerning the person of Christ which is supported and explained in the narrative. In saying that the Gospel is not a history, that does not mean that it is unhistorical. Good theology and good apologetics must be based on good history, and it is definitely claimed that the writer intended to narrate facts and that the history is good.

'This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his witness is true.'²

I now propose to examine certain episodes in the Gospel from this point of view:

At the beginning of the Ministry, as it appears, we have an account of the cleansing of the Temple.³ What relation has the story to the similar event described in the other Gospels after the last and formal entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem? Did he twice cleanse the temple? That seems to me very improbable. More than that the story in St. John seems, in part, to be based on St. Mark's narrative. Which, then, is correct as to the time of the event? Again, it is difficult to believe that Jesus at the beginning of his ministry without any support should have been able to carry out such an act. At the end of his ministry he has just entered Jerusalem with a large body of enthusiastic followers, and is able to dominate the Temple. Moreover, the event takes its place naturally in the narrative, and provides one of the immediate causes of the arrest. What, then, are we to say about it?

Dr. Bernard, to take an example, says: 'Our conclusion accordingly is that there is some mistake (which cannot now be

¹ St. John xx. 31.

² St. John xxi. 24.

³ St. John ii. 13-22.

explained) in that account of the cleansing of the Temple which places it immediately after the miracle of Cana, as the traditional text of St. John places it.¹ This seems to me very unsatisfactory. It is difficult to understand how any one who claimed to write with authority about the life of our Lord and had the other Gospels before him could make this mistake.

I venture to think that there is quite a different explanation. With what purpose was the story told here? It was told, I believe, because it was an event in which Jesus had clearly exhibited his authority as Messiah. There was a well-known prophesy, 'The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple.'² This is what Jesus had done. He had appeared with authority in the Temple, and had there acted as the Messiah would act. One of the purposes of the Evangelists was to give witness to Jesus and here was an incident where the witness was clear. So the story was placed with others, all of which witness to him.

In the Prologue, stress is laid on the witness of the Baptist: 'The same came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the Light.'³ Afterwards this witness is described: 'And this is the witness of John.'⁴ The remainder of the chapter contains incidents which strengthen the witness. The next section contains the story of the miracle in Cana of Galilee. The purpose with which the story is told is clear: 'This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him.' Whatever may be the meaning of 'the third day' in the first verse, I do not think that Jesus had rushed from Bethany beyond Jordan immediately after his baptism to attend a wedding. I think that this has been selected as one of the most striking of the miracles or signs of Jesus, to carry on the idea of witness. Directly after this comes the witness of the cleansing of the Temple.

¹ Bernard, vol. 1, p. 88.

² Mal. iii. 1.

³ St. John i. 7.

⁴ St. John i. 19.

Next comes another episode which, from a chronological point of view, seems out of place: the prediction of the destruction of the Temple. We should gather from the reference made to these words at the trial of Jesus that they had been recently spoken. Again we have stress laid on its value as evidence. 'When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he spake this: and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus said.'¹

As regards the narrative of the talk with Nicodemus, Dr. Bernard writes: 'Some points in the narrative of iii. 1-15 would suggest that the incident here recorded did not happen (as the traditional text gives it) at the beginning of the Ministry of Jesus.'² He gives good reason for this opinion. It may be noted also that Tatian in his *Diatessaron* places it during the last visit to Jerusalem. If we turn to the narrative we find again the idea of witness; this time the witness of Nicodemus: 'Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do those signs that thou doest except God be with him.'³ Moreover, the discourse clearly refers to Baptism, and it is immediately followed by incidents connected with Baptism and discipleship. This gives the occasion for a further account of the Baptist's witness: 'Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.'

I think that this examination gives us some insight into the principles upon which the Gospel is constructed. It does not give us a narrative of the life of Jesus. It selects stories and incidents, not on chronological grounds, but to prove the assertion that it makes: these stories form the basis on which the theological instruction is built up. We shall find in them and elsewhere in the Gospel much interesting information, which fills up gaps in our knowledge and throws light on the Synoptic history, but they are not introduced for historical reasons, nor as part of a consecutive narrative, but to support the statement

¹ St. John ii. 22.

² Bernard, vol. 1, p. 100.

³ St. John iii. 2.

made in the Prologue. This, I think, throws real light on the Fourth Gospel and enables us to understand what the writer was aiming at. I am glad to find that Sir Edwyn Hoskyns supports this view. 'If this be so, the important position of the Cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of the Fourth Gospel can be explained without assuming either that the Temple was twice cleansed (Westcott, Schanz) or that the Fourth Evangelist has preserved the proper position of the incident and that, consequently, its position in the Marcan narrative (followed by Matthew and Luke) is unhistorical (B. Weiss, Dr. Brooke). *The fourth Evangelist is concerned more with the meaning of the words and actions of Jesus than with their original setting or relative order.* Understood as he understood it, the cleansing of the Temple provided the key to a proper understanding both of the quite fundamental controversy of Jesus with the Jews and of the implications of discipleship. For this reason he placed it at the beginning of his Gospel.'¹

There follow next four incidents: the Samaritan woman, the nobleman's son, the healing of the paralytic at Jerusalem, and the feeding of the five thousand. These incidents are, I believe, introduced as a background to three great discourses, and are arranged to suit the discourses, without reference to chronological order. Dr. Bernard and others suspect a disarrangement of the text. It is thought that chapter v would come more naturally before chapter iv. The miracles at Jerusalem should be placed before the journey through Samaria. If there were reason to think that the order was biographical there might be a more natural arrangement, but that was not the purpose of the author of the Gospel. He recorded the several incidents as, so to speak, the text for the teaching.

The first discourse describes what, according to the author, was the relation of Jesus to the Samaritans, and the lesson of it is:

¹ Sir Edwyn Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, vol. 1, p. 209. Edited by F. M. Davey. Faber & Faber.

'The hour cometh when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father . . . The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.'¹ The two miracles introduce a discourse on the unity of the Father and the Son, and the dependence of the Son on the Father. 'My Father worketh hitherto and I work.'² 'The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing.'³ 'The Father loveth the Son and showeth him all things that himself doeth.'⁴ The feeding of the multitude introduces the third discourse, the best summary of which is 'I am the bread of life',⁵ and perhaps it illustrates the words of the Prologue: 'But as many as received him to them gave he power to become the children of God.'⁶

Next follow two visits to Jerusalem, one at the Feast of Tabernacles, the other at the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple, and it is clear that the author introduces these incidents for the sake of the discourses. The chief incident is the healing of a man blind from his birth, and this is made the occasion for illustrating another point in the Prologue, 'I am the light of the world.'⁷ At the Feast of Dedication the claims of Jesus culminate in the statement, 'I and the Father are one.'⁸

From now on the events seem to follow one another in chronological sequence. The story of the raising of Lazarus illustrates another statement of the Prologue: 'In him was life,'⁹ and the teaching is summed up in the words, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life.'¹⁰ According to the author of the Gospel this was the decisive event which made the chief priests and Pharisees decide upon the death of Jesus, and for the time being Jesus retired again beyond Jordan. It may be noted that these retirements to Peraea agree with the statement of St. Mark that the last

¹ St. John iv. 21-23.² St. John v. 17.³ St. John v. 19.⁴ St. John v. 20.⁵ St. John vi. 35.⁶ St. John i. 12.⁷ St. John viii. 12.⁸ St. John x. 30.⁹ St. John i. 4.¹⁰ St. John xi. 25.

stage in our Lord's life before the Passion was spent in a preaching journey in Judaea and beyond Jordan.

If our analysis of the plan of the Gospel be correct, we must not look upon it as a history or biography, but as a theological book designed to tell us what we should think of Jesus. We need not trouble ourselves because we cannot make its chronology fit in with that of St. Mark, for it has no systematic chronology. We need not, like Dr. Bernard, conclude that there must be displacements in the text and seek to rearrange the order of events. We need not be worried and draw dogmatic deductions because some events are not mentioned. The writer had the other three Gospels before him, and they described many events adequately. Our author related just those events which were necessary for his purpose and enabled him to give us a true account of what Jesus taught us about himself. On the other hand we are able, from the incidents recorded, to fill up gaps in the Synoptic narrative—the witness of the Baptist, the early preaching of Jesus in combination with the Baptist, his first acquaintance with some of his disciples, his occasional visits to Jerusalem.

Much has been written about the discrepancy between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics concerning the visits to Jerusalem. We are told that the Fourth Gospel places the greater part of the ministry in Jerusalem. It does not seem to me that this discrepancy exists. The author of the Fourth Gospel knows quite well that Jesus never went to Jerusalem except at the times of the Jewish feasts. That is the reason why he refers to the feasts on each occasion. He does not do so for chronological reasons, for he has little or no interest in chronology. It would be quite natural that a devout Jew (and that Jesus was) should keep the feasts. St. Luke tells us that it was a family custom: 'His parents went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover.'¹ And the Fourth Gospel tells us that his brethren went up. It has often

¹ St. Luke ii. 41.

been remarked that there are incidents and discourses in the Synoptic Gospels which seem to imply visits to Jerusalem. Incidents are recorded which suggest that Jesus had friends in Jerusalem, and that he was known there. Certain facts are mentioned quite incidentally which to my mind are highly significant: Jesus was able to make arrangements for his triumphal entry and the last supper. Renan points out, moreover, that altercations with the Pharisees would be more natural there than in Galilee. It seems to me that the information we obtain from the Fourth Gospel, that Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the feasts, is just what is needed to explain the narrative, and that on this point there is no reason for finding discrepancy between the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel.

If we have rightly understood what I believe to be the aim and purpose of the Fourth Gospel, then the main difference between it and the Synoptics disappear. There will still be found discrepancies, but not more than are natural between different independent authorities. Any one acquainted with the use of original authorities will know that there will always be difficulties to which only a provisional solution can be given. If it were not so we should begin to suspect collusion. No two eye-witnesses tell a story in exactly the same way or notice the same things.

It will, I think, bring out what I believe to be the plan and purpose of the Gospel if I set it out in the manner of a modern book.

THE TRUE JESUS

Introduction. This Gospel is written to show that Jesus is, to use current philosophical phraseology, the divine Word who is one with the Father, and the source to mankind of Light, Life, Grace, and Truth. (*St. John* i. 1-18.)

Chapter I. The Evidence. The witness of the Baptist. The First Miracle. Jesus in the Temple. The witness of the Rabbi. The Sacrament of Baptism. (*St. John* i. 19-iii.)

Chapter II. Jesus and the Samaritans. The worship of the future. (St. John iv. 1-45.)

Chapter III. Miracles. The healing of the Nobleman's son, and the Paralytic. All that Jesus does is the work of the Father. (St. John iv. 46-v.)

Chapter IV. The Feeding of the Multitude. Jesus is the Bread of Life. The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. (St. John vi.)

Chapter V. Incidents and Talks at Jerusalem. The healing of the man born blind. Christ the Light of the World. (St. John viii-ix.)

Chapter VI. The Good Shepherd. (St. John x. 1-21.)

Chapter VII. Jesus at the Feast of Dedication. The Unity of the Father and the Son. (St. John x. 22-42.)

Chapter VIII. The Story of Lazarus. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. The High Priests plan the death of Jesus. (St. John xi.)

Chapter IX. Jesus the Messiah. The entry into Jerusalem. The Last Supper. The promise of the Comforter. (St. John xii-xvii.)

Chapter X. Jesus is Glorified. (St. John xviii-xx.)

II

THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF THE INCIDENTS RECORDED IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

WE have seen that it is a mistake to look upon the Fourth Gospel as a history or biography describing the Life of Jesus. It is a theological work intended to give us an account of his person and to interpret to us the nature of his teaching, and the history is entirely subordinated to this purpose. This view, as I believe, clears away many difficulties. The Gospel, however, contains many historical incidents, and the question that we have to discuss is whether these incidents are good history.

There are certain general questions that must be discussed first.

1. There is the allegorical interpretation. This is put forward by the Baron von Hügel in the article on St. John's Gospel in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and by Loisy in *Le Quatrième Evangile*, and is held by others.

The Baron von Hügel sums up the characteristics of the Gospel as follows:

'1. A readiness to handle traditional, largely historical materials with a sovereign freedom, controlled and limited by doctrinal convictions and devotional experience only.

'2. A mystic's deep love for double, even treble, meanings.

'3. There is everywhere the influence of certain central ideas, partly identical with, but largely developments of, those less reflectively operative in Jerusalem.

'4. There is everywhere a striving to contemplate history *sub specie aeternitatis* and to englobe the successions of man in the simultaneity of God.

'The Fourth Gospel is the noblest instance of this kind of literature, of which the truth depends not on the factual accuracy of the symbolizing appearances, but of the truth of the ideas and experiences thus symbolized.'

M. Loisy sums up his view as follows:

'What the author was, his book, in spite of himself, tells us to some extent: A Christian of Judæo-Alexandrian formation: a believer without, apparently, any personal reminiscence of what has been the life, preaching and death of Jesus; a history far removed from every historical preoccupation, though he retains certain principal facts of tradition, without which Christianity would evaporate into pure ideas; and a seer who has lived the Gospel which he propounds.'

Let us study some examples of this allegorical method of interpretation. The miracle at Cana in Galilee tells us how the good wine of the Gospel has taken the place of the old wine of Judaism. The helplessness of the old condition is announced by the true Israel, the Messiah's spiritual mother. The number six (the six waterpots), being an incomplete number, symbolizes the inadequacy of Judaism.

Here is Professor Schmiedel in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*:¹

'The 6 waterpots containing 2 or 3 firkins apiece after the manner of the purifying of the Jews represent the inferior dispensation of the week-days, i.e. the Law—preparing the way for the perfect dispensation of the Sabbath, i.e. the Gospel for which the wedding feast of Cana is a type.'

In the same article further on we read:²

'The Bridegroom. This section contains the doctrine of water: 1st, the water of the Law superseded by the wine of the Gospel: and the water of Purification from above: the water of

¹ *Enc. Biblica* II. 1796.

² *ibid.*, p. 1800.

Life that quenches the soul's thirst. The three scenes of these subsections are severally Galilee, Jerusalem and Samaria.'

'Jesus is the acknowledged bridegroom of the Church.'

'The mother of Jesus is the Jewish Church.'

A still more fanciful explanation is that of Professor Estlin Carpenter:

'In Christ as the dispenser of wine, we have a conscious or semi-conscious attempt to present the Lord of the Christians to the Greek world as the true and better Dionysus—the fourth Evangelist transformed the miracle of Dionysus into an imaginative symbol of the glory of Christ.'

All this seems to me very far-fetched, and unreal. At any rate, the Christian Church failed to find the real meaning of the sign for nearly nineteen hundred years.

The author of the Fourth Gospel, in the story of the cleansing of the Temple, adds the incident that Jesus 'made a scourge of cords, and cast all out of the Temple, both the sheep and the oxen.' This, it is said, symbolizes the end of the sacrificial system. In the story of the healing of a cripple, 'These five porches signified the law which bears the sick but does not heal them, discovers them but does not cure them.' As the Hebrews wandered thirty-eight years in the desert, the thirty-eight years of the man's infirmity are an allegory or symbol of Jewish unbelief.

Many more instances might be given, but there is a difference to be noted. There are those who look upon the stories as historical, but find in them also a spiritual meaning; but some modern critics, like Loisy, hold that most of them were never intended to represent actual events. They were merely symbolical. I do not think this was the view of the author of the Fourth Gospel; I think he told all these stories, whether miracles or not, as historical facts, and considered them signs of the authority of Jesus.¹ I must leave my readers to judge for them-

¹ This view is supported by Dr. Bernard, vol. 1, lxxxv et seq.

selves, but I do not think that any one reading the Gospel with an open mind would doubt that this was the intention of the writer and that the value of his argument depends upon whether the events he records are true. 'The works which the Father hath given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.'

2. We must next consider certain general questions in relation to miracles. As regards the type of miracle recorded there is only one important difference between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptists. All the Gospels contain both miracles of healing and what are called nature miracles, but in the Fourth Gospel there is a complete absence of any reference to those who were possessed of evil spirits and to the healing of such persons.

There is, however, a great difference in the attitude towards miracles. In the Fourth Gospel they are called 'signs' and used for their value as evidence. Moreover, we are given a definite rationale of miracles. They imply the unity and co-operation of Jesus, the Son of God, with the Father; they result from this unity and co-operation. It was because Jesus could say: 'I and my Father are one'—'My Father worketh hitherto and I work,' that miracles can take place. The fact that they do take place is one of the proofs, so it is alleged, of the truth of the great thesis of the Gospel: that Jesus was in very truth the Son of God, the divine Word.

We are not now discussing the reality or possibility of miracles; it is sufficient to say at present that in the following examination all stories alike, whether miraculous or not, will be examined in the same way.

3. What is the criterion by which the truth of an incident is to be judged? It is needless to say that no sort of demonstration is possible. It is not possible to prove that any episode is historical. It can only be a matter of judgement, and judgement may err. There are, however, certain criteria. We ask whether the writer seems acquainted with the thought and life of the time

and place he is describing; whether he shows a knowledge of geographical details; whether his story agrees with other accounts; whether we notice the presence of irrelevant details, which have been introduced because they have remained impressed on the memory of an eyewitness; whether the writer is able to give us information which implies, or seems to imply, knowledge derived from other sources; whether there is a life-like vividness about the narrative.

All these and similar points have been investigated by Bishop Lightfoot,¹ Bishop Westcott,² Dr. Sanday,³ and others and the value of their work must be weighed.

I would especially refer to an interesting appendix to Renan's *Vie de Jésus*, in which he defends the use that he has made of the incidents contained in the Fourth Gospel. To his critical friends it seemed shocking to suppose that anything in this Gospel could be historical. Renan reviews many of the incidents and decides in favour of their historical character by just the same arguments as those which Bishop Westcott uses. In particular he criticizes with great force the theory that the Gospel is symbolical or allegorical. He does not apply the same methods to the miraculous stories. This one would expect, for his scepticism was too strong. He gives us instead an elaborate 'rationalist' explanation of the origin of miraculous stories which leads him to some strange conclusions. But we may accept his testimony to the general historical character of, at any rate, part of the Gospel, and look upon his literary and historical judgement as sound when it is not interfered with by his *a priori* opinions or prejudices.

In the light of these principles we can now examine the separate narratives. I will take first those given also in the Synoptic Gospels and afterwards those found only in the Fourth Gospel.

¹ Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays*. Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1904.

² Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*. With Introduction and Notes. John Murray, 1890.

³ Sanday, *The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel*. Oxford Clarendon Press, 1921.

We begin with the story of John the Baptist. The purpose of the author is to give us the Baptist's witness to Christ, and this he does more fully than the other Evangelists. While in St. Mark we are told that Jesus saw the Spirit descending as a dove; in St. Matthew and St. Luke that the Spirit so descended; in the Fourth Gospel the Baptist tells us that he saw the Spirit descending. There is no discrepancy between the different accounts, but the witness of the Baptist is much fuller and more definite. Are we to take this as evidence invented or exaggerated to deal with followers of the Baptist in Asia, or was the writer present, and does he in this very vivid chapter give us his own reminiscences?

It may be noted that the story in the Fourth Gospel corroborates and explains what we learn from other sources. It tells that Jesus had known some of his principal disciples, when like himself they were with the Baptist, and that they then become attached to him. It also tells us that for a time Jesus preached in company with the Baptist. This explains why, in putting forward the credentials of an apostle, St. Peter in the Acts speaks of men 'who have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John';¹ it explains why the Galilaean Ministry began 'after John was cast into prison,' why Jesus went to Capernaum and how he knew those whom he summoned to be his disciples. It is clear that the story of the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel harmonizes with and amplifies our other accounts.

The next event to be noticed is the cleansing of the Temple. It has already been explained why the story has been placed here. The Fourth Gospel adds a good many details which seem probable. Jesus made a scourge of cords to cast out the sheep and oxen. The author puts words into our Lord's mouth, 'Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise.' Our Lord knows the mind of the disciples. His disciples remem-

¹ Acts i. 21-22.

bered that it was written, "The zeal of thine house shall eat me up."¹ There is appended a further saying of Jesus, 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.'² This seems to explain the evidence brought against him at his trial.³ Or did the author, as is suggested, put together the story from the evidence at the trial? Is it, therefore, an effort of the imagination when he says: 'When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he spake thus; and they believed the scripture, and the word that Jesus had said?'⁴

The next story that is also found in the Synoptic Gospels is the healing of the nobleman's son at Capernaum. All three accounts seem to refer to the same event, but there are a considerable number of small differences. In the Fourth Gospel it is a nobleman. In St. Matthew and St. Luke it is a centurion. In the Fourth Gospel it is a son, in the Synoptics a servant. In the Fourth Gospel it is Jesus who says: 'Go thy way, thy son liveth.' In the Synoptics it is the centurion who says: 'Speak the word only and my servant liveth.' In St. Luke it is the elders of the Jews who come to Jesus on behalf of the centurion. In the Fourth Gospel there is a reference to Cana of Galilee. On the fundamental points all the accounts are agreed.

The next story that we have to consider is that of the Feeding of the Five Thousand.⁵ By far the best account in the Synoptics is that of St. Mark.⁶ This the Fourth Gospel seems to have made use of, but two interesting points are added. We are told that the event took place near the time of the Passover, and that the people 'were about to come and take him by force and make him king.' Both these facts are illuminating. There are other smaller variations, and there is also what seems to be a quite independent account of the confession of Peter.⁷

We now pass to events at the end of our Lord's ministry.

¹ St. John ii. 16.

³ St. Mark xiv. 58; St. Matt. xxvi. 61.

⁶ St. John vi. 1-15.

² St. John ii. 20.

⁴ St. John ii. 22.

⁶ St. Mark vi. 30-44.

⁷ St. John vi. 66-vii. 1.

The first story that we must notice is that of Mary anointing the feet of Jesus.¹ The Fourth Gospel differs from St. Mark and St. Matthew by placing the feast on the Sabbath evening before the entry into Jerusalem, instead of later in the week. It leaves out the name of Simon the Leper. But the outstanding feature of the story in the Fourth Gospel is that it brings in the names of Martha, Mary and Lazarus—it is Mary who anoints Jesus. There is also a reference to Judas who criticizes our Lord. We are told that he was a thief and that he kept the bag. An interesting point is that here we have one of the few points where the Fourth Gospel seems to be indebted to St. Luke. In St. Matthew and St. Mark the anointing is on the head. In the Fourth Gospel Mary anoints the feet of Jesus and wipes his feet with her hair. So in St. Luke. 'She began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with an ointment.'²

In St. Luke the woman is a sinner and many have supposed that Mary's affection for Jesus had arisen because he had rescued her from a sinful life. One more point may be noted which is of some interest when we are studying the minds of critics. The Fourth Gospel tells us, 'the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.' While Westcott and others point out that this is a clear sign of the testimony of one who was present, for the smell of the ointment is just one of those things which would live on in memory, another school of critics say that these words are symbolical. It is another way of saying: 'Wheresoever the Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.'³ Which of these interpretations is the most natural?

We shall later discuss this story in relation to the raising of Lazarus. I am sure that the natural explanation is that the author of the Fourth Gospel knew the circumstances better than

¹ St. John xii. 1-8.

² St. Luke vii. 38.

³ St. Mark xiv. 9.

any of the other writers, that he had been in Jerusalem, that he was present at the feast, and gives us a vivid account of what happened. That is the natural deduction from a comparison of the narratives.

We come next to the entry into Jerusalem. If we compare the Fourth Gospel with St. Mark, we notice that each gives an account which is natural if we consider the point of view of the writer. St. Mark's account is written with the knowledge only of a pilgrim who had just come up from Galilee; he describes things as he has seen them. The Fourth Gospel is written from the Jerusalem point of view. It tells us that Jesus had spent the Sabbath in Bethany, and no doubt had made the necessary arrangements for his entry. It describes the expectations of the people of Jerusalem who came 'out to meet Jesus.'

There is, however, one difficulty which must be noticed. Bishop Lightfoot, who does not often make a mistake, lays stress on the mention in the Fourth Gospel of the branches of the palm trees which had been cut down on the road to Bethany. But the palm, which is a sub-tropical plant, cannot grow in such an elevated place as the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. If there were branches of palm trees carried they must have come from Jericho. It was the custom to carry palm in procession at the Feast of Tabernacles, and they were used especially for meeting royal personages.

The story of the Last Supper has caused some people great difficulties. Professor Burkitt may be taken as an example. He writes as follows:

'When therefore we find him writing an elaborate account of the last meal . . . in which nevertheless there is no mention of the epoch-making words of Institution, we can only regard his silence as deliberate. . . . It is evident that "John" has transferred the Eucharistic teaching from the Last Supper to the earlier Galilæan miracle. . . . This is something more than mere historical inaccuracy. It is a deliberate sacrifice of

historical truth.' He describes the Evangelist as 'careless of event.'¹

It does not seem to me that there is any justification for these attacks. The Evangelist is not careless of events. He has not written a Gospel to rival the Synoptics or to supersede them, but to supplement them. Unless he needs the incident for some particular purpose he does not repeat what can be found in their narrative. He has given his Eucharistic teaching in relation to the Feeding of the Five Thousand, and we know that that story was so interpreted in the early days of the Church. He does not think it necessary to record the narrative of the Institution with which every one was acquainted. As he wanted to find room for so much new matter, he naturally left out many things that were already correctly recorded.

Professor Burkitt writes: 'If we are to regard the Fourth Gospel as a narrative of events, we can only say that the writer has given a false impression of what occurred.'² This seems to me wrong-headed. I should rather say that the fact that the story of the Institution was not repeated shows that the Evangelist thought the existing narrative satisfactory. He had nothing to correct, and did not think it necessary to repeat it. He left it out that he might have room for the story of the washing of the disciples' feet, which had not been told before, and for the discourses on the promise of the Spirit.

It may be noted that Renan on the other hand considers the omission of the story of the Institution clear evidence of the superior historical character of the Fourth Gospel.

It is noticeable that although the other Gospels do not mention the washing of the feet, St. Luke tells us that there was contention among the disciples as to which should be accounted greatest. That seems to give the cause of our Lord's action.

¹ F. Crawford Burkitt, *The Gospel History and Its Transmission*, pp. 224-5. T. & T. Clark, 1906.

² Burkitt, p. 226.

There remains the story of the Crucifixion. It is more than probable that the Fourth Gospel gives a date for that event different from that of the Synoptists. According to them it took place on the fifteenth Nisan, the first day of the Passover. Then the Last Supper which took place on the evening before (we remember that the Jewish day began at six o'clock in the evening) was a Passover. According to the Fourth Gospel it took place on the fourteenth Nisan, at the time when the Paschal lambs were sacrificed. The Last Supper in that case was not a Passover. This seems the most probable date, for it was the aim of the Jewish authorities not to make the arrest on the feast day; and care was taken that the bodies should not remain on the cross during the feast. Hence the indecent haste with which they were taken down. There is also some evidence that this is in accordance with Jewish tradition. The date in the Fourth Gospel seems the more probable. This is one of the cases where it seems to give us correct historical information.

To turn to details. The author of the Fourth Gospel, in accordance with his custom of giving the names of the disciples, tells us that it was Peter who cut off Malchus' ear. He tells us that the first examination was before Annas, which may well be an instance of inside knowledge. He passes quickly over the trial before the Jewish authorities, but reports a considerable conversation with Pilate. He omits as unimportant the story of Simon of Cyrene. The most noteworthy of the new information given us is the presence at the Cross of the disciple whom Jesus loved, and the mother of Jesus, and the recommendation to the disciple by Jesus of the care of his mother. We have no means of testing the truth of this story, but there is no improbability in it.

Those who desire an allegorical explanation may like the following: 'The woman at the wedding and beneath the cross stands primarily for the faithful Old Testament community, corresponding to typical New Testament followers of the Son, the Messiah.'

The Resurrection stories in the Fourth Gospel seems to be quite independent.

If we sum up the results of this investigation, we can say that the author of the Fourth Gospel had the other three Gospels before him. He did not attempt in any way to rival them by giving a new biography, but selected such stories as suited his purpose. He generally followed St. Mark. He often adds details which for the most part improve and add point to the narrative and which may well be personal reminiscences. He occasionally corrects the Synoptic story and probably his corrections are sound. He may not always be right—no one is—but I see no reason to doubt that he intends to tell us what he believes has really happened, and that he gives us for the most part good history.

We now pass to those stories which are given us only in the Fourth Gospel, and I will begin by considering the most important of all, the one that causes the critics the greatest difficulty, the raising of Lazarus. How far is the story true historically?

The first argument that is used against it is the character of the event recorded. The miracle is of such a stupendous nature that it is felt to be impossible that it should really have happened. This argument, of course, begs the whole question at issue. According to Christian tradition our Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God, God incarnate. If that be true there is no valid reason for not believing in the miracles that are recorded of him. If the stupendous fact of the incarnation be possible these minor breaches of the order of nature (as it is called) are also possible. All that the law of the uniformity of nature tells us is that the same antecedents have the same consequences. If a new antecedent comes in the consequences must be different. The direct action of Jesus Christ, himself the creator of all things, will be a *vera causa* which may overpower all other causes. To assume that this is not possible, is to assume that the Church's teaching about Jesus Christ is not true. We are told of this miracle and it is

put before us as a proof of the truth about Jesus Christ. To start our investigation by ruling the evidence out on a *a priori* grounds is not logical, for the question at issue is the nature of Jesus Christ. If a miracle such as that of the raising of Lazarus could be proved to be true it would go far towards proving the reality of Christ's divinity. To rule it out because miracles cannot happen would be as illogical as to assume they had happened because we had already decided to accept the claims of Christ.

Secondly, it is said that the miracle cannot have happened because it is not recorded in any other Gospel or in any other source. This argument is put forward with great vigour by Professor Burkitt:¹

'The discrepancy between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic narrative, i.e. St. Mark's Gospel, comes to a head in the story of the raising of Lazarus. . . . The story of the raising of Lazarus was a favourite with the early Christians. . . . But where are we to put the same into the historical framework preserved by St. Mark? Can any answer be given, except "there is no room"? If the events occurred as told in the Fourth Gospel, if they were as public as the Fourth Evangelist insists, so fraught with influence upon the actions of both friends and foes, they could not have been unknown to a well-informed personage like St. Mark, nor could he have had any reason for suppressing a narrative at once so public and so edifying.'

There are two objections raised: the one is that there is no room for these events, the other is that St. Mark must have known about them and if he had known must have recorded them. I feel it presumptuous to doubt the authority of Professor Burkitt, but I think him mistaken on both points.

In chapter x. 1, St. Mark tells us that Jesus began a preaching journey in the region of Judaea, and beyond Jordan. From St. Luke we learn that it was so important that he sent forth a mission similar to the Galilaean Mission of the twelve Apostles.

¹ *The Gospel History and Its Transmission*, p. 221.

St. Luke gives us incidents which occurred during this journey, none of which St. Mark records. This exactly agrees with what we learn in chapters vii-xi of the Fourth Gospel concerning the preaching of Jesus in Judaea and his retirement to Peraea. We have not sufficiently exact information to be able to arrange the order of events, but there is ample time for all the events recorded both by the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel.

As regards the record, we have good ground for thinking that the Gospel of St. Mark is based on the story which St. Peter told of his own experiences. So far as we can gather he was not with Jesus during any part of this period. He did not go with him on the journey through Judaea. He is never mentioned in any of the narratives of this mission, and he met Jesus again at Jericho. The same is true probably of many other of the disciples. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were with their Master, and so was Thomas, but we do not hear of any others.

Now, St. Mark's Gospel was, we believe, based on what St. Peter preached about Jesus, and his story was concerned with events at which he had himself been present and about which he told his own story. He does not give any account of the birth of our Lord, and he gives only a very short reference to John the Baptist. He describes the Galilaean ministry and the events in Jerusalem after the entry of Jesus. He never gives us anything outside these limits.

Let us now examine the story and ask whether it bears the marks of being genuine. To me it reads like a vivid story told by some one who was present. Once we accept that Jesus was one who could accomplish such things, we have no reason to doubt it. We note particularly how true it is to the characters of Martha and Mary, which are depicted consistently with the story told of them in St. Luke's Gospel. Moreover, the writer is able to tell us something of the reactions to the event. He believes that it was the decisive cause which made the High Priest and Pharisees decide to kill Jesus. He

knows also the effect on the people of Jerusalem of this miracle. It was the union of the pilgrims from Galilee and the disciples in Jerusalem which swelled the crowd that led Jesus in triumph into the city, and enabled him to dominate the Temple for several days. The story in St. Mark is written from one point of view, that of St. John from another point of view. The Galilaean St. Peter was not present at the raising of Lazarus and told his own story in a manner quite natural to his position. The disciple who had been in Jerusalem had naturally a better insight into the course of events. The whole story reads as a vivid record of events which actually happened and not as a work of the imagination.

Those who feel unable to accept the miracle are obliged to find some means of accounting for the story. They tell us how it was put together from various fragments. There was the story in St. Luke of Martha and Mary; there was the parable, or fable, or story, of Dives and Lazarus; there was the vivid story given by St. Luke of the woman who was a sinner who anointed Jesus; and the more prosaic form of the story in St. Mark with the feast at the house of Simon the Leper. Out of all these elements the family of Martha, Mary and Lazarus; the home at Bethany where Jesus was a welcome guest; the supper at which Lazarus was present; and the story of the raising from the dead were constructed; and to make the episode seem more probable it was connected with the plot against Jesus and a meeting of the Sanhedrin was summoned to discuss the event. This was, I think, a remarkable achievement of historical reconstruction.

I must leave each of my readers to decide what opinion he forms on the matter.

We must now consider briefly the other stories contained only in the Fourth Gospel. The story of the marriage in Cana of Galilee has been already referred to, and I have given illustrations of the very remarkable allegorical explanations of it. If we are not prepared to accept them, something rather less

sensational is given us by Wendt: 'It is quite possible that an utterance which the Apostle originally made in a figurative sense: "Jesus turned the water of legal justification into the wine of marriage joy"—was afterwards interpreted by the circle of Johannine disciples as recording an actual conversion of such water of justification into wine for a marriage.'

If we set aside all these fanciful interpretations and turn to the story itself, we find no hint of any theological meaning and a simple and straightforward story, told quite simply. The narrator was himself present. He records the conversation. He tells us of the six waterpots, not because the number six had some mystical meaning, but because there were six. He ends with telling us that 'his disciples believed on him.' The reader must make up his mind which is the most natural interpretation of the story.

There follows the story of Nicodemus. It has been already pointed out that it probably belongs to a later period in the Ministry—perhaps to the last days, and that it has been placed here, near the beginning, because of its evidential value. We are not at the moment concerned with the discourse but with the possibility of such an event. We are told elsewhere that Nicodemus, like Joseph of Arimathea, was a member of the Sanhedrin who had not agreed with the majority. It was natural that he should desire to see Jesus and that he should do so secretly. The story is quite a possible one, and that is all that can be said.

The episode of the further witness of the Baptist has been the occasion for a great deal of criticism, both from the point of view of the critics who think that it was invented to deal with later troubles with the disciples of the Baptist and from the point of view of late sacramental teaching. If we take it as a simple narrative of facts, it seems to me quite straightforward. It tells us, first of all, that there was a time after the Baptism of Jesus when, assisted by some disciples who had attached themselves to him, he preached in co-operation with the Baptist, somewhere

in the Jordan valley. If this was so, it explains why St. Mark tells us that it was after the imprisonment of the Baptist and the consequent dispersal of his followers that the Galilaean ministry began. It tells us that Jesus began to attract more disciples than the Baptist, as was natural; that people tried to make mischief, but that the Baptist recognized the position, that he gave further testimony to Jesus, summing it up by the words, 'He must increase, but I must decrease.' The words assigned to him had the picturesque character we might expect: 'He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice; this my joy therefore is fulfilled.'¹ These words contrast with the formal theology of the Evangelist in the comment that he inserts in the following verses, and have the ring of being genuine words of the Baptist, which had impressed themselves on the memory. We are told also that Jesus continued the practice of baptizing, although he left the actual ceremony to his disciples. It is quite true that we have no other evidence that Jesus during his ministry baptized, but all the probability is in favour of his having done so. He had been himself baptized, those disciples of his who had been disciples of the Baptist had been baptized. Baptism was the universal preparation for the coming of the Messiah which all expected. Is it likely that it would have been given up by Jesus? After Pentecost St. Peter at once proposes that the new converts should be baptized, not as anything new but as the normal procedure. Does not all this make it probable that the disciples had been regularly baptizing new converts? To me the whole narrative seems natural. Of course, those critics who believe that the chief occupation of the Church was faking narratives about Jesus, will suspect the record here as elsewhere.

Let me take an instance. This is what Goguel writes:²

¹ St. John iii. 29-30.

² Maurice Goguel, *The Life of Jesus*. Translated by Olive Wyon.

“The story cannot have been written by one hand: the confusion of certain phrases, especially of the last phrase, reveals the marks of revision and editing. Thus alone can we explain the obscurities and contradictions in the passage. The narrator, after having represented John the Baptist as baptizing freely, notes that at that moment he was not in prison. A dispute between a Judaeen or Jew and the disciples of John leads to a complaint of the latter against Jesus. The disciples of John are scandalized at the success of a man whom their master, nevertheless, had formerly declared to be greater than he. Some Pharisees emerge unexpectedly from nowhere at the end of the story, and it is on their account that Jesus goes away. The inconsistencies are no less striking than the obscurities. Jesus has more disciples than John (iii. 26; iv. 1) and yet no one receives his testimony (iii. 32). He baptizes (iii. 22; iv. 1) and he does not baptize (iv. 2). We are here dealing with something quite different from editorial incompetence.’

And again: ‘Finally the touch in iv. 2 (“though Jesus himself baptized not but his disciples”) almost automatically betrays its character as a secondary element. This statement directly contradicts the data of the source in trying to adapt it (which, indeed, it does rather badly) to the current idea, which is also that of the Evangelist, that Jesus himself did not baptize.’

Most of this criticism seems to me quite futile. To take only one example: the addition, in a parenthesis, of the statement that Jesus did not perform the ceremony personally but left it to his disciples, is just exactly what I or any one else might have done in telling the story. To look on it as a discrepancy, or think it is a gloss, seems to me absurd.

There is one real discrepancy. St. Mark tells us that Jesus went into Galilee after John was cast into prison; the Fourth Gospel puts it earlier and suggests that Jesus left off preaching in co-operation with the Baptist, so that there might be no idea of antagonism or ill-feeling. Probably the Fourth Gospel is right,

but the end of the Baptist's ministry did, in fact, come very shortly afterwards.

In the story of the Samaritan Woman we are again offered an allegorical interpretation, but in rather a different way, the allegory is found in the words of Jesus, and not in the story as a whole. The words: 'Thou saidst well, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: this hast thou said truly,'¹ are interpreted of the religious history of Samaria. The five husbands refer to the five heathen religions which had been adapted, and 'he who was not a husband' refers to the schismatic worship of the God of Israel. Some think this probable, others do not, but it does not affect the historical character of the incident.

There is nothing improbable in the story. The geographical details are interesting and exact. The writer knows about the relations of Jew and Samaritan. He is shown clearly here, as in so many places, to have a knowledge of Palestine in the days before the destruction of Jerusalem. The episode might quite easily have happened on a journey from Jerusalem. The historical character of the conversation is another matter.

I have already mentioned the allegorical interpretations which have been given of the healing of the paralytic. On the other hand it is pointed out that here, as elsewhere, we have evidence of topographical knowledge of Jerusalem, which implies an acquaintance with the city before its destruction. The miracle resembles others given in the Synoptic Gospels, and was one worked on the Sabbath. It is clearly told in this context as giving the text for the discourse which follows. There was no need to invent it, as miracles which might take its place could be found in the other Gospels.

At the beginning of chapter vii we have interesting details about the relation of Jesus to his brethren, which have every appearance of being authentic, but one verse causes me some

¹ St. John iv, 17-18,

difficulty. 'And after these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Judaea because the Jews sought to kill him.'¹ These words occur after the Feeding of the Five Thousand which marks the end of the Galilaean ministry. I do not think we can be certain about the chronology, and I have already pointed out that I doubt whether the arrangement of the Gospel is intended to be chronological.

The last episode that I would refer to is that of the man born blind. The story is clearly narrated as having furnished Jesus with a text for his discourse on the Light of the World, but that is no reason for thinking that it was made up for the purpose. The whole story reads like something natural and true. It has considerable analogy to stories of the healing of the blind in the Synoptics, and the author of the Gospel might have taken any one of them for his purpose. We cannot prove that it is a true story. It reads as such, and (except for the fact of the miracle) there is no reason for thinking it not good history.

We have now reviewed the incidents recorded in the Gospel from the point of view of their historical value. Are we to consider them a series of allegories written with a view to their spiritual value and having no pretensions to be true history? I must confess that I can find no evidence to support that view. They are all told as straightforward stories. A definite appeal is made to their historical truth. Their value as evidence depends upon their historical truth. The allegorical interpretations are generally unreal and far-fetched.

Are the stories well-written romances intended to deceive us? They are of two classes: those found in the other Gospels and those confined to the Fourth Gospel. The former are told in a way which is quite consistent with the other accounts, but there are often details added which seem to be probable, and a good deal of additional information is given. Sometimes they seem to correct the older accounts. Sometimes the details added seem to

¹ St. John vii. 1.

be more doubtful, but speaking generally, the relationship is that of two independent but good authorities, which we can compare as we would any two original documents.

These facts would make us doubt very much the suggestion that the other stories are romances. They all read like genuine happenings; there are often signs of topographical or other similar knowledge. They may come from other sources which are now lost, or from traditions, or the writer himself may be the eyewitness. The matter, it must be recognized, cannot be one of demonstration, it is a matter of judgement. We have to decide whether, to a wise judgement, the stories seem true. We know that there are some who have answered this question in the negative, and we must weigh the matter carefully before we answer in the affirmative.

III

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE

I COME now to the question of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. I think Renan says somewhere that this is one of the most difficult of literary problems. It has certainly been made so by the multitude of those who have written about it. Clearly we must be careful in our investigation, and avoid any excessive dogmatism.

I will begin with certain general considerations about the Gospel. They are based principally on the investigations of Bishop Lightfoot and Westcott, but they have been reviewed by later writers, and there seems to be little doubt as to their validity.

(1) The writer was an Aramaic-speaking Jew. He thought in Aramaic, and his Greek, although grammatical and free from errors, is not what any one who was born a Greek would write.

We may quote Bishop Lightfoot:

'It is not ungrammatical Greek, but it is distinctly Greek of one accustomed to think and speak through the medium of another language. . . .'

'Tested by his style then the writer was a Jew. Of all the New Testament writings the Fourth Gospel is the most distinctly Hebrew in this respect.'¹

'The Hebrew character of the diction, moreover, shows itself in other ways, by the parallelism of the sentences, by the repetition of the same words in different clauses, by the order of the words, by the syntactical constructions, and by individual

¹ Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays*, p. 16.

expressions. Indeed, so completely is this character maintained throughout that there is hardly a sentence which might not be translated literally into Hebrew or Aramaic, without any violence to the language or the sense.¹

This position is corroborated by the investigations of Professor Burney.² He believed that the Fourth Gospel was originally written in Aramaic and had been translated. His theory of translation has not been generally accepted. It is possible but not probable. It would add indeed to the complications of the problem that we are investigating. But the arguments that he brings forward prove, I think conclusively, the Aramaic character of the style. I do not think that we need labour this point further.

(2) Further corroboration has been found for the Jewish character of the writer in the quotations from the Old Testament. While some are taken direct from the Septuagint, some undoubtedly agree with the Hebrew as against the Septuagint and must have been translated from the Hebrew or an Aramaic Targum.

Dr. Bernard sums up the position as follows:

'It has been thought by some that there is a tendency in the Fourth Gospel to reproduce O.T. *Testimonia* in a form recalling the Hebrew text rather than the LXX version. If the actual author were a Jew of Palestine, this is perhaps what we might expect, and at certain points John seems to give a free rendering of the Hebrew: (i. 33; vi. 45; xii. 15, 40; xiii. 18). On the other hand, the LXX (as distinct from the Hebrew) is behind the citations at ii. 17; xii. 38; xvii. 17; xix. 24). The quotation at xix. 37 is probably derived from some current version other than the LXX. No inference can be drawn from the form of the O.T. text cited vi. 31; vii. 42; viii. 17; x. 34; xii. 13, 34; xv. 25; xix. 28, 36. The evidence, taken as a whole, hardly proves that the

¹ Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

² C. F. Burney, *The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel*. Oxford Clarendon Press, 1922.

evangelist was more familiar with the Hebrew O.T. than he was with the LXX; although a knowledge of the Hebrew as well as of the LXX seems to be behind the Gospel quotations.¹

Dr. Bernard certainly does not overstate the case. He also suggests that 'it is possible that many of John's O.T. citations are taken from a volume of *Testimonia* compiled in Greek for Christian use.' This seems an unnecessary complication. I think that the facts are such as to make it probable that the author was one who was acquainted with the Hebrew original on which he had probably been brought up, and when it was necessary he would use it. Naturally he would (like St. Paul) save himself the trouble of translating by using the LXX where possible. At any rate, there is nothing inconsistent with the author being an Aramaic-speaking Jew, and many will think that it corroborates that opinion.

(3) The Gospel shows detailed topographical and geographical knowledge both of Jerusalem and of such parts of Palestine as are mentioned. The writer is exact and particular in his geographical statements, sometimes they can be illustrated from Josephus and other sources, sometimes they are independent. They seem to prove that he knew Jerusalem and Palestine in the days before the destruction of Jerusalem. This detailed knowledge is specially noticeable in the story of the last days in Jerusalem and of the Crucifixion.

(4) The writer gives constant explanations of Jewish customs. This would seem to prove that he was familiar with these customs himself, but that as he was writing for Gentiles who did not know about such things he thought it necessary to explain them. For the same reason he generally gives a translation of Aramaic place-names and words that he uses.

(5) He has a remarkable knowledge of Jewish thought current in the first century; and of rabbinical methods of argument. He knows all about the Jewish expectation of the Messiah.

¹ Bernard, Introduction, vol. 1, lxxix.

He knows about the teaching on Sabbath observance. He mentions the Jewish feasts and sometimes the teaching seems more than incidentally connected with the occasion of the feast. The method of argument used in the Jerusalem disputes is quite in accordance with Jewish methods of argument. I owe the following quotations to Dr. Bernard:¹

‘Most remarkable,’ wrote the rabbinical scholar Dr. Abrahams, ‘has been the cumulative strength of the arguments adduced by Jewish writers favourable to the authenticity of the discourses in the Fourth Gospel, especially in relation to the circumstances under which they are reported to have been spoken.’² So in the same way he understands the relations between Jews and Samaritans and gives us many explanations of life in Palestine when he wrote.

(6) Lastly there are many passages which have all the characteristics of being written by an eyewitness. They give interesting details and allusions, they are vivid and life-like, they show a knowledge of character. This argument we cannot use with the same confidence as some of the earlier ones because it is very much a matter of judgement. Some illustrations have been given in the review of the separate instances reported in the Gospel.

Putting together all the facts which have been so far described, the conclusion that I would arrive at is that the Fourth Gospel is a literary unit. It is written in a style of its own, and that style runs through the whole work. Any large interpolation is not possible. Of course, the material may have been derived from different sources, but these sources (if there were such) have been assimilated by the author. He writes in his own style, and in his own way. He is a Jew of Palestine, who knew Jerusalem in the old days. He knew how people thought in those days, but he is interpreting the old life to another people.

¹ Bernard, p. lxxxii.

² *Cambridge Biblical Essays*, p. 181.

We must now try to discover any signs as to who this writer may have been. Let us begin with the twenty-first chapter of the Gospel. We may provisionally agree that this chapter is an Appendix added to the Gospel and that it is not by the author. We may leave it an open question whether the traditions contained in it are true. It makes the following statement:

‘Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following, which also leaned back on his breast at the supper and said, Lord, who is he that betrayeth thee? Peter therefore seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. This saying therefore went forth among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, that he should not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? This is the disciple that beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his witness is true.’¹

Now there is one fact that we can deduce from this statement with some degree of certainty. There was presumably living at the time when these words were written an elderly man who was believed to have been a disciple of Jesus; that is, one of those who had known him and been his intimate follower. This disciple attained a great age, so that people speculated about him and wondered if he would never die, but live on until Jesus returned to the world, as many people believed he soon would do. Unless there were such a person, it is difficult to understand why these stories or traditions about him should have been reported or invented.

Now this is just what early Christian traditions tell us. They tell us various things about him which may or may not be true. They give him a name: whether they do so rightly or wrongly we must investigate further. The point that I wish to make is that the writer of these words would not tell this story about him

¹ St. John xxi. 20-24.

or describe him as the author of the Gospel, unless such a person existed and was known to exist. I want this point accepted as a starting point.

Further, the Gospel tells us of a certain disciple, of whom it is said that Jesus loved him. 'There was at the table reclining on Jesus' bosom one of the disciples, whom Jesus loved.'¹ 'When Jesus therefore saw his Mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to his disciple, Behold thy mother! and from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.'² 'She [Mary Magdalene] runneth therefore and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved. . . . Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. And they ran together and the other disciple outran Peter, and came first to the tomb: and stooping and looking in he seeth the linen clothes lying: yet entered he not in. . . . Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, which came first to the tomb, and he saw and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. So the disciples went away again unto their own home.'³

This then is the disciple who is said to be the witness of these things.

On two occasions also there is mention made of a disciple called 'another disciple.'

'And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Now that disciple was known unto the high priest, and entered in with Jesus into the court of the high priest: but Peter was standing at the door without. So the other disciple which was known unto the high priest went out and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.'⁴

On an earlier occasion we are told: 'Again on the morrow John was standing and two of his disciples: and he looked upon

¹ St. John, xiii. 23.

³ St. John xx. 2-10.

² St. John xix. 26.

⁴ St. John xviii. 15-16.

Jesus as he walked, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus. . . . One of the two that heard John speak and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.¹

It is generally thought, although it cannot be proved, that this other disciple was the beloved disciple. It is claimed, then, that this Gospel was written by a disciple who lived to a great age, who had been a disciple of the Baptist and who is described as the disciple whom Jesus loved. He was also apparently a person of some importance in Jerusalem and was known to the high priest. He was present at the trial in the high priest's house. He was present at the Last Supper. He was a witness of the Crucifixion, and in particular of the empty tomb. He was entrusted with the care of Jesus' Mother.

Clearly he was a most suitable person to write about his Master. If he was the author of the Gospel, there are other things that we can know about him. He specially narrates events which happened in Jerusalem, so it is reasonable to conjecture that he was the disciple whom Jesus chose as his companion on his visits to Jerusalem at the Jewish feasts, and he would have special knowledge of what was going on. Let us take an instance: he gives us a very vivid account of the raising of Lazarus, he distinguishes the characters of the actors, and stresses the impression that the miracle made. Further than this, he knows what is going on in official circles. He knows that the strong feeling against Jesus which, according to him, had existed for some time was brought to a head by this event. He describes what happened at a Council of the chief priests and Pharisees; he gives a very remarkable saying by Caiaphas, and he tells us that the determination to put Jesus to death was then taken.

He knows also the repercussions among the people. The story about Lazarus had become known. It had created, as was

¹ St. John i. 35, 37 and 40.

natural, great excitement. People in Jerusalem were full of expectation as to whether Jesus was coming to the feast, and when they heard of his coming crowds went out from Jerusalem to meet him. Also he knows that Jesus spent the Sabbath at Bethany, and that he was able to make preparations for the entry into Jerusalem. He tells us, having clearly some special knowledge, that Jesus was first taken to the house of Annas.

But now we are told that all this is inconsistent with the same story as told by St. Mark, or what is really the case by St. Peter.

If the story of Lazarus were true surely St. Peter would have told us of it? From him we gather that it was the cleansing of the Temple which was the cause of the arrest of Jesus.

I do not think myself that there is any discrepancy. The story of St. Mark is written from the point of view of the Galilaean disciples, and tells us what they saw happening in a straightforward way. St. Peter does not tell us about Lazarus because he was in Galilee when the event occurred. He would only know of it by hearsay. It is quite true that the cleansing of the Temple was the occasion of the arrest of Jesus, but it is probable enough that the authorities had already made up their minds and were only waiting for their opportunity. The two accounts tell the story from different points of view and they supplement each other without discrepancy.

Then let us look at the narrative of the Fourth Gospel generally. It must have been written by a disciple who was a companion of Jesus when he visited Jerusalem. We have noticed that there is no record of any visit to the city except at the time of a feast. The statement that is sometimes made that Jesus is represented as preaching in Jerusalem much more than in Galilee has no real foundation. The narrative is consistent with the record of the Galilaean ministry, occasionally interrupted by a visit to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover or some other feast—a normal occurrence which would not be thought worth mentioning unless it were for a special purpose.

It appears also that the narrator of the story was present on other occasions. He was one of those who had been a disciple of the Baptist. He records the two miracles at Cana in Galilee and writes about them as if he had been present. He was probably with Jesus in the early days of his preaching in Judaea under the auspices of the Baptist. He accompanied him on his journey north through Samaria. He was present at the Feeding of the Five Thousand. We have an interesting little account of a discussion between Jesus and his brethren about going up to the feast of Tabernacles. All these events might imply that the writer of the Gospel was with Jesus in Galilee.

Then there is the more general evidence which has been already referred to. The writer of the Gospel was an Aramaic-speaking Jew. He moves naturally in the life of Palestine at the time of our Lord. His geography is good. His discussions with the Jews show a knowledge of the methods of Jewish thought.

These are the conditions that have to be fulfilled.

Now what solutions are there? Broadly speaking there are three. (1) That the beloved disciple and the author of the Gospel was John, the son of Zebedee. (2) That he was some other disciple, probably a resident in Jerusalem. (3) That he did not really exist at all. He was invented to give an air of reality to the story. The Fourth Gospel is the product of the imagination of a pious Christian, who took this means of explaining Jesus to the people of Ephesus, and through them to subsequent generations.

Let us examine these suggestions:

That John, the son of Zebedee, should be the disciple whom Jesus loved is entirely natural. He was his cousin, for Salome was the sister of Mary. He was one of the three or four disciples who, as we know from the other Gospels, belonged to the inner circle of the Apostles and were the companions of Jesus on special occasions. In the early days of the Christian Church he, with Peter, clearly held a prominent position. It was quite

natural that he should have been selected by Jesus to be his companion when he visited Jerusalem at the feasts. We know that he with his brother James, was with Jesus on his last journey.¹ He would naturally be present at all the events referred to in Galilee. He had been a disciple of the Baptist. He was in every way fitted to fulfil the role required for the author of the Fourth Gospel. It was quite natural that Jesus should commend his mother to his care. He was her nephew, and probably the brethren of Jesus were not her own sons.

There is one position which it is somewhat difficult for us to think of him filling. He is said to have been the friend of the high priest. What could this son of a Galilaean fisherman have to do in such circles? It should be noticed, however, that we are never told that 'another disciple' who went with Peter to the high priest's house was the beloved disciple. It may well have been one of those who, like Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea, had become attached to Jesus. The existence of such a disciple may account for the knowledge that Jesus, and the author of the Fourth Gospel, had of what the authorities were doing. On the other hand there is a tradition about John which might connect him with a priestly family. What do we really know about the sons of Zebedee? They were clearly remarkable men, something more than Galilaean fishermen. Salome was the sister of Mary, and Mary was, according to St. Luke, related to Elisabeth and Zacharias. Of course the critics deny this, but then they deny everything which makes history intelligible. It would mean that John might have had a connection with a priestly family. Then there is the curious statement made by Polycrates of Ephesus who tells us of John, 'Who leant back on the Lord's breast, who was a priest wearing the sacerdotal plate.'² I do not find in the commentaries any satisfactory explanation of these words.

There is one small point in the Fourth Gospel which appeals

¹ St. Luke ix. 54.

² ap. Eus. *H.E.* iii. 31-32.

to me as of great importance. Not only does the author never mention himself by name, but it is significant that he always calls the Baptist 'John' without any distinguishing mark, such as the other Gospels find necessary. To him there was no other John. The point is a somewhat subtle one, and I doubt if any forger would have the cleverness to think of it.

It is unnecessary to point out that John, the son of Zebedee, would have all the general characteristics which we have mentioned. He was an Aramaic-speaking Jew, he lived in Palestine and spent at least some time in Jerusalem during the life of Christ; he would have geographical and topographical knowledge; he would have a knowledge of Jewish life and thought.

It is obvious that John, the son of Zebedee, has very considerable claims to be the author of the Fourth Gospel. What is the difficulty?¹ Some critics have felt it impossible to believe that a fisherman from Galilee, one of a group described as 'unlearned and ignorant men,' could have written such a Gospel. 'And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galilaeans?'² 'Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled.'³ Is it feasible to suppose that any one who came from such a rough stock should have had the career we must ascribe to John, the author of the Gospel; could such a person have written the Prologue, the Gospel, the Epistles?

We must remember that John was a Jew and that the Jews were the one really educated race of the Roman world. They had all been taught, at any rate, in the synagogue schools. They were—there is plenty of evidence for it—an able and a clever people. St. John was a very young man, perhaps little more than a boy, when he was attached to Jesus. His intercourse with Jesus, his visits to Jerusalem, his activity and experience after the

¹ The date of the Gospel is discussed below in connection with the external evidence.

² Acts ii. 7.

³ Acts iv. 13.

Resurrection, the stimulus of the gift of the Spirit, would all help to develop his mind. We do not hear of him in Jerusalem after the Apostolic Council. He must have travelled. He may, like St. Peter, have visited Rome. He had come under a great variety of influence. A man of ability and inspiration would quickly learn in such a life.

Take the career of another Jew, Josephus. As a young man he lived for three years with an ascetic called Bannus in the desert. Eventually he became the friend of the Emperor Titus, had a wide acquaintance with Greek literature, and was the author of learned and elaborate works. Is the development of John any more remarkable? After all, he always carried with him the evidence of his origin in the curious Greek that he wrote.

I think, then, on internal grounds that the arguments for the identification of the author of the Fourth Gospel with John, the son of Zebedee, are very strong. He fills every qualification. Let us remember this: he could have been present, he probably was present, at every single event recorded in the Gospel.

We must consider now more briefly the other two theories that are put forward on internal grounds about the writer of the Gospel.

It has been argued that there is evidence to show that John, the son of Zebedee, died as a martyr when quite young, like his brother James. That is a statement we shall examine later. If it be true, some other claimant for the position will have to be found. It is suggested that there was another disciple of the name of John, a Jerusalem disciple, whom we find later in life in Asia where he bore the title of John the Presbyter and that he filled the position which a mistaken tradition ascribed to John, the son of Zebedee.

Postponing for the present the discussion of the external evidence, I think it will be found that if we examine this hypothesis it is very doubtful whether it fulfils the conditions of the 'beloved disciple'—he must have been present at the Last Supper,

but only the Twelve were there. He must have been on such intimate terms with St. Peter as to accompany him to the tomb. He must clearly have been present at the events which he describes in Jerusalem. That obviously would have been possible, and perhaps we may let him off attendance in Galilee, and suppose that he obtained his information about Galilaean episodes from other sources. But what the Gospel (as I believe) demands for its author is some one who had a very close intimacy with Jesus and could interpret his thoughts as no one else could, and I cannot believe that there was a disciple who could be styled the 'disciple whom Jesus loved' who is not mentioned in the other Gospels. If the legend of the martyrdom of St. John, the son of Zebedee, early in life be not true, there is no need for him; if it is true, he fills the part very inadequately.

There is a third alternative: that the beloved disciple never existed at all; that he was an ideal figure created to give an air of authority to the Fourth Gospel; that the Gospel is really a historical romance, like *Philochristus*, written with the admirable purpose of bringing home to the people of Asia the reality of the life of Jesus. If this supposition is true the author made use of the Synoptic Gospel, and of other traditions, but what he wrote is not in any real sense historical whatever claims he may make. All I can say is, that I do not think that a careful examination of the Gospel will support such a theory. We have examined it carefully, and we have found that the stories that it tells bear all the marks of being good history, and that the Gospel again and again shows the signs of being the work of an eyewitness, and not a romance.

IV

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

I NOW turn to the external evidence concerning the date and authorship of the Fourth Gospel, and I shall treat it under the following headings:

1. A general review of the evidence.
2. The alleged death of John the Apostle in Palestine.
3. John the Presbyter.
4. John the Apostle in Asia.

*The Review of the Evidence*¹

It is well-known that whereas during the first half of the second century the remains of Christian literature are scanty, from the year 170 onwards we have a body of Christian writers from all parts of the Roman Empire from whose works we can extract a very full picture of the Church life of the day, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Origen, Polycrates of Ephesus, besides many others of whom fragments have been preserved. Now it is quite clear that at that time the four Gospels as we have them were accepted by the great body of Christians. In particular the Fourth Gospel was so accepted and ascribed to the Apostle John. Somewhat earlier we have a body of writers who are generally described as Apologists. They wrote to defend the Christian religion against persecution by the State, and do not, as a rule, quote or refer to Christian literature. Their evidence, therefore, is less full,

¹ By far the best review of the evidence is that in Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays*, pp. 45-122. For all that can be found to disparage it, see Professor Schmiedel in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, vol. iii, Gospel 1765, John the Son of Zebedee, 4503.

but it is sufficient to make it clear that the Gospel was known and used from the year 150 onwards.

First of all, I would mention Theophilus of Antioch, whose date is *circa* 170–180, the first to quote the Gospel by name.

‘The holy Scriptures teach us, and all the inspired men, one of whom, John; saith: *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God*: afterwards he saith: *and the Word was God. All things were made through him, and without him was not even one thing made.*’¹

The next quotation I give is from Athenagoras (*c.* A.D. 170–180). He writes: ‘The Son of God is the Word of the Father in idea and actual. For all things were made in dependence on him and through him, the Father and the Son being one. But since the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son, by unity and power of the Spirit, the Son of God is the mind and word of the Father.’² I do not think that we can doubt that Athenagoras had the Fourth Gospel before him.

The evidence of Claudius Apollinarius, who addressed an apology to Marcus Aurelius, *c.* 174, is of a more indirect character. In his work *De Paschale* he wrote: ‘Some say that the Lord ate the Lamb with his disciples on the 14th (Nisan) and suffered on the great day of unleavened bread; and they state that Matthew’s narrative is in accordance with their view; while it follows that their view is at variance with the Law and according to them, the Gospels seem to disagree.’³

It seems that the discrepancy between the First and Fourth Gospels was well-known, that there had been discussions about it, and that both were recognized as Gospels.

Tatian is rather earlier than these, he wrote about A.D. 155–170. He quotes St. John i. 5, ‘This is in fact that which hath been said: The darkness apprehendeth not the light.’⁴ But far more impor-

¹ Theophilus, *ad Antoc.* ii. 22, cf. St. John i. 1, 2.

² Athenagoras, *Leg.* 10, cf. St. John i. 3.

³ See Routh, *Rel. Sacrae* I. 160.

⁴ Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos*, 13, cf. St. John i. 5.

tant than this is the fact that Tatian made a harmony of the Four Gospels which contained the Fourth Gospel as well as the other three. This appears to have been published in Syria at the end of his life.¹

Earlier still than Tatian is Justin Martyr, whose companion and disciple he was. His date may be put between A.D. 140 and 160. He gives much information about the life of our Lord, and there has been discussion as to the sources of his information. His theology is based to a considerable extent on the *Logos* doctrine. The certainty that we now have about the *Diatessaron* seems to me to clear the situation. It is very unlikely that when Tatian knew and used the Four Gospels, his companion and teacher should have been indebted to quite other sources of the existence of which we have no evidence. Further than that there are what seem to be definite quotations from the Fourth Gospel in Justin: 'For Christ alone said: *Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven. Now that it is impossible for those who have once been born, to enter into their mother's womb, is manifest to all.*'²

The teaching about 'the Word' is the same as in the Fourth Gospel, but there are no verbal quotations. There are, however, the following statements: 'and his Son, who alone is properly called Son, the Word, who also was with him, and was begotten before the world, when at first he created and

¹ The recovery of the full text of the *Diatessaron* is one of the romances of scholarship. Its hero is Zahn who reconstructed a large part of the work from the commentaries upon it in two Syriac authors: Ephraem Syrus and Aphroates. His work was corroborated by the publication by Ciasca of the full text in an Arabic Translation (1888). It had always been suspected that as the work was called the *Diatessaron* it was formed from the Four Gospels, and it is interesting to record that Baur with the usual dogmatism of a critic said that was impossible as the Fourth Gospel was not written until A.D. 170. So the usual process of explaining away evidence in order to support the errors of criticism was resorted to. The History of New Testament Scholarship during the last hundred years is the gradual destruction of the critical position by new discoveries.

² Justin Martyr, *Apologia*, i. 61.

arranged all things by him, is called Christ,' referring to his being anointed, and God's ordering all things through him.¹

'We have been taught that Christ is the first-born of God, and we have declared above that he is the Word of whom every race of men were partakers.'²

'The Word who is the first-born of God.'

I think that it is most improbable that Justin could have written like this independently of the Fourth Gospel. It may be noted also that Justin ascribes the Apocalypse to John the Apostle.³

From the year 150 onwards, therefore, we have ample evidence that the Christian Church accepted the Fourth Gospel as one of the Four Canonical Gospels, and ascribed it to the Apostle John. The only evidence of any other opinion is that there was a sect in Rome at the beginning of the third century called the *Alogi* who did not like the *Logos* theology and did not accept the Gospel.⁴

Before that date, as has been said, there is very little Christian literature, and the evidence is therefore necessarily scanty, but it must be realized that the proof of the genuineness of the letters of Ignatius and Polycarp⁵ has made the position much more clear. Ignatius certainly quoted the Fourth Gospel: 'For even though certain persons desired to deceive me after the flesh, yet the spirit is not deceived, being from God: for it *knoweth whence it cometh and where it goeth*, and it searcheth out the hidden things.'⁶ 'I desire the *Word* of God, which is the flesh of Christ, who was of the seed of David, and for a draught I desire his blood which is love incorruptible.'⁷

¹ Justin Martyr, *Apologia*, 6, cf. St. John i. 1, 2.

² *Apologia*, i. 46.

³ *Apologia*, i. 21.

⁴ Much is made of these heretics, but there is no evidence that they had any independent tradition. They rejected the Gospel, like modern critics, because they did not like its teaching. See Lightfoot, p. 115 et seq.

⁵ The *Epistles of Ignatius* were written A.D. 110. Polycarp lived at latest A.D. 70-156. See Lightfoot, p. 81 and pp. 53-4.

⁶ *Ignatius ad Philadelphos*, 7, cf. St. John iii. 8.

⁷ *Ignatius, ad Rom.* 7, cf. St. John vi. 47-51. See also, *ad Trall.* 8; *Eph.* 5.

Ignatius also uses the title, 'The Word was Christ.'

'To the end that they which are disobedient might be fully persuaded that there is one God, who manifests himself through Jesus Christ his Son, who is his Word that proceedeth from silence, who in all things was pleasing unto him that sent him.'¹

Polycarp was Bishop of Smyrna. When martyred in 155-6 he was 86 years old, or had been a Christian for 86 years. Eusebius tells us that he was entrusted with the oversight of the Church in Smyrna by those who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word. We are told by Irenaeus that he had known John the Apostle.² (This fact we shall investigate later.) We have one short letter of his in which he quotes the First Epistle of St. John:

'Every one who shall not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is antichrist.'³

It used always to be considered as almost axiomatic that the Gospel and Epistle were written by the same person. That is now denied, and will demand further investigation. But if the writer of the Epistle is some one different he must have been acquainted with the Gospel.

The problems connected with Papias will demand considerable investigation. Here it is sufficient to point out that according to Irenaeus he was a man of primitive times, a hearer of John and companion of Polycarp. That implies that he lived at the beginning of the second century. He is said by Eusebius to have used testimonies chosen from the former Epistle of John.⁴

The Fourth Gospel is also quoted by the Presbyters from whose works Irenaeus gives us extracts. It is also used by the heretics Basilides and Valentinian about A.D. 130, and the earliest commentary on it was by Heracleon, a follower of Valentinian.

I think that, considering the small amount of Christian litera-

¹ Ignatius, *ad Magn.* 8.

² Eus., *H.E.* iii. 36.

³ Polycarp, *ad Phil.* 7.

⁴ Eus., *H.E.* iii. 38; Irenaeus, *cont. roer.* v. 33-36.

ture which has survived from the beginning of the second century, we have as much evidence as it is reasonable to expect.

The general result of this survey is that we have adequate testimony that the Fourth Gospel could not have been written later than the end of the first century; that it was well-known and used by the Church by the middle of the second century, and that it was ascribed by all the leading theologians who wrote in the fourth quarter of the second century to the Apostle John. This has always been the tradition of the Christian Church, but we are now told that it cannot be true for three reasons: that the Apostle John had been martyred by the Jews in Jerusalem; that a certain person called John the Presbyter had been confused with the Apostle; and that the testimony of Irenaeus and the other Christian theologians of the end of the century is of no value. These points must now be investigated.

Was St. John the Apostle martyred in Palestine?

It is now held almost as a dogmatic truth in certain critical circles that St. John the Apostle suffered martyrdom in Palestine. It is necessary, therefore, to investigate carefully the evidence on which this statement is made.¹

An Oxford MS. (Cod. Barocc. 142) contains an anonymous epitome of the History of Philip of Side. The MS. belongs to the seventh or eighth century. The sixth section of this deals with Papias and is as follows:

'Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, who was a disciple of John the Divine, and a companion of Polycarp, wrote five books of the Oracles of the Lord, wherein when giving a list of the Apostles, after Peter and John, Philip and Thomas and Matthew he included among the disciples of the Lord, Aristion and a second John, whom also he called "The Elder." (He says) Some think that this

¹ See especially Bernard, St. John xxxvi-xlv; *Studia Sacra* 260; Schmiedel, *Enc. Bib.* ii. 2509; Moffatt, *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, p. 602.

John is the author of the two short and Catholic Epistles, which are published in the name of John: and he gives as the reason that the primitive (fathers) only accepted the first Epistle. Some, too, have wrongly considered the Apocalypse also to be his (i.e. the Elder John's) work. Papias, too, is in error about the Millennium, and from him Irenaeus also. Papias, in his second book, says that John the Divine and James his brother were killed by the Jews. The aforesaid Papias stated on the authority of the daughters of Philip that Barsabas, who is also called Justus, when challenged by the unbelievers drank serpents' poison in the name of the Lord, and was shielded from all harm. He makes also other marvellous statements, and particularly about the mother of Manaim who was raised from the dead. As for those who were raised from the dead by Christ, (he states) that they survived till the time of Hadrian.¹

Philip of Side lived at the beginning of the fifth century and wrote an ecclesiastical history, which has been lost. No writer has anything to say in its favour. It was apparently diffuse and ill-digested. The author had no reputation for veracity. It was written more for display than for usefulness.

The above extract is found in an epitome of the seventh or eighth century, and we must leave our readers to decide whether it bears the marks of being a trustworthy historical authority. We notice that it contradicts itself, for it tells us that Papias was a disciple of St. John the Divine, and then tells us that St. John the Divine was killed by the Jews with his brother James. It calls St. John 'the Divine,' a title which he was not given until long after the days of Papias. Whether the other incidents quoted add to his credit as an historian I must leave my readers to judge.

Our next authority is the Chronicle of George the Sinner, or Georgios Hamartolos, dating from the ninth century.

¹ Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 530.

'After Demitian Nerva reigned one year, who recalled John from the island (i.e. Patmos). He was at that time the sole survivor of the twelve Apostles, and after writing his Gospel received the honour of martyrdom. For Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, who was an eyewitness of him, in the Second Book of the Oracles of the Lord says that he was killed by the Jews, and therefore evidently fulfilled, together with his brother, Christ's prophecy concerning him, and their own confession and undertaking on his behalf. For when the Lord said to them: *Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of?* and they readily assented and agreed, he said, *My cup ye shall drink, and with the baptism that I am baptized shall ye be baptized.* And reasonably so, for it is impossible for God to lie. So, too, the learned Origen affirms in the interpretations of St. Matthew's Gospel that John was martyred, declaring that he had learnt the fact from the successors of the Apostles. And indeed the well-informed Eusebius also in his *Ecclesiastical History* says: "Thomas received by lot Parthia, but John, Asia, where also he made his residence and died at Ephesus." ¹

I do not think that this ninth-century chronicle bears any better marks of authenticity. George the Sinner combines the statement ascribed to Papias with the acceptance of the belief that St. John lived to the reign of Nerva and wrote his Gospel, and then received the honour of martyrdom. He quotes Origen to prove that he was martyred, but all Origen tells us is that he was banished to Patmos. He quotes Eusebius, who tells us that he died at Ephesus. Clearly there has been some blunder. The most probable explanation is that suggested by Dr. Bernard, that it arose from applying to James, the son of Zebedee, words applied by Hegesippus to James, the Lord's brother.

Two corroborative arguments are brought forward. The one is that our Lord is represented in the story told us by St. Mark and St. Matthew as prophesying the death of the two brothers,

¹ Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 531.

and it is argued that the Evangelists would not have invented or reported the story unless it was known that the prophesy was fulfilled. The other is that in certain calendars the two brothers are commemorated on the same day as martyrs. But that John could be described as a martyr, for he had confessed Christ, is undoubted, and he is so described by Polycrates of Ephesus, who knows that he had died at Ephesus.

What strikes me as so strange is the credit which is given by modern critics to late and obviously inaccurate authorities when they say something that they like. What would the critics say if any orthodox writer were to quote eighth and ninth-century authorities when arguing in favour of the Virgin Birth or the early date of Episcopacy? Their scorn would be extreme. They would hold him up as incompetent to deal with critical questions.

Take the following statement of Professor Goguel, the French Protestant theologian. He writes quite dogmatically: 'It is impossible that this Apostle (John) should have composed the Fourth Gospel, because this book at the very earliest dates from the last decade of the first century, and cannot therefore be the work of John, the son of Zebedee, who died as a martyr in 44.'¹

Now some years later, perhaps in 48, St. Paul went up to Jerusalem and met John, whom he describes as one of the pillars of the Church. 'And when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship.'² It is difficult to see how under these circumstances he could have been martyred with his brother several years before. Some critics have sought to evade the difficulty by saying that the name John should be omitted as an interpolation. That is in accordance with critical methods. If authorities do not say what we want, the natural thing to do is to alter them. What I

¹ *The Life of Jesus*, by Maurice Goguel, translated by Olive Wyon, p. 151.

² Gal. ii. 9.

want to emphasize is that a critic of repute is prepared to ignore the evidence of St. Paul who was an eyewitness writing in an Epistle which is looked upon as one of the most certainly authentic books in the New Testament, in favour of an anonymous writer of the eighth century whose text bristles with inaccuracies.

Another way of getting over the difficulties about St. Paul is to say that the death of St. John came later. If we ask why there is no record of it, we are told: 'If the death of John, the son of Zebedee, fell within the subsequent period covered by Acts, lack of any allusion to it is simply another of the many gaps which are visible in Luke's narrative.'¹

Looking at the matter as a whole we must point out that the writings of Papias were well-known in the second and following centuries. Yet there is no one who records these words about the martyrdom of John. Irenaeus indeed tells us that Papias was a disciple of the Apostle John, but he, we are to understand, was either foolish or openly dishonest. Eusebius gives us most of the authentic information about him, but he, although ready, as we shall see, to recognize information at variance with current tradition, knows nothing about this story. No one else has been able to find it. Were all Christian writers so dense or so dishonest as to leave out all allusion to it? In the early Church there was great interest in the Apostle John, but no trustworthy reference to his martyrdom has been found, although Christian literature has been ransacked to find it. On the other hand there is a large amount of information inconsistent with it. Dr. Moffatt, with great industry, has collected everything which could possibly be used in support of the early death, of the martyrdom, but he has been singularly unsuccessful.² I am quite sure that if any one in secular historical studies had treated evidence in this way and had written as Dr. Moffatt does, he would have been looked upon as unfit for the work of an historical critic.

¹ Moffatt, *Introduction*, p. 603.

² Moffatt, *Introduction*, p. 602 et seq.

John the Presbyter

We now come to John the Presbyter,¹ another of the complicated problems with which we are presented. It is complicated because of the somewhat doubtful nature of the evidence, by which his existence is supported, and by the fact that he has been made to play more than one part. He was discovered or invented by Dionysius of Alexandria and Eusebius, in order to find an author for the Apocalypse which they felt unable, on the ground of style, to assign to the Apostle, but when difficulties began to be felt about the Apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel, the roles were reversed and John the Presbyter was made the author of the Gospel. The problem becomes still more confused when he is made to fill both parts, and we find Professor Harnack and others ascribing all the five works which Christian tradition ascribed to the Apostle John to John the Presbyter, suggesting that the argument from differences of style was not so sound as had been thought.

We must now try to examine the evidence.

In his account of Papias of Hierapolis, Eusebius tells us that, according to Irenaeus, Papias was a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp, but that he was mistaken because 'Papias himself, in the preface of his discourses, makes it plain that he was in no sense a hearer and eyewitness of the Holy Apostle but tells us, by the language he uses, that he had received the things pertaining to the faith from those who were their pupils.' He then quotes the following passage of Papias:

'But I will not scruple also to give a place for you along with my interpretations to everything that I learnt carefully and remembered carefully in times past from the elders, guaranteeing its truth. For unlike the many, I did not take pleasure in those who have so very much to say, but in them who teach the truth;

¹ On John the Presbyter, see Bernard, 'St. John,' I. xlv-iv. The evidence for the existence of John the Presbyter is criticized very fully by Dom Chapman, O.S.B., in *John the Presbyter and the Fourth Gospel*, Oxford, 1911.

nor in those who relate foreign commandments, but in those (who record) such as were given from the Lord to the Faith, and are derived from the Truth itself. And again, on any occasion when a person came (in my way) who had been a follower of the Elders, I would enquire about the discourses of the elders. What was said by Andrew, or by Peter or by Philip, or by Thomas or James, or by John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's disciples, and what Aristion and the Elder John, the disciples of the Lord, say. For I did not think that I could get so much profit from the contents of books as from the utterances of a living and abiding voice.¹

Eusebius then adds his comment:

'Here it is worth while noting that twice in his enumeration he mentions the name of John: the former of these Johns he puts in the same list with Peter and James and Matthew, and the other Apostles, clearly indicating the evangelist; but the latter he places with others in a separate clause, outside the number of the Apostles, placing Aristion before him: and he clearly calls him Elder, so that he hereby also proves their statement to be true who have said that two persons in *Asia* have borne the same name, and that there were two tombs at *Ephesus* each of which is still to this day said to be *John's*. And to these details one must needs pay attention, for it is likely that the second (if one is unwilling to admit that it was the first) saw the Revelation which is extant under the name of John. And Papias, of whom we are now speaking, acknowledges that he received the discourse of the Apostles from those who had been their followers, but says that he was himself an actual hearer of *Aristion and of John the Elder*. Certainly he mentions them by name frequently in his treatises and sets forth their tradition.'

He further adds that Philip the Apostle resided at Hierapolis with his daughters, that Papias had learnt a wonderful story from the daughters, and that 'he evidently was a man of exceed-

¹ Eus., *H.E.* iii. 19.

ingly small intelligence.' Also that he gave accounts of Aristion, and traditions of John the Elder.

It seems to me very doubtful whether Eusebius gives us either the necessary or the right interpretation of Papias' words. It turns on two points—the first is as to the interpretation of the words 'And again, on any occasion when a person came who had been a follower of the Elders, I would inquire about the discourses of the elders, what was said by Andrew,' etc. Now these words, whether in Greek or English, may quite well mean that the discourses of the Elders are identical with what Andrew, etc., said. In other words, Andrew, etc., are identified with the Elders. Or they may mean what the Elders said about what Andrew, etc., said. In this case a distinction is made between the Elders and the disciples of the Lord.

The second point is what is meant by the Greek word *πρεσβύτερος* which is here translated Elder. It is used in two senses particularly. It may be an ecclesiastical term. It was, in Apostolic times, the technical name for the officials of the local church who were also sometimes called *ἐπίσκοποι* (Bishops). In Irenaeus it is habitually used as a descriptive name for the Bishops. But the word is also used as a term of respect for those elderly men whose age and position gave them authority. In Irenaeus the word seems to have acquired almost a technical meaning. It is used for those who had met and were able to give some account of those disciples of the Lord who were the survivors of the first generation of his Church, such apparently as John and Philip. Now in this fragment of Papias these meanings are not clearly distinguished, for John the Elder is called a disciple of the Lord. He is mentioned here particularly as being one still alive, hence the present tense is used.

I do not think, therefore, that this in any way demonstrates the existence of John the Presbyter as distinct from John the Apostle, and we must, moreover, remember that there is no single mention of John the Presbyter, or of any other person than John

the Apostle, in any writer of the second century. There is only one John known and he is always described as the Apostle or disciple.

I think, that in these circumstances, this single obscure passage of Papias is a quite inadequate evidence for the existence of a John the Elder as distinct from John the Apostle, and I am quite sure that if Eusebius, who had the whole of Papias' book before him, had been able to discover any other evidence he would have given it. He had a much more complete knowledge of the literature of the second century than we can possibly have, and if he had found any reference to John the Elder, he would have given it. It is the usual custom for critics to describe their conclusions as certain. I am afraid that I cannot do that. We cannot arrive at any but probable conclusions. It seems to me, however, that there is not sufficient evidence for the existence of John the Presbyter, apart from John the Apostle.

I now turn to the speculations of Dionysius of Alexandria. He became Bishop of Alexandria in the year 247, and is the writer of many letters, of which Eusebius gives us large extracts. In one of these letters he discusses the Apocalypse with great ability, and comes to the conclusion that, although the author bore the name of John, he could not have been the same as the author of the Gospel and Epistle. He shows the remarkable resemblance in style and subject matter between the Gospel and Epistle, and then proceeds:

'But the Apocalypse is utterly different from and foreign to these writings; it has no connection, no affinity, in any way with them: it scarcely, so to speak, has even a syllable in common with them. Nay more, neither does the Epistle (not to speak of the Gospel) contain any mention or thought of the Apocalypse, nor the Apocalypse of the Epistle, whereas Paul in his Epistles gave us a little light also on his revelations, which he did not record separately. And further, by means of the style one can estimate the difference between the Gospel and Epistle and the Apocalypse. For the former are not only written in faultless

Greek, but also show the greatest literary skill in their diction, their reasonings and the constructions in which they are expressed. There is a complete absence of any barbarous word or solecism or any vulgarism whatever. For their author had, as it seems, both kinds of word, by the free gift of the Lord, the *word of knowledge* and the *word of style*. But I will not deny that the other writer had seen *revelations* and received *knowledge* and *prophesy*; nevertheless, I observe his language and his inaccurate Greek usage, employing as he does barbarous idioms and in some places committing downright solecisms. These there is no necessity to single out now. For I have not said these things in mockery (let no one think it), but merely to establish the dissimilarity of these writings.¹

For these and other reasons his conclusion is:

'I think there was a certain other (John) among those that were in Asia, since it is said both that there were two tombs at Ephesus and that each of the two was said to be John's.'

Dionysius' conclusion is based entirely on internal evidence, and he is not able to give any external support to it except the existence, as he alleges, of the two tombs at Ephesus. Of this we have no other information.

The authorship of the Apocalypse will have to be considered later. At present I should like to emphasize the evidence which this letter of Dionysius gives of the high standard of capacity in the theologians of the early Church. The Canon of Scripture and the history and literature of the Church do not come from an age of ignorance. The theologians of the early Church were as able a body of men as the critics and theologians of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

John the Apostle in Asia Minor

We now come to the third reason alleged for denying that John, the son of Zebedee, lived to a great age in Asia and was

¹ Eus., *H.E.* vii. 25.

the author of the Fourth Gospel. All the direct evidence for it depends, we are told, upon Irenaeus. But Irenaeus led astray the Christian Church; his evidence is intellectually and morally worthless; he was careless and confused and we cannot rely on his testimony. Canon Streeter, it appears, has come to the conclusion that Irenaeus, in common with modern orthodox writers, is unreliable in the presentation of evidence because he is so eager to find 'the short way with dissenters.'¹

Let us first state what was the clear belief of the Church from the second century onwards. It was that John, the son of Zebedee, who was the beloved disciple, had lived to an old age in the province of Asia; that there he had been a great spiritual leader, that he had organized the Church, and established what, for the sake of distinctiveness, we call monarchical episcopacy; that he was the author of the Fourth Gospel, and of the Epistles which are ascribed to him; and that, owing to his great age and the reverence which was felt for him, he was spoken of as the 'Elder.' Shall we translate it as 'The Grand Old Man'? It is the evidence for this that we have now to investigate, and we will begin with that of Irenaeus, clearly in many ways the most important.

Irenaeus

We will take first the letter to Florinus (*c.* 190) given us by Eusebius.²

'These opinions, Florinus, to say no more, are not of sound judgement; these opinions are not in harmony with the Church, involving those who adopt them in the greatest impiety; these opinions not even heretics outside the Church ever dared to espouse openly; these opinions the elders before us, who also

¹ *The Primitive Church*, by Burnett Hillman Streeter, p. 96: 'Irenaeus is not the only person who seeing in some statement "a short way with dissenters" has inclined to view the evidence for it with a perhaps too partial eye.'

² Irenaeus, *ap. Eus., H.E. v. 20.*

were disciples of the apostles, did not hand down to thee. For when I was still a boy I saw thee in Lower Asia in the company of Polycarp, faring brilliantly in the imperial court, and endeavouring to secure his favour. For I distinctly recall the events of that time better than those of recent years (for what we learn in childhood keeps pace with the growing mind and becomes part of it). So that I can tell the very place where the blessed Polycarp used to sit as he discoursed, his goings out and his comings in, the character of his life, his bodily appearance, the discourses he would address to the multitude, how he would tell of his intercourse with John and with the others who had seen the Lord, how he would relate from memory their words; and what the things were which we had heard from them concerning the Lord, his mighty works and his teaching. Polycarp, as having received them from the *eyewitnesses of the life of the word*, would declare altogether in accordance with the Scriptures. To these things I used to listen diligently even then, by the mercy of God which was upon me, noting them down not on paper but in my heart. And by the grace of God I constantly ruminates upon them faithfully; and I can testify before God that if that blessed and apostolic elder had heard the like, he would have cried aloud and stopped his ears and said, as was his wont: "Good God, for what sort of times hast thou kept me, that I should endure these things?" and he would have fled the very place where, sitting or standing, he had heard such words. And this can be shown from his letters, too, which he wrote, whether to the neighbouring churches, confirming them, or to some of the brethren, admonishing and exhorting them.'

To this we can add the following extracts from Irenaeus' work against heresies:

'But Polycarp also was not only instructed by Apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by Apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the church in Smyrna. . . . There are also those who heard from him that John, the disciple

of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, "Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus the enemy of the truth is within" . . .¹

"Then again, the Church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the times of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the Apostles."²

'For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe what he always had observed with John the disciple of our Lord and the other Apostles with whom he consorted.'³

He also distinctly calls him the disciple who leaned upon the Lord's breast.

'Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon his breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus.'⁴

As has often been pointed out, this evidence is very strong.⁵

¹ Irenaeus, *Heresies*, iii. 3, 4.

² Irenaeus, *Heresies*, iii. 3, 4; ap. Eus. *H.E.* iii. 23-4. Cf. Irenaeus ii. xxxiii. 3, ap. Eus. *H.E.* iii. 23, 3.

³ Irenaeus, *Letter to Victor*, ap. Eus. *H.E.* v. 24, 10.

⁴ Irenaeus, *Heresies*, iii. 1, 2.

⁵ But note how Canon Streeter deals with the evidence of Irenaeus. 'Clearly, Irenaeus is making the most of his connection with Polycarp. Hence, in the absence of any express statement to that effect, we are not entitled to infer that he was in any sense a personal pupil of Polycarp. Nor is there any reason to suppose that Irenaeus was born, or long resident, in Asia; his language would be justified if he had been at Smyrna on a visit for only a few months. Since Papias calls John the Elder a "disciple of the Lord" it is probable that Polycarp used the same phrase. We ask, then, would it ever occur to a lad, perhaps lately come to Smyrna, that this aged Bishop—a boy's chronology is of the vaguest and every grey-beard is a Methuselah—meant any one but the Apostle? If in boyhood Irenaeus had taken it for granted that the John whom Polycarp had spoken of was the Apostle, he had the strongest temptation to continue to believe it. Thus his evidence is not that of an impartial, nor it would appear, of an exceptionally well-informed witness. Only by a confusion in his mind between two such Johns could so gross a misunderstanding of Polycarp be explained.' See Streeter, *The Four Gospels. A Study of Origins*. Most of this is pure conjecture. If such arguments are accepted the strongest and most direct evidence can be explained away.—(The Edts.)

Irenaeus is quite definite that it was John the Apostle who lived in Ephesus, that it was he who had leaned on Jesus' breast and that he wrote the Gospel. He gives this on the authority of Polycarp, and appeals to Florinus as the basis of their common experience. It is not likely that he would have done so unless he had been fairly certain that he was correct. He also tells us that Polycarp was Bishop of Smyrna, and had been appointed to that office by Apostles.

The argument against this identity is that Irenaeus confused John the Presbyter with John the Apostle, just in the same way as Polycrates, for example, confused Philip the Apostle with Philip the Deacon. As I will show later, it is very doubtful whether Polycrates was mistaken, and in any case the fact that some one else made a similar mistake is not a very good argument against the authority of Irenaeus.

Tertullian

I pass next to Tertullian. He is an independent authority to the existence of the tradition, and there is no evidence that he derived it only from Irenaeus.

He tells us that the succession of bishops in Asia goes back to John.

'Let them (the heretics) produce the original records of their churches; let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning in such a manner that their first bishop shall be able to show for his ordainer and predecessor some one of the Apostles or of Apostolic men, a man, moreover, who continued steadfast with the Apostles. For this is the manner in which the Apostolic churches transmit their registers, as the Church of Smyrna, which records that Polycarp was placed therein by John.'¹

And again: 'We have also John's foster churches. For although Marcion rejects his Apocalypse, the order of the

¹ Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum* xxxii.

bishops, when traced up to their origin, will yet rest in John as their author.¹

We are told also that he was the author of the Gospel, and in this connection special emphasis is laid on the fact that he is an Apostle.

'We lay it down as our first position that the evangelical Testament has Apostles for its authors. . . . Of the Apostles, therefore, John and Matthew first instil faith into us; whilst of Apostolic men, Luke and Mark renew it afterwards.'²

These extracts, each of them supporting separate points, show us that Tertullian accepted the complete picture of the activities of John in Asia; and looked on him as an Apostle.

Polycrates of Ephesus

We next come to Polycrates of Ephesus. This is what Eusebius tells us about him:

'But as for John, while we have already stated, after a fashion, the time of his death, we must go to the Epistle of Polycrates (who was bishop of the community at Ephesus) to show us the place where his tabernacle lies. In writing this Epistle to Victor, Bishop of the Romans (c. 195), he mentions John, and together with him Philip the Apostle and his daughters, somewhat as follows:

'For indeed in Asia great luminaries have fallen asleep, such as shall rise again at the last day, the day of the Lord's appearing, when he comes with glory from heaven to seek out all his saints; to wit, Philip, one of the twelve Apostles, who has fallen asleep in Hierapolis (as have) also his two daughters, who grow old in virginity, and his other daughter who lived in the Holy Spirit, and rests at Ephesus, and moreover there is John too, who leant back on the Lord's breast, who was a priest wearing the sacerdotal plate, both martyr and teacher. He has fallen asleep at Ephesus.'³

¹ Tertullian, *Adv. Marcionem*, iv. 5.

² *ibid.* iv. 2.

³ Ap. Eus., *H.E.* iii. 31. 2; cf. v. 34. 2, 3.

Here Polycrates is supposed to have made two confusions. He has confused Philip the Deacon with Philip the Apostle, and John the Elder with John the Apostle. The first seems to me very doubtful—Eusebius, with Papias before him, definitely calls this Philip 'the Apostle.' His testimony is corroborated by the fact that Philip the Apostle is specially mentioned in the Fourth Gospel. This probably arose from the fact that he was one of the group to which the author of the Gospel belonged.

The difficulty is that apparently both Philips had several daughters. That is quite possible. Those of the deacon and evangelist are said to have been prophetesses in the Acts of the Apostles. This description is not given to the daughters of the Apostle until the time of the Montanists, who wished to show a succession of prophetesses.

The other confusion is that of the two Johns. There is no doubt that Polycrates thought that the John of whom he wrote was the Apostle, who had leant on Jesus' breast. He describes him as a teacher, as a martyr—a title never given to John the Presbyter, and as 'a priest who wore the sacerdotal plate.' This last description is very enigmatic, and the commentators do not seem to help us. It is pointed out that the same description is given by Epiphanius on the authority of Hegesippus to James the Just. It may mean, in the case of John, either that he was of priestly family, which is quite possible, and explains how he was known to the High Priest, or, as I have suggested before, that there was a stage in the organization of the Church when the body of the Apostles and Elders formed a sort of Christian Sanhedrin, and James was by inheritance a Christian High Priest.¹

The testimony of Polycrates is, I think, quite independent of that of Irenaeus. He had an independent tradition in Ephesus

¹ On this see Bernard, 'St. John,' ii. 594

of which he was bishop, and he believed that John was the Apostle of that name.

Clement of Alexandria

Clement (c. 190–200) wrote a short work entitled 'Who is the rich man that is saved,' in which he tells us the story of St. John and the robber, which Eusebius quotes. This represents the activity of St. John in Asia.

'Here a tale, that is no mere tale, but a true account of John the Apostle, which has been handed down and preserved in memory. For when on the death of the tyrant he removed from the island of Patmos to Ephesus, he used to go off when requested to the neighbouring districts of the Gentiles also, to appoint bishops in some places, to organize whole churches in others, in others again to appoint to an order some one of those indicated by the Spirit.'¹

This again seems a quite independent tradition, and Clement has no doubt that it refers to the Apostle John. It is suggested by Professor Schmiedel that the story came from the apocryphal Acts of John. This seems to me exceedingly improbable. The story, which might well be a true one, is quite different to those in the Acts, which are of the usual apocryphal type, and it is most unlikely that an heretical work would describe the organization of the Catholic Church as due to St. John. Clement in his early life had lived in the neighbourhood of Asia, and had probably there learnt the story and the traditions.

To this we can add the following statement by Eusebius of Clement's opinion on the Gospels as expressed in the *Hypotyposes*.²

'But that John, last of all, conscious that the outward facts had been set forth in the Gospels, was urged on by his disciples and, divinely moved by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel.'

¹ Clement of Alexandria, ap. Eus. iii. 23. 6.

² Ibid., *Hypotyposes*, ap. Eus., *H.E.* vi. 14. 9.

*The Muratorian Fragment on the Canon*¹

An important witness is the Muratorian Fragment on the Canon which cannot be much later than A.D. 170. Its statement about the Fourth Gospel is as follows:

“The Fourth of the Gospel was written by John, one of the disciples. When exhorted by his fellow disciples and bishops (*Cohortantibus condiscipulis et episcopis suis*) he said, “Fast with me this day for three days; and what may be revealed to any of us, let us relate it to one another.” The same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the Apostles, that John was to write all things in his own name, and they were all to certify.’

About the Epistle, it is added: ‘What marvel therefore if John so firmly sets forth each statement in his Epistle, too, saying of himself, “What we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears and our hands have handled, these things we have written to you.” For so he declares himself not an eyewitness and a hearer only, but a writer of all the marvels of our Lord in order.’

This seems to describe to us what has been called a Johannine circle in Asia, consisting of some of the original disciples, John, Philip, Andrew (the latter two specially mentioned in the Gospel), with the bishops whom we learn from other sources he had appointed, and that they certified it. This exactly coincides with the character of the Gospel.

On this Dr. Moffatt comments: “The Muratorian Canon which already indicates the canonicity of the Johannine writings by means of the Apostolic authorship, had also reflected indirectly the Papias tradition by assuming that the Fourth Gospel was composed while the Apostles were still together (i.e., before A.D. 70), and by asserting that in writing to seven churches Paul was simply “*Sequens prodecessoris sui Johannis ordinem . . .*”²

¹ On the *Muratorian Fragment* see Westcott, *Canon of the New Testament*, pp. 211 f.; Gwatkin, *Selections from Early Christian Writers*, pp. 76 f.

² This does not mean that St. Paul wrote at a later date than St. John, but that he followed the same order as one who had been an Apostle before him.

'The original setting of the story was probably in Nero's reign (cf. Jerome, *adv. Jovin.* 1.26 reporting Tertullian) afterwards, when he was identified with John the Seer and witness of the Apocalypse, the Domitianic period of the latter led to the subsequent transference of the tale from Nero to Domitian.'¹

I do not know whether Dr. Moffatt wishes us to take this theory seriously and believe that the Gospel was written in the reign of Nero. It is probable that he means the conjecture to be of value only as destroying the story of St. John in Asia. But it must be noticed that there is one great objection to this date, the mention of bishops. The idea that there should be bishops in the reign of Nero is of course horrible. However, this is easily got over, for it is proposed to look on the word *episcopacy* as interpolated. It is one of the characteristics of the critics that if any passage conflicts with their theories they cut it out as an interpolation or alter it.

The Apocryphal Acts of John

The only other authority I think it necessary to mention is the apocryphal Acts of John.² The date is usually now put as about A.D. 170. (It used to be earlier, and the work clearly comes from Gnostic sources.) The stories are the usual style of apocryphal writings and have no claim to be historical. The importance for us is that they throughout tell us of the activity of John the Apostle in Asia Minor. As Canon Streeter has suggested that the story of St. John in Asia had been consciously or unconsciously invented by Irenaeus as 'a short way of dealing with dissenters,' it is necessary to point out that these 'dissenters' accepted the truth of the tradition.

We have now surveyed, I hope sufficiently, the external evidence for the Fourth Gospel, and it is necessary to try and

¹ Moffatt, *Introduction*, p. 607.

² These may be read by English readers in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, translated by M. R. James.

arrive at some conclusion. I would once more emphasize that in this, as in other historical problems, we cannot expect demonstrative proof. The evidence is scanty and sometimes contradictory, and there is nothing to justify us in saying that our conclusions are certain. I notice that generally when a writer on these matters says that his conclusion is certain I disagree with him. I hope therefore that I may be warned by these examples. Let us summarize, then, what seem on the balance of arguments and evidence to be the most probable.

1. There are quotations from the Gospel in writers of the second century continuously from Ignatius of Antioch and the Presbyters. These second-century writers are quoted by Irenaeus and his successors. Moreover, soon after the middle of the second century the Gospel was recognized as one of Four Canonical Gospels, it is very difficult therefore to believe that it was written at any later date than the end of the first century.

2. If we examine the writers of the second century who have written about the Gospel, we find that they all alike ascribe it to John the Apostle, that they represent him as living to an old age in Ephesus, and that they know nothing of any second John, styled John the Presbyter.

3. The story that John the Apostle died as a martyr in Palestine is contained only in two documents of the eighth and ninth centuries. As the contrary opinion is held by all writers of the second century, it is more probable that that opinion is the true one, and that the story of the early death of John is the result of some confusion.

4. The existence of John the Presbyter, as opposed to John the Apostle, is based only on the very doubtful interpretation of a single passage in the writings of Papias; there is no corroboration of any sort, and since many writers in the second and following centuries had Papias before them and none of them appear to have known of this John the Presbyter, we may reasonably doubt his existence.

So far as external evidence goes it is most probable that the Fourth Gospel was written by John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee, in the province of Asia towards the end of the first century after Christ.

The internal evidence told us that the Gospel claimed to have been written by a disciple of Jesus, called the beloved disciple, and that the disciple who seemed most clearly to fulfil all the conditions necessary was John, the son of Zebedee.

I therefore conclude that the balance of probability is that the author of the Fourth Gospel was, as the Christian Church has always held, John, the son of Zebedee.

THE TEACHING OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

THE main importance of the Fourth Gospel is in the teaching that it gives us. It was obviously written for this purpose and this has been its gift to the Christian Church. It is natural and necessary therefore to ask how far it can be considered authentic; how far does it give us the teaching of Jesus himself?

The answer must depend in part at least upon what is held about the authorship of the Gospel, and for that reason I have postponed treating it until after I had come to a decision on that question. I accept, then, what the Gospel states about itself, that it was written by one who could be described as the disciple whom Jesus loved, that is to say, that he was one of those who were most intimate with him and had been in a particular way his companion, and was present at all the most intimate scenes of his life. Tradition has always identified him with the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, and that is the most probable theory and most in accordance with the evidence. He lived to a great age and filled an important position in the Christian world of Asia. He died at Ephesus towards the end of the century. Probably he did not write earlier than A.D. 80, and it may have been later.

On one point there is some uncertainty in the tradition, and room for diversity of opinion. How far was the actual composition the work of the Apostle? There is evidence that he dictated it. That we may accept. The custom of dictation was common in the first century, among all classes and in all countries, for the habit of employing the professional scribe still prevailed. We know, too, that many other books of the

New Testament were dictated. More doubtful is the extent to which the scribe might be responsible for the actual composition. I do not think that the question is of great importance, for in any case the subject matter came from the Apostles; but the style, both of the Gospel and of the Epistle, is so distinctive, and to a certain extent peculiar, that I believe the composition of the work also to be mainly due to the Apostle. We are told that he wrote at the request of his fellow disciples and bishops and that they certified the work. There may be a certain number of glosses, therefore, added to it, but the unity of style is sufficiently marked to make me believe that the Apostle himself was responsible for the composition.

Accepting this as the hypothesis on which we are working, what does it imply? The Crucifixion took place in A.D. 33, and the Gospel was probably written not earlier than A.D. 80, that is some fifty years later; how far would the writer be able to produce, with any degree of accuracy, the teaching that he had heard from Jesus? Would he have any written records, or would he depend entirely on his memory? It must be remembered that through all those fifty years he would be preaching and teaching, and that part, probably a considerable part, of his teaching would be telling stories about Jesus and telling Christian people what he had said. All this would become stereotyped and impressed upon his memory. It would vary a little, but not much. We are dealing with Jews who were a people trained to remember. The chief duty of the teachers in the Rabbinical schools was to hand on the traditions of celebrated Rabbis, and probably the teaching of the synagogue schools also was mainly a training of the memory.

We must ask, what was the purpose of the author? I think that it was to interpret the teaching of Jesus in such a way that it might be comprehensible and that it might appeal to the thoughtful minds of the day. With that purpose he expressed his belief in Christ by identifying him with the Word or *Logos*. This was

a stroke of genius, or to put it in a different way, a sign of inspiration. The 'Word,' the '*Logos*,' was the most characteristic expression used by the philosophy of the first three centuries to express the theory of the universe. It had a threefold history. It was an expression used in Jewish biblical theology; it had a long history in Greek philosophy, going back to Heraclitus of Ephesus six hundred years before—it is an interesting fact that the two most important uses of the term should belong to the same city; it had also been used by Philo, the Alexandrian Jew, to put a philosophic Judaism before the Greek world. It became, in the second century, the basis of Christian Apology. Its authoritative position in the Fourth Gospel was an immense strength to Christian teaching, for it brought Christian doctrine in touch with the philosophic thought of the day. It prevailed until Athanasius brought back Christian theology in the fourth century to the doctrine of the 'Son of God.'

We notice, however, and for our purpose it is of the greatest importance, that while it occupies its proper place in the Prologue to the Gospel, the philosophic language of the Prologue is kept distinct from the teaching ascribed to Jesus. As the author might have put it, 'If you are to understand about Jesus you must look upon him (to use the language of your philosophers) as the Word of God. In him the Word about which you tell us so much became incarnate.'

It is the neglect to notice the fact that the *Logos* teaching is confined to the Prologue that has led some commentators to suppose that the Gospel is throughout Hellenistic in character. Dr. Inge, I think, somewhere tells us that it is a guide to a Greek mystery religion. Dr. Moffatt says:

'Apart from the O.T. the main currents which flow through the Gospel are those of (a) Paulinism; (b) the Jewish Alexandrian Philosophy; and (c) Stoicism.'¹

This I believe to be mistaken. Although there may be traces

¹ Moffatt, *Introduction*, p. 522.

of the influence of St. Paul, the theology of the Fourth Gospel is on different lines. There are two different aspects from which the Christian religion may be looked at. The one is the Atonement, the other the Incarnation. St. Paul looks at it primarily from the point of view of Atonement, the Fourth Gospel from first to last lays emphasis on the Incarnation. As regards Philo, it is true, as Dr. Bernard¹ points out, that there are passages in the Fourth Gospel that can be illustrated from Philo, but there is no evidence of literary connection, and if I read a tract of Philo and then turn to the Gospel, the whole tone and character seems to me different. As regards Stoicism, the resemblances given are slight or imaginary. The influence of Stoicism did not come in until Justin Martyr spoke of the *λόγος σπέρματικός*, 'The Word whose seeds are planted in man.'

The Fourth Gospel is, as I believe, the work of a Palestinian and not a Hellenistic Jew, and its sources are the Old Testament, and the Teaching of Jesus, which St. John had meditated on and expounded for fifty years. Although the term *Logos* has other relations, it came to St. John from its use in Jewish theology, and not from Hellenism.

We have to ask, then, what is the relation of the teaching of Christ as narrated in this Gospel to that of the Synoptic Gospels? That teaching is expressed in the language natural to the Palestine of Jesus' life. It made use of many expressions such as 'the Kingdom of Heaven,' 'the Son of Man,' which would not have much meaning to the Greeks of Asia. It needed interpretation. Moreover, a great part of the teaching of the Synoptic Gospels was public teaching. We have, however, clear instances of private teaching to the disciples as, for example, in the confession of Peter, or in the story of the request of the sons of Zebedee. On both these occasions we find Jesus speaking more openly. We have to remember always that there was a good deal of reticence in his public utterances. He did not say directly

¹ Bernard, 'St. John,' i. 93.

that he was the Christ, but he taught in such a way that men would ultimately find the truth.

The teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels has certain marked characteristics of style. There is the parable, there is the striking epigrammatic expression, there is the paradox, there is the habit of answering a question by asking another. Then again, there is the constant relation of the teaching to the ideas and thought of the time. I do not doubt that in these Gospels the teaching for the most part agrees verbally with our Lord's own words. It was, I believe, for the most part written down very early, perhaps even in his own lifetime.

Now, the teaching of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel is for the most part in the words and style of the Evangelist. Although there are allegorical expressions, there are no parables. This was natural, if the purpose of the Gospel was to explain the teaching of Jesus. In order that that might be done the teaching must be translated from the language of Palestine at the beginning of the century into the language of Asia at the end. We may accept, then, the general position that the teaching of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel is an interpretation, a translation, an explanation in the language of a later generation. It was also, as we know, the custom of ancient historians to put into the mouth of the actors explanations of their words and deeds. Livy and Josephus, for instance, often explain the actions of the characters they are describing by means of speeches which are clearly written by the authors themselves. The Evangelist, if he did so, would be acting in accordance with the recognized custom of the times.

The question then remains: does the Fourth Gospel give us the substance of Jesus' teaching? We will examine its fundamental doctrine of the unity of the Father and Son.

Here is what the Fourth Gospel says:

'But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh even until now and I work. For this cause therefore the Jews sought the

more to kill him, because he not only brake the sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God.¹

‘My Father, which has given them unto me, is greater than all: and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hands. I and the Father are one.’²

‘Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me.’³

Now, the Synoptic Gospels tell us clearly that Jesus called himself the Son of Man. He is called definitely the Son of God and he speaks of himself as being in a special relationship with the Father.

To take an instance. The following appears in the common matter of Matthew and Luke.

‘At that season Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight. All things have been delivered unto me of my Father, and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father: neither doth any one know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him.’⁴

But a similar teaching is implied in other passages. Jesus, we are told, said, ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.’⁵

Professor Schmiedel, who in matters of interpretation is often oddly obtuse, selects these words as among the most certainly authentic words of Jesus, for the Church (he says) would not admit his ignorance. He does not seem to see that in these very

¹ St. John v. 17. ² St. John x. 29, 30. ³ St. John xiv. 10, 11.

⁴ St. Matt. xi. 25-27.

⁵ St. Mark xiii. 31, 32.

words a great claim is made. They assume the special relationship of the Father and Son which might lead one to expect that the Son would have this knowledge. Our Lord's prayer in the garden of Gethsemane represents just the same personal relation with the Father. Let us take another instance, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone, but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.'¹ In St. Mark's Gospel we have the same saying in a different context: 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospels shall save it. For what doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what should a man give in exchange for his soul?'² I do not think any higher claims are made by our Lord in the Fourth Gospel than are implied by what he has said elsewhere. But they are more clearly stated.

It has been said that the style of teaching in the Fourth Gospel is that of the Evangelist, but there are many words and short sayings which seem to present Jesus' own teaching. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit.'³ Or consider the following: 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life.'⁴

Now we feel that this is how Jesus might teach, but when we pass on to the explanation which the Evangelist gives, we find a different atmosphere. 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life,' and so on.⁵

¹ St. John xii. 24, 25.

² St. Mark viii. 34-37.

³ St. John iii. 8.

⁴ St. John iii. 14, 15.

⁵ St. John iii. 16.

Take another instance: 'He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.'¹ We feel that this is what John the Baptist might say, but hardly when it goes on: 'He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is of the earth, and of the earth he speaketh,' and so on.²

These instances may suggest to us that the Evangelist passes easily from the words that he remembers to his own explanation. We shall, however, often find it difficult to know where the reminiscence ends and the explanation begins, and all the explanations are given us as the words of Jesus.

There is one series of phrases which are put into the mouth of Jesus which are of particular interest:

'I am the bread of life.'

'I am the Light of the World.'

'I am the door.'

'I am the good shepherd.'

'I am the Resurrection and the Life.'

'I am the true vine.'

'I am the way, the truth, and the life.'

If we are to be guided by the records in the other Gospels, these are not the words of Jesus. He is never represented as making such definite assertions about himself, but we shall find that they are always based on his teaching. They state explicitly, what is implicit in words and parables as quoted in other Gospels.

Jesus said: 'Follow me' which is interpreted, 'I am the Way.'

Jesus said: 'Enter ye in at the strait gate'; 'I am the door.'

Jesus said: 'I have compassion on the multitude as sheep without a shepherd'; 'I am the good Shepherd.'

Jesus said: 'Ye shall receive in the world to come eternal life'; 'I am the Resurrection and the Life.'

¹ St. John iii. 29, 30.

² St. John iii. 31.

I think that there is always to be found something in the Synoptic Gospels which justifies the teaching of the Fourth Gospel. In the Synoptic Gospels it is only implied, but in the Fourth Gospel it is put forward clearly so that no one can miss it.

The 'beloved disciple' reports to the world the teaching of Jesus, but he does it in his own words, and as the result of his own meditations on the words of Jesus.

There are some particular questions to which we would like an answer, but we shall find it difficult to obtain one. How far is the conversation with the Samaritan woman a report of an actual conversation? Or how far must we look on this and other dialogues in the same way as we look on the dialogues of Plato? The conversation is life-like. It may well go back to an actual incident, but that is all that we can say.

Then again, there are the dialogues at Jerusalem. They also are life-like. Moreover, we are told that they show a knowledge of the thought and methods of the Rabbis. I think probably there would be a nucleus of an actual conversation, but that they represent the Evangelist's own way of explaining the teaching. Take an instance from chapter v. First we are told the story of the healing of the sick man at the pool of Bethesda. This is made the occasion for the teaching.¹ Then we have a short discussion.² Afterwards there follows a long passage in which Jesus elaborates his theme. It seems likely that this discourse comes from the Evangelist but that it is based on what Jesus definitely taught. When the Baptist inquired of him he appealed to his works. Or again, when accused of casting out devils through Beelzebub, Jesus said, 'If I by the finger of God cast out devils, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you.'³ On each occasion the lesson is elaborated by the Evangelist.

I would sum up my conclusions as follows:

(1) The teaching is given in the words of the Evangelist, but contains many reminiscences, even verbal, of the teaching of Jesus.

¹ St. John v. 1-9.

² St. John v. 10-18.

³ St. Luke xi. 20.

(2) While it is often much elaborated, it harmonizes with the teaching of the other Gospels. The Jesus of all the Gospels is the Son of God.

(3) While we are often not able to separate the words of Jesus from the explanations of the Evangelist, we know the Gospel comes from one who had been the intimate companion of Jesus, whose whole mind had been illuminated by his teaching, and by a knowledge of his action and person, who had listened to his public teaching, and heard his private talks, who, inspired by the Spirit, had meditated on all that he had heard and so was able to say:

‘That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, and which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness, and declare unto you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us; yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ; and these things we write that your joy may be fulfilled.’

CONCLUSION

THERE are in the New Testament five books that have usually, in tradition, been ascribed to the Apostle John: the Fourth Gospel, the Three Epistles, and the Apocalypse. Criticism has raged round them, and if we were to listen to everything the critics tell us we should want at least five Johns in Asia, besides all the many people whose contributions went to making up the Fourth Gospel.

It used to be looked on (as I have said) almost as axiomatic that the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle were by the same author. Now Professor Dodd, in a contribution that he made to the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, and in his recently published edition of the Johannine Epistles¹ denies the identity, basing his denial on an elaborate analysis of the style of the two works. I have not gone over the ground myself, so I do not care to speak too dogmatically, but I am inclined to doubt his conclusion. In the first place the resemblance of the two works is remarkable. This Professor Dodd fully realizes, and it will be sufficient for the present to quote his words:

‘Not only the ideas of the two writers, but also their ways of expressing them, are similar. It would be easy to compile a list of fifty or more phrases in the Epistle which have close parallels in the Gospel. The reader, however, can best form an impression of the extent of the similarity, if he goes through the text of the Epistle (perhaps with the help of a concordance or a good reference Bible), and underlines all those expressions which echo the language of the Gospel more or less exactly. A glance at the result will show how few and short are those passages of the Epistle which are free from such echoes.’

¹ See *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 21, No. 1, April 1937; *The First Epistle of John and the Fourth Gospel* (Manchester University Press) and *The Johannine Epistles*, both by Professor Dodd.

Then secondly: I am quite certain that if I wrote a Gospel the style would be quite different from that of my letters. Professor Dodd forgets that there are reminiscences of the words and teaching of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. It certainly does not merely express the thought of the author only. It would naturally be more Aramaic in character, might in places bear marks of translation and would use the Old Testament more. He should remember, too, that his skilful analysis has shown differences in the style of all three Epistles, yet, on the whole, he is inclined to ascribe them to the same author. I cannot really believe that there could be two persons so alike in their thoughts and manner of writing. I am still therefore inclined to believe that the author of the Fourth Gospel is also the writer of the First Epistle.

I have really little doubt either that the same person wrote the two smaller letters. The resemblances are far greater than the differences. The doubt held about them in the Early Church arose from the fact that they were so seldom quoted. But this is natural enough owing to their small size, and the comparative paucity of early Christian literature. The fact is most important because it is a sign of the care shown by the Church in its construction of the Canon of the New Testament. I have already pointed out how careful and critical were the Fathers, and the result was a Canon which probably contains no mistake but the admission of the Second Epistle of Peter.

As regards the Apocalypse, I am in difficulties and I am unable to come to any conclusion. The evidence about it seems to me inconsistent. Clearly its style and contents are very unlike those of the Fourth Gospel, and so to solve some of our problems we are introduced to two Johns, John the Apostle and John the Presbyter. But the writer of the Apocalypse calls himself John, without any mark of distinction, as if there was no other John. Nor do I think it likely that there should be two persons of the name of John in Asia who could hold the authoritative position

implied in the letters to the Seven Churches, and the Johannine Epistles.

Then I am entirely dissatisfied on the question of the date. External evidence tells us that John was banished to Patmos by Domitian; but neither in the reigns of the Flavian Emperors nor in that of Domitian can I find any evidence of persecutions to justify the language of the Apocalypse. It is to me inspired throughout by the horrors of Nero's reign, and suits in every way the earlier date. I must say, frankly, that very little I am now told about the Apocalypse satisfies me.

We have already considered the Gospel. I am glad to hear from Professor Dodd that it is fashionable at present in critical circles to accept the unity of the work, and to reject either partition theories or the presence of large interpolations. A work of genius is not created in that way.

For the rest I have tried to show that it is most probable on the ground, both of external and internal evidence, that the author was John, the beloved Apostle, the son of Zebedee, and that all the characteristics of the teaching are best explained by supposing that it comes from one whose mind had been formed by the teaching of Jesus, and who has told us what he had learnt of the personality of his master.

One thing more I would say in conclusion. The Christian Church teaches that Jesus Christ, who lived in Palestine in the first century and founded the Christian Church, was the incarnate Son of God. It is a stupendous fact. It is natural that many thoughtful people should wonder if it is true. But if it is true it must be realized that our difficulties vanish. We need have no difficulty in accepting the divine as well as human character of his life, and it is witnessed to by all our authorities. It also witnesses to them. There may be many minor difficulties, as there always will be in constructing our history from original authorities, but the great difficulty which has been at the root of all the critical troubles passes away.

THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF ST. MARK'S GOSPEL

Is St. Mark's Gospel good history? When writing the Life of our Lord I did so on that supposition. I learnt from Professor Burkitt¹ and others, and my own investigations justified the belief, that the Gospel was based on the teaching of St. Peter (with a certain amount of information from other sources), that it contained a short but correct account of the public life of our Lord, and that it was possible on the basis of it to construct an intelligent account of his ministry. Now I am told that St. Mark's Gospel is not really history, but interpretation, that it is of more value in showing what were the ideas of the early Church than the teaching and work of Christ, and that the early Christians took no interest in the life of Jesus but only in its theological significance.

The Bishop of Derby,² who published his commentary in 1925, tells us that this is a Gospel, not a history or biography. 'The Marcan hypothesis has indeed in recent years been riddled with criticism of the most damaging kind.'³ The most fundamental difficulty of all, however, with regard to the Marcan hypothesis 'is just the intrinsic improbability of anything like a chronological outline of our Lord's ministry, or an itinerary of his movements having been preserved through a whole generation of oral tradition, by a Church which was not primarily interested in such matters.'⁴ However, the Bishop of Derby admits elsewhere a good deal that modifies his criticism. St. Mark is known to have had access to first-hand traditions; 'his

¹ See especially *The Gospel History and Its Transmission*, by F. Crawford Burkitt, M.A., F.B.A., 1906.

² *St. Mark*, with introduction, commentary and additional notes, by A. E. J. Rawlinson, B.D. (now Bishop of Derby), 1925.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. xx.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xx.

narrative is from first to last authentically Christian in tone and spirit'; 'the episodes for all the confessedly Roman origin of the book, and the fact that it seems to have been meant for the use of the Christians of Rome, reflect, nevertheless, with quite singular fidelity the atmosphere and setting, the social and religious institutions of first-century Palestine: and the stories are told with such astonishing vividness, with such an incomparable directness, simplicity and force, that to not a few readers the impression has been suggested that they were not listening to the words of St. Mark, but were hearing the story of an actual eyewitness—St. Peter himself.'¹

We cannot help remarking in passing that if all this be true, and if, as the Bishop of Derby thinks, the Gospel was written in Rome where St. Peter and St. Mark were together, and if, as an early tradition tells us, St. Mark's Gospel was based on the preaching of St. Peter, it is not unreasonable to believe that that tradition is true, and that the Gospel is good history.

We will, however, not follow Dr. Rawlinson further, but will turn to Professor Lightfoot, who, in his Bampton Lectures,² with such support as *Formgeschichte* can give, makes a vigorous attack on St. Mark as an historian.

In his first lecture he rebukes us for not showing proper respect for German theologians. I am afraid that the rebuke does not make me feel guilty. For the last sixty years I have listened to the same complaints. I remember how Mrs. Humphrey Ward got up some second-hand knowledge of the writings of the Tübingen School, and produced *Robert Elsmere* to show up the ignorance of the Anglican clergy. But now the Tübingen theories are a back number, and most of their critical conclusions have been disproved. *Supernatural Religion* was written to show up our ignorance of true criticism, but I do not think

¹ *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

² *History and Interpretation in the Gospels*, by Robert Henry Lightfoot, Fellow of New College, Dean Ireland's Professor of Exegesis in the University of Oxford. The Bampton Lecture, 1934.

that any one thinks much of it now. Then there was the Liberal Christ who was an ethical teacher, and the Apocalyptic Christ who only taught an 'interim ethic.' The advocates of each theory attained their end by eliminating from the Gospel record everything inconsistent with their particular point of view. I came across an ardent apocalypticist who thought that the Sermon on the Mount was not part of our Lord's teaching, but was due to the influence of St. Paul.

Now Professor Lightfoot tells us that we are behind the times because we do not take as our guides Wrede and Wellhausen. I am afraid that I am inclined to agree with Dr. Sanday's criticism on Wrede, as 'not only very wrong, but distinctly wrong-headed.' I think that the same is true of Wellhausen, whom Dr. Sanday also criticized. We used to be told to listen to Professor Harnack, but since he has written *St. Luke the Physician* and published his *Chronology of Early Christian Literature*, he has gone out of favour, for he is much too conservative. He believes that most of the books of the New Testament are authentic. We are also bidden to look on *Formgeschichte* as the last revelation which has come to us from Germany.

As I look back on the experience of these sixty years, I feel more and more how unsound are the methods and ephemeral the conclusions of the majority of German critics on early Christian history, and I find that distinguished historians like Professor Mommsen and Sir William Ramsay criticize their methods, and if I study their writings I find a great deal which seems to me fantastic. Let me take two instances:

There is no more human story than that of Martha 'cumbered with much serving' and Mary, who 'hath chosen the good part' given us by St. Luke.¹ It seems to us true to human nature and an admirable instance of the sympathy and insight of our Lord. Moreover, it is consistent with the character of the two women as presented to us quite independently by St. John. But the

¹ St. Luke x. 35-42.

critics tell us that it is not a real incident at all. It represents the contrast between Pauline and Petrine Christianity. Martha represents the Petrine Christianity of Works, Mary the Pauline Christianity of Faith. Surely this is making criticism absurd.

I will take another instance from Professor Lightfoot. This he suggests as the explanation of the story of the Gerasene swine: 'Late in the day (cf. 1 Cor. x. 11b) Jesus, in other words the Gospel, borne by the disciples (iv. 36) in the boat of the Church, crosses from Jewish soil to Gentile, with all that this implies. The difficulty and danger of the voyage are vividly described (iv. 37-40) and it is in the course of the transit that the problem of the nature and person of Jesus begins to make itself acutely felt (iv. 41). A landing having been effected on the other side, the power of Jesus is manifested in very signal form. The question then arises whether those who have been thus drawn within its orbit are to attach themselves to the original community, the Jewish (Christian) Church (cf. carefully v. 18b with iii. 14a). The answer is given in the negative. Gentiles are to remain among their own people, and in their own condition, there making known, however, what great things have been done for them by *Israel's* God, and the story of his boundless mercy. These benefits, however, and the mercy are conferred through *Jesus*,—he is their embodiment; and therefore the God of Israel is glorified, when Jesus is proclaimed; (cf. *Rom.* xv. 9-12). The man does not disobey.'¹

It is a pity that St. Mark does not give us some hint of the meaning of this allegory or parable. His message has had to wait 1,900 years to be understood, and all that time the Christian Church has been labouring under the mistaken idea that we were reading about an actual episode in the life of our Lord. I am afraid that I prefer the story as it is told with all its difficulties.

We do not doubt the value of German erudition, as shown us, to take an instance, in such a work as that of Schürer on the

¹ Lightfoot, pp. 89, 90.

history of the Jewish people at the time of our Lord, and as Professor Harnack reminds us, we have learnt a great deal from the Tübingen school, especially by criticizing it. What is important, however, is to recognize the difference between the two ways of writing history, the *a priori* method, and the historical method. The one, the *a priori* method, reads into the Gospels preconceived ideas, and is prepared to alter or mutilate its authorities, in order to prove them. The other, the historical method, starts with the original authorities and tries to find out by careful study what they really teach us, remembering that the statement of a contemporary writer is more likely to be true than the conjectures of a modern critic. That is the way the good historian sets about his work, and we esteem him according to the ability that he displays in carrying it out.

I will now try to state what Professor Lightfoot believes about St. Mark's Gospel. He begins by telling us that the early Church had no continuous records of our Lord's life, and that they took no interest in biography as such. All that they had were isolated stories which might be useful for preaching purposes. This statement, which is the presupposition of the whole theory, seems to me most improbable in itself, and contrary to the evidence that we have. St. Luke tells us distinctly that there were many who had 'taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us,' and that he might assume that Theophilus (whoever he might be) had 'received instruction' in these things.¹ St. Peter also in the Acts speaks as follows:

'The word which he sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)—that saying ye yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judaea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; even Jesus of Nazareth, how that God anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good,

¹ St. Luke i. 1-4.

and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem.¹

The syntax of this passage is very awkward, a fact which certainly does not reflect on its authenticity, but that does not prevent us from knowing what it means. It tells that St. Peter could assume in those that he was addressing a knowledge of the life of Jesus, that it extended from the preaching of John the Baptist, that it was concerned with the person and work of Jesus, that he went about doing good, and in particular healing those that were oppressed by the devil, and that he himself and others were witnesses of these things. This might quite well be a short description of St. Mark's Gospel, and seems sufficient evidence to me that Professor Lightfoot's statement is false.

However, let us go on and hear what further, following the statements of *Formgeschichte*,² he has to tell us. The original material out of which the Gospels was constructed, consisted of short stories, narrated without reference to time and place. All the connecting links were added by St. Mark when he constructed the Gospel. These short stories were of two kinds: the one was concerned in giving the teaching in the form of short epigrammatic speeches; the other gave accounts of 'mighty works.' The former are called 'paradigms,' or models, or 'apothegms'; the latter 'miracle-stories' or 'novellen.'

The chief characteristic of the former class is that the story serves as the framework for an important utterance of our Lord. In its original form it will be simple and brief, and will lead up to a suitable conclusion. Also it shows no interest in biographical detail. As an instance we are given the blessing of the children.

¹ Acts x. 36-39.

² On *Formgeschichte*, see especially *From Tradition to Gospel*, Martin Dibelius, Ph.D., D.Th., Professor of New Testament in Heidelberg. Translated from the Revised Second Edition of *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* in collaboration with the authors, by Bertram Lee Woolf, Ph.D., M.A., B.Sc., B.D., Professor of New Testament in Hackney and New College, University of London, 1934.

I should have thought that in a very short space it contradicted the definition. Jesus was moved with indignation at the disciples rebuking those that brought them. 'He took them up in his arms and blessed them.'¹

The Novellen contrast with this. They show much greater wealth of detail. Jesus is not a teacher. Emphasis is laid on his acts of power. 'The most striking characteristic of the Novellen in St. Mark's Gospel is their wealth of detail, and in some cases the length at which they are narrated. There is obvious interest in the description as such.' They do not reach their climax in a saying of Jesus of universal application. 'There is greater *naïveté* of tone.' 'They are not so strongly marked by the religious notes of reverence and edification.'² These stories are said to have affinity with miracle-stories, outside the Christian Church. They are later in date than the paradigms. These stories of both classes ought to conform to a definite model, and if they do not, that arises from the fact that they have been altered in transmission.

I am afraid that all this seems to me very unreal and artificial, and not very helpful. As we read through the Gospels what strikes us is the great variety of stories, and the different types of teaching. The parable, the epigram, the long discourse like the Sermon on the Mount. There are 'mighty works,' but there are incidents of a different character—preaching, the sending forth of Apostles or the Seventy, dangers from without, disputes with Pharisees, and so on. No doubt these stories might be used in preaching. Some of them would be circulated separately. Some of them in collections. There is no evidence of conscious alteration. We do not know how soon they were written down; but I venture to suggest that it would begin quite early.

Let us now try to sum up what Professor Lightfoot tells us about St. Mark's Gospel. He says that it is the product of a long development. He wisely adds: 'so far as these words can be

¹ St. Mark x. 13-16.

² Lightfoot, p. 52.

rightly applied to the work of one or at the most of two generations.¹ But this limitation shows us the fallacy which arises in applying the methods of Old Testament criticism to the New Testament. How far it will be ultimately accepted for the Old Testament I am not prepared to prophesy, but it is clear that changes might take place in centuries which would be quite impossible in a period of thirty years. So we are a little inclined to doubt when we are told that 'there are different strata of tradition in the narrative,' and that many sections have 'passed through a moulding process'; that it is a 'compilation of materials of different date, origin, character and purpose, many of which may have had a considerable history—whether oral, or literary or both—before they were finally inserted in this Gospel; at least a large part of the book being formed from anonymous traditions which had long been current in the Church.'²

We cannot help wondering what sort of place the early Church was if it was continuously involved in this process of moulding and altering the records of our Lord's life.

In the preface of the Gospel we are told that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. This, it is said, shows that the Gospel is not history, but doctrine. It is written to prove that Jesus is the Messiah. That seems to me a very mistaken inference. Surely the more natural explanation is that this book is written to tell us the Gospel, that is the teaching and life of him we all know as the Messiah, the Son of God. Of course it is in a sense Apologetic, for good history is Apology. However, we are to suppose that it is an artificial construction for doctrinal and apologetic purposes. There was apparently great difficulty felt in the Church at the time when the Gospel was published, because it was alleged that Jesus had not called himself the Messiah in public, and had rebuked devils when they called him by that name. This is called the Messianic secret and the book is constructed to deal with that question. All this seems to me

¹ Lightfoot, p. 33.

² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

quite improbable, and certainly does not suit the time when it was published. We cannot but wonder also that the purpose of the Gospel should have lain hidden for nineteen hundred years until it was revealed by Professor Wrede.

All this was the work of St. Mark: 'It is possible to show with a high degree of probability,' writes Professor Lightfoot, 'that it is he (St. Mark) who has arranged the order of the Gospel, and imposed the framework on the originally isolated sections, thereby welding them together and giving some kind of unity, cohesion and forward movement to the narrative.'¹ This is the thesis. It would mean that as an outline of the history of our Lord's ministry it had little authority. It is this that we have to examine, and the difficulty that I feel is that no reason is given in support of many of these statements.

Before passing then to the examination of the Gospel, there is one more statement of Professor Lightfoot that must be quoted, as it seems to suggest great ignorance of Jewish thought. The Gospel 'is indeed simple in that it has its origin from very humble circles in which popular belief in possession by demons and in the insight of demons is extremely strong.'² Surely there was nothing 'humble' in the first century in Palestine about the belief in demons. It was the universal belief of every one, educated and uneducated.

I will now examine some passages in St. Mark in order to see how far they support these theories. I will take first the story of the man sick of the palsy.³ Here Professor Lightfoot tells us that the introduction—the first two verses—are added by St. Mark, the story came to him without a context.

Let us examine the story. I would say at once that it seems to me to have all the marks of coming from an eyewitness, as shown by the irrelevant details which add vividness to the narrative. The paralytic was 'borne of four.' This detail is omitted by St. Matthew, who wishes (as always) to shorten the narrative,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³ St. Mark ii. 1-12.

and by St. Luke. It was, of course, a quite unnecessary detail and would only be added because the teller of the story had seen it, and still saw the scene vividly. Then we are told that they uncovered the roof, using a strange word, ἐξορύξαντες which means 'digging up' and puzzles the commentators. But it is exactly the right word, if the house, as is probable, was one with a mud roof. The Western text leaves it out, so does St. Matthew. St. Luke tells us they let him down through the tiles, an adaptation of the story to more polite surroundings. As I have often slept in such a house it appears to me a suitable word. The word used for bed is κράβατον—a poor man's bed; such as one often sees in the East. It is just a thin mattress. It can be rolled up and made a receptacle for clothes. A man may be seen riding with it behind him on his horse. The story tells us of the insight of Jesus both into the perplexities of the sick man and the irritation of the Scribes. Then comes the vivid touch, 'he saith to the sick of the palsy . . .' Lastly, it would be quite easy for the sick man if healed to take up the ordinary poor man's bed.

I am sorry to have to confess it, for I know how wrong it is to think that a story in the Gospels is really true; but I feel that I am reading a narrative written by some one who was present.

Now Professor Lightfoot wishes us to think that the preface to the story was an invention of St. Mark: 'And when he entered again into Capernaum after some days, it was noised that he was in the house. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, no, not even about the door: and he spake the word unto them.'

But this is a part of the story necessary to explain why they could not get into the house; and the reason for the crowd was that Jesus had returned to Capernaum after a more or less lengthy tour in Galilee. The word πάλιν is not a weak adverb as we are told. It is important as reminding us that Jesus was returning to

what had become a home. The reference to 'the house' is what a narrator who knows what 'the house' meant might say.

It will be found in other cases that narratives in St. Mark (not all) have just that touch of vividness which implies an eyewitness, and their connections those that suit the occasion.

I will now examine a longer passage, the events leading up to the feeding of the Five Thousand and the retirement to the districts of Tyre and Sidon.¹ We begin with the sending forth of the Twelve. This must have created a considerable stir. It meant the beginning of teaching on a wider scale and made the mission of Jesus more widely known. The result was that Herod Antipas heard of Jesus.² Already, as we are told, there had been a union between the Pharisees and Herodians who both, for different reasons, were opposed to Jesus. Later he warns his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and the leaven of Herod,³ and St. Luke has preserved a warning that came to Jesus that Herod wished to kill him.⁴ Clearly the situation is becoming dangerous.

Now I cannot believe that it was St. Mark writing in Rome twenty or thirty years later who told us of this conspiracy of the Pharisees and Herodians, or connected the mission of the Twelve with Herod's interest in Jesus. It must have been the original narrator of the events who knew Galilee and wrote with a knowledge of the sequence of events.

Then comes the return of the Twelve. We are led to think that their mission had been successful, and that it had made Jesus known more widely. I cannot but think that their preaching of repentance had the same effect as the first preaching of Jesus in preparation for the coming of the Kingdom; it aroused excitement, and men began to seek Jesus as they had followed false Messiahs into the desert, with the aim of an armed insurrection to found such a kingdom as the majority of the Jews expected. This is just what Jesus did not want. It would

¹ St. Mark vi. 7—vii. 24.

³ St. Mark viii. 15.

² St. Mark vi. 14.

⁴ St. Luke xiii. 31.

destroy the whole aim and purpose of his ministry. So he proposes to 'go apart into a desert place and rest awhile,' 'for there were many coming and going and they had no leisure so much as to eat.'

Clearly the narrative is describing a sequence of events and this sequence of events continues. The people whose hopes and expectations had been stirred follow him on land when he leaves in a boat, and when he had reached the place which he had chosen for his retirement he finds a great multitude—some five thousand—waiting for him. Then follows the story of the feeding of the multitude—a story told with some detail, and as coming from some one who had been present. We note especially that the grass was green. This surely is the sign of an eyewitness. However, the Bishop of Derby seems to think that it was a touch added by St. Mark to make the story more vivid. We note, however, that St. John¹ tells us the same thing, 'now there was much grass in the place.' He may, of course, have got that fact from St. Mark; for he was acquainted with the Gospel. He also tells us that it was about the time of the Passover, that is, in the spring, the only time when there could be green grass in most places in Palestine.

But St. John adds another fact of great significance. 'They wanted to make him king.' That which Jesus had always wished to avoid was in danger of happening. He was to be involved in the political activities of the crude Messianic hope of earthly sovereignty which had already done so much harm to Israel, and in a few years' time would lead to the destruction of the nation. This helps to explain to us why Jesus was so anxious to avoid advertising his Messiahship. But now things had become serious. The Pharisees and Herodians had joined together. Herod Antipas had heard about him. This assembly in the desert would be reported far and wide, and would bring things to a head. So Jesus takes instant action. He sends the disciples to

¹ St. John vi. 10.

Bethsaida which was in the territory of Philip and therefore safer. He wishes also to keep them from being influenced by the crowd whom he stays behind to dismiss.

There is a certain amount of geographical difficulty. On which side of the lake did the feeding of the Five Thousand take place? We are told that the disciples were to go before him to Bethsaida, to the other side of the lake. But Bethsaida was not on the other side, but at the head of the lake. It is important therefore to notice that an interesting group of textual authorities, the recently-found Washington MS., four of the Cursives (Fam. 1), the old Latin Codex Monacensis, and the Sinaitic Syriac leave out *εἰς τὸ πέραν*. This is probably the correct reading, *εἰς τὸ πέραν* having been introduced by assimilation with St. Matthew.

What seems to have happened was that our Lord sent the disciples to Bethsaida, but there was a strong north wind against them, and they could not make headway. They were driven across the lake and eventually landed at Gennesaret, a little south of Capernaum. Our Lord probably, as St. John tells us, went to Capernaum, where he is again exposed to the attacks of the Pharisees. The situation was now obviously a dangerous one. The gathering in the desert, the suspicions of Herod, the renewed hostility of the Pharisees will clearly make preaching in Galilee dangerous if not impossible in the future. So Jesus went into the territory of Tyre and Sidon. We hear of him afterwards in the Decapolis and in the Tetrarchy of Philip. He never after this preaches in Galilee.

This has been called a flight. That may be an exaggeration; but we want some reason for the retirement, and that is given us by the narrative in St. Mark. This helps us to realize that St. Mark's Gospel is based on an intelligent source, the work of an eyewitness. The advocates of *Formgeschichte* do not allow us to think this because their theory is that St. Mark's Gospel is not intelligent or history. It is formed out of isolated stories which

have been jumbled together with sham links of connection inserted.

There are certain other points to be noted. We have besides the feeding of the Five Thousand, the feeding of the Four Thousand.¹ I find it very difficult to believe that this is not a doublet; that also may be true of the three next sections. The story of the Four Thousand appears to be a transcript of that of the Five Thousand; the only point added being the mention of three days. It is a bare, lifeless narrative, and that is the case also in the following sections. The place, Dalmanutha, is unknown and is probably a corruption which has arisen in the transmission of the story. In St. Matthew it becomes Magadan, which is equally unknown, but has a certain resemblance to Magdala.

It is to be noticed that there are no links of connection with these stories. It looks as if here and possibly elsewhere St. Mark has done what the *Formgeschichte* people like and inserted anonymous stories based on oral tradition. We are told that St. Mark was anxious to leave nothing out, and coming across the story of the Four Thousand he felt he should not omit this miracle. It may be noted, further, that these stories have no connection with what precedes, or follows, which suggests that the connecting links are part of the source and not the invention of St. Mark.

It may be noted that we have six accounts of the feeding of a multitude in the Gospels. Of these, two, that of St. John and the feeding of the Five Thousand in St. Mark, which make some claim to be derived from an eyewitness, are living stories. The others read like abbreviated transcripts.

There is one more point of interest. St. Luke omits the whole section from vi. 45 to viii. 26. It has been held that the copy of St. Mark which he had was an earlier edition which was without them. A modification of this theory may be possible, as I will

¹ St. Mark viii. 1-10.

suggest later, but it is not necessary. If St. Luke was to keep his Gospel to a convenient size he would be obliged to omit some of his material, and most of this would seem to him of little interest to his readers. The long section of the controversy with the Pharisees on hand-washing and other ritual matters did not concern his Gentile readers, and might be omitted, as similar sections of the Sermon on the Mount, on the Jewish law and ritual observances were omitted. The feeding of the Four Thousand, even if it describes a different event, does not add anything, and the same is true of the other sections.

Now I think our examination of the story of the man sick of the palsy and of the events leading up to the retirement to Tyre and Sidon give us some reason for supposing that the accounts come from a witness or witnesses who are describing events in which they have taken part. There is a vividness about the narratives which is most naturally explained as arising from the fact that the report comes from some one who was present. That seems to me more probable than that they have been written up by some one—presumably St. Mark—with considerable imaginative powers. Moreover, they give signs of topographical knowledge and of acquaintance with the circumstances of the time. Further, they seem to describe a natural sequence of events, which gives an intelligent explanation of what happens. Let us see, then, if we can find in St. Mark's Gospel as a whole a natural historical sequence of events.

The narrative of the Gospel starts with a very abbreviated account of John the Baptist. This is given because his preaching was from the beginning looked upon as the starting-point of the whole movement. St. Mark may have abbreviated the account before him, as there were others available. Jesus, like many others, goes from his home in Nazareth to hear him. He is baptized. He retires for a period of solitude. It is only after the preaching of the Baptist is brought to an end by his imprisonment that Jesus comes to Capernaum with a consciousness of mission,

as we should say. We are not told why he chose that place, but it may well have been because he wished to get in contact with those who, we know from other sources, had been disciples of John and had become attached to him.

Then follows the calling of the first disciples, and preaching in Capernaum, which immediately begins to have influence. We seem to be reading the events of a single day,—the first day of the Galilaean ministry, the first day of St. Peter's discipleship. I do not see why this should be thought to be an invention of St. Mark. Two points are noticeable in what follows: the desire which is often later brought before us of retirement for private prayer, and the urge to carry his message further, when Simon and the others wish him to stay in Capernaum and respond to the demands of the people.

There follows a preaching tour, 'And he went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out devils.'¹ So far there had been everywhere success. Notice also that it is specially mentioned that he preached in the synagogues.

At the end of the tour he returns to Capernaum, which seems to have been the centre of his Galilaean life, and where he had something of a home—perhaps, it has been suggested, in Simon's house. So far there has been success, but now opposition begins. The reasons for this are described in a series of incidents selected for this purpose, not probably arranged chronologically. This is just what a modern historian would do. The result comes in an alliance between the Pharisees and Herodians, the religious and secular opposition, a portent for the future. However, the success increases. People come to hear Jesus from all parts, not only from Galilee, but from Judaea, Jerusalem, beyond Jordan, Tyre and Sidon. This leads to another step forward, the appointment of the Twelve. Jesus was carrying out his purpose. We have been specially told by a writer of great insight to notice that they were appointed to 'be with him.'²

¹ St. Mark i. 39.

² St. Mark iii. 14.

Then comes another step forward in the growth of the opposition. We are told of Scribes and Pharisees who had come from Jerusalem.¹ Did the writer of the Gospel invent this incident? Or is it another sign that he had a source which came from a well-informed witness?

Then come the parables of the Kingdom, also instances of how special teaching was given to the disciples. The Kingdom was the preaching of the Gospel. These parables would have but little meaning for the many people who heard them, but the disciples were instructed about them. The process of teaching those who after our Lord's death were to spread the Gospel was begun. St. Mark only gives a few parables, but tells us that many others were spoken at this time.² No doubt some of them are given by St. Matthew. Then follow the striking stories of the Gerasene maniac and the healing of Jairus' daughter. This series of events in which the development of Jesus' purpose becomes clearer is followed by a second tour in Galilee which includes a visit to Nazareth.

We have already described the series of events that follow. The mission of the Twelve and their return, the assembly in the desert, and the feeding of the multitude on the one side, the continual growth of opposition on the other, leading finally to the close of the Galilaean ministry, and the retirement of Jesus to districts outside.

There is now a change in the teaching. It is directed to the disciples and not to the multitude. These have learnt that Jesus is the Messiah. Now the time has come for them to learn of the nature of the Messiah. The Messiah must suffer, and in the Transfiguration there is for them a revelation of his glory and his suffering. Jesus himself knows now that the time has come that he should leave Galilee and make his way to Jerusalem. Henceforth we are reminded many times of his passion and

¹ St. Mark iii. 22.

² St. Mark iv. 33.

death and resurrection. He passes through Galilee without preaching and another stage in the ministry begins.

We are told that leaving Capernaum he comes to the districts of Judaea and beyond Jordan. Emphasis is laid on the fact that once more people come to hear him in great numbers and once more he preaches. 'And multitudes come together unto him *again*; and, as he was wont, he taught them *again*.'¹ The idea that he has now started merely on his last journey to Jerusalem is a misinterpretation of this passage. The Gospel that had been preached in Galilee must now be preached in the rest of Palestine.

About this missionary journey in Judaea and beyond Jordan we have no information in St. Mark's Gospel, but the statement is corroborated by St. Luke and St. John. St. Luke knows of this journey. He tells us of the mission of the Seventy. As the Twelve had preached in Galilee, so the Seventy preached in Samaria and Judaea. He inserts here a large collection of teaching, some of which was in Samaria and some on the way going up to Jerusalem. But some of the stories are clearly wrongly placed. They belong to the Galilaean ministry or Jerusalem. St. John tells us of visits to Jerusalem and Peraea.

The narrative of St. Mark begins again in chapter x. 32. 'And they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them; and they that followed them were afraid. And he took *again* the Twelve.'

From here onwards there is a continuous narrative until the end. I believe that since he had left Galilee Jesus had been separated from many of the Twelve.

This, as I see it, represents the history of the ministry of Jesus as told in St. Mark and based on good authority. I must leave my readers to decide whether this is a better account of the Gospel than that given by Professor Lightfoot following Wrede, and Wellhausen, and Dibelius.

¹ St. Mark x. 1.

As to the chronology of the Gospel, it is not of course claimed that there is any attempt at a scientific chronology, connecting the events of Jesus' life with dates in secular history, as we find in St. Luke, but that as we have a short but good narrative of the Galilaean ministry of Jesus we can with reasonable confidence construct a chronological scheme. The Galilaean ministry began with the imprisonment of the Baptist. It included two missionary journeys through Galilee and ended at the feeding of the multitude which took place in the early spring about the time of the Passover. The retirement outside Jewish territory must have been in the summer, for if the Transfiguration was on Mt. Hermon, as is probable, it was probably when the mountain was clear of snow. The missionary tour in Judaea, which included visits to Jerusalem, was in the autumn and winter. That is corroborated by St. John: 'And it was the feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem: it was winter; and Jesus was walking in the Temple, in Solomon's porch.'¹ The ministry must have lasted about three years.

Now we come to a further point, which I have so far left out of consideration. We are told by Christian tradition, the earliest record coming from Papias of Hierapolis, in a passage which I shall examine later, that St. Mark's Gospel is based on the preaching of St. Peter. I must confess that it is my habit to prefer the statement of an ancient author, especially if it explains the facts, to a conjecture by a modern professor, whether English or German. We know that St. Mark was a companion, first of St. Paul, then of St. Peter. We know that he was in Rome with St. Peter about the time of the Neronian persecution. He would have had every opportunity of hearing St. Peter's story. If the book is based on that preaching it exactly explains its character. It is probable that St. Mark added stories from other sources. That will explain the presence of incidents which do not fit in, for Papias tells us that he was anxious to avoid leaving

¹ St. John x. 22.

anything out, so not everything in it has St. Peter's authority. It is, therefore, as a book, good history, and as it is good material it is possible out of it with a considerable degree of probability to discover the sequence of events and construct the outlines of a history of our Lord's ministry. This we believe we have ourselves been able to do.

Are there any characteristics in the book which would support this theory? I have already alluded to the statement of St. Peter himself in the Acts which describes an outline of the history we find in the Gospel. Then I think that we may say that it deals with the problems which particularly exercised the mind of the earliest period of the history of the Church and were prominent in his own speeches and in his Epistle—that of the Messiah. If we compare the two theories, that of *Formgeschichte* and the Petrine hypothesis, the Gospel as a whole harmonizes with the conditions under which St. Peter taught. St. Mark, it has been alleged, composed the Gospel as a doctrinal and apologetic work, rather than as history; it was written in Rome for a largely Gentile Church, and was compiled, at the earliest, a little before the fall of Jerusalem. The Church at that time had ceased to be concerned with the disputes with the Scribes and Pharisees. This is shown by the fact that St. Luke tends to omit such things. It was no longer concerned with the problem whether Jesus was the Messiah and whether Jesus must suffer. All this had been settled. But these were the acute problems in the early days when St. Peter began to preach, as we see in the Acts of the Apostles.

There is another interesting point. The very critical opinion held by St. Mark about the mentality of the Apostles has often been commented on. The Bishop of Derby quotes a criticism, 'how St. Mark must have hated the Twelve.'¹ That is severe but not unnatural. If, however, we find that the main authority on which the book was based was one of the Apostles telling us

¹ Rawlinson, *op. cit.*, p. xxviii.

how difficult they had found it to realize what our Lord said, the sting is taken away.¹

I would claim, therefore, that a considerable part of the book, although not quite all, comes from St. Peter's preaching and gives us a trustworthy account of our Lord's ministry. St. Peter's memory could be good, and he was describing events in which he had played an important part. During the better part of those years he had been constantly with Jesus, he had many times heard him preaching, his words would have sunk into his heart. I have no doubt that he gives a trustworthy account although it is not necessarily correct in every detail. Every one makes some mistakes. St. Peter himself had told the story many times. No doubt the words had become fixed in his mind and he would not forget.

What was the date of St. Mark's Gospel? There are two traditions. Irenaeus, towards the end of the second century, tells us that after the death of St. Peter and St. Paul, Mark the disciple and interpreter of St. Peter handed down to us in writing the things which Peter had proclaimed. The other tradition is that of Clement of Alexandria, a little later, who says that the Gospel was composed with the approbation of St. Peter when this Apostle was yet alive. It is quite probable that both statements are true, that St. Peter knew the work while it was being written, but that it was not completed or published—whatever that may have meant—until after his death.²

¹ I would suggest that the criticisms seem to us more severe because they are expressed in a different language to that which we now use. "Their heart was hardened" reads to us like a moral condemnation, but to the Jew the heart was the seat of the intellect, and the words do not mean that the disciples were wickedly obstinate, but that they were mentally dense.

² The main passages about the Gospel are:

The statement of Papias quoted by Eusebius, *Ecl. Hist.* iii. 39. 'And the Elder said this also: Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately everything that he remembered, without however, recording in order what was either said or done by Christ. For neither did he hear the Lord nor did he follow him; but afterwards as I said (attended) Peter, who adapted his instruc-

A further question has been raised as to what acquaintance St. Peter had with the collection of the teaching of Jesus called the Logia or Discourses. It seems to me probable that he and St. Mark knew of them in some form or another, and that that was the reason why there is so little record of Jesus teaching in the Gospel. The object of this work was to enable the Christian Church and the many new Gentile converts, to know about the life and ministry of the founder of Christianity, a need which had been met so far by the instructions given by the early Christian teachers. We know how prominent a place the teachers occupied in the early Christian ministry, and that it might be assumed generally that a record of the life of Jesus was generally known.

The last question I would ask is how early the records of Christianity began to be written? I would suggest much earlier than is often supposed. The Jews were an educated people. Most of them would have learnt to read and write in the synagogue schools, and as soon as the wide spread of Christianity began records for the guidance of the teachers and preachers

tions to the needs (of his hearers) but had no design of giving a connected account of the Lord's oracles. So then Mark made no mistake, while he thus wrote down some things as he remembered them; for he made it his one care not to omit anything that he heard, or to set down any false statement therein.'

Irenaeus, iii. i, 2. 'After their departure (i.e. Peter and Paul), Mark the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing, what had been preached by Peter.'

Clement of Alexandria, ap. Eusebius VI. xiv. 5-7. 'The Gospel according to Mark came into being in this manner: When Peter had publicly preached the word at Rome, and by the Spirit had proclaimed the Gospel, those present, who were many, exhorted Mark, as one who had followed him for a long time, and remembered what had been spoken, to make a record of what was said; and that he did this, and distributed the Gospel among those that asked him. And that when the matter came to Peter's knowledge, he neither strongly forbade it, nor urged it forward.'

I do not know why the Bishop of Derby, comparing Clement with Irenaeus, speaks of the 'developing ecclesiastical tradition'—Clement was a contemporary of Irenaeus, and his traditions seem often to be quite independent, and as he had a wide acquaintance with the Christian world, just as likely to be correct.

would be needed.¹ I do not know how far we can accept Professor Ramsay's suggestion that the Logia were written down in our Lord's lifetime, but there is nothing improbable about it.² The Twelve, when they were sent out, and the Seventy would need some records of our Lord's words to guide them in their teaching, and would not trust entirely to their memories.

I have put forward to the best of my ability the theory of *Formgeschichte* and I have given the reasons why I am still prepared to believe in the historical character of St. Mark's Gospel. I must leave the problems now to my readers to make up their own minds.

¹ See on this what the Dean of Winchester says in his *Commentary on 1 Peter*, on the materials for Catechetical instruction in the Early Church.

² Professor Lightfoot, in my opinion, is not justified in speaking of Professor Ramsay's 'aberration.' Professor Ramsay was a distinguished historian, with very wide experience in historical research, who had added many chapters to our history of the Ancient World; and his statements is a perfectly possible one. He represents very largely the reactions of secular historians who are accustomed to deal with historical sources without the peculiar bias of New Testament critics.