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THE FOURTH GOSPEL

"THE Fourth Gospel," says Dr. Vacher Burch, "is the most beautiful book in the world, . . . and the secret of the spell of its beauty is that it portrays the historic Christ and not another."¹

Just as the nineteenth century was closing Dr. Stalker, as Cunningham Lecturer, said: "At one time the Gospel of St. John . . . enjoyed singular favour among the most advanced critics, who declared that in it, if anywhere, was to be found the authentic portrait of Jesus; but at present the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme, and this Gospel has been spoken of in terms of great dubiety, if not of condemnation." Within a very few years two works of importance belonging to English scholarship did much to stimulate confidence in this book of the Spirit, which Ernesti declared to be "the heart of Christ."² The downward trend, however, soon reasserted itself and about the year 1920 a "landslide," to use the expression of Dr. Vincent Taylor, swept away much of the credence which had been restored. Now in the latest English work on this subject, we have these categorical statements: "We shall never know who wrote the Gospel." "The evangelist was almost certainly not the Apostle John." "It can never be proved that the author was a personal disciple of the Apostle John."³ There are, however, signs of a reversal of judgment. In the December issue of the *Expository Times* the editors remark: "One of the most striking features of the critical movement in recent years has been a definite tendency towards the rehabilitation of the Fourth Gospel."

As one reflects upon the oscillations of Biblical Criticism, one is conscious of a great reluctance to accept its findings in those matters which are of faith. It is so unsure of itself, it retracts its steps, it revises its decisions, it flings to the winds some of its most assured results. Criticism, like Kronos, devours its own children. And in this case the consequences are of the first importance. We are faced with this alternative: Either Christ said such things and wrought such works, or He did not. If He

¹ *The Structure and Message of St. John's Gospel* (1928).

² *The Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel*, by Dr. James Drummond (1903), and *The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel*, by Dr. W. Sanday (1905).

³ *The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation*, by Dr. W. F. Howard (1931).

did not, it is of comparatively little consequence that at the opening of the second century it should be generally believed that He had done so. The difference is vital. Faith does not rest on the belief of the Church, but on the fact of Christ.

A well-known critical scholar asserts that, with reference to many questions, and especially with regard to the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, "our age has cancelled the judgment of centuries." One seems to remember a saying of Emerson to the effect that the true task of faith is to assert the centuries against the hours, but that might not be taken as a conclusive argument. Until recent years there was little serious doubt within the Church that this book was written by John, the son of Zebedee. Within the last two generations, however, there has been ceaseless and eager controversy on this point, and the debate, as we all know, is not ended. The contention is keen because the matters at stake are momentous. In this Gospel we have the most unequivocal pronouncements of the true Deity of our Saviour, and these are professedly given by one who was intimately conversant with Him, by that one indeed who, better than any other, understood His character, the purpose of His mission, and the significance of His teaching. This is a testimony which cannot possibly be regarded with indifference.

I

Let us begin with the tradition of the Johannine authorship. It was almost world-wide in the last quarter of the second century. Dr. Sanday points to the distribution of evidence: "Irenaeus and the Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons in Gaul, Heracleon in Italy, Tertullian at Carthage, Polycrates at Ephesus, Theophilus at Antioch, Tatian at Rome and in Syria, Clement at Alexandria. The strategical positions are occupied, one might say, all over the Empire. In the great majority of cases there is not a hint of dissent. On the contrary, the fourfold Gospel is regarded for the most part as one and indivisible. . . . Eusebius, who is really a careful and candid person, and has ancients like Origen and Clement behind him, can describe the Gospel as unquestioned both by his own generation and by preceding generations."¹

In the Muratorian Fragment (*c.* 170) we have this account: "At the entreaties of his fellow-disciples and the bishops, John,

¹ *The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 238f.

one of the disciples, said : ‘ Fast with me for three days from this time, and whatsoever shall be revealed to each of us (whether it be favourable to my writing or not) let us relate it to one another.’ On the same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the apostles, that John should relate all things in his own name, aided by the revision of all. . . . What wonder is it then that John so constantly brings forward Gospel phrases, even in his Epistles, saying in his own person, ‘ What we have seen with our eyes, and heard with our ears, and our hands have handled, these things have we written ’ ? For so he professes that he was not only an eye-witness, but also a hearer, and moreover a historian of all the wonderful works of the Lord.”

Irenaeus (c. 180) speaks of the origin of the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark and Luke, and continues : “ Thereafter John, the disciple of the Lord, who lay on His breast, he too gave forth the Gospel while he yet abode at Ephesus in Asia ; and all the elders, they of Asia who had conferred with John the disciple of the Lord, bear witness that (their tradition) had been delivered to them by John, for he remained on with them until the days of Trajan ”¹ (i.e. till A.D. 98 at least).

Clement of Alexandria (c. 200) writes as follows : “ John, last of all (the evangelists), perceiving that what had reference to corporeal things was sufficiently related, encouraged by his friends and inspired by the Spirit, wrote a spiritual Gospel.”²

Eusebius the historian (c. 340) had access to many early documents. He reports as follows : “ John, they say, having all the time preached, but not using his pen, in the end set himself to write. The occasion was this : on the three earlier Gospels being handed to him, he, they say, admitted them and testified to their truth, although they were so far defective that the earlier stages of the ministry were absent from their accounts.” After commenting on the fact that the Fourth Gospel was complementary and supplementary, he adds : “ One who attends to these circumstances can no longer entertain the opinion that the Gospels are at variance with one another.”³

The prevailing belief in the early Church, at least as early as the close of the second century, was that the Fourth Gospel was the work of a disciple of the Lord, generally held to be the son of Zebedee, that it was written in Ephesus in the old age of the author, and that it was the drawing together of frequent narrations

¹ *Haer* III, i, 1 ; iii, 4.

² Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.*, vi, 14.

³ *Hist. Eccl.*, iii, 23, 24.

made during many years of ministry. There is also the suggestion that this Gospel, as regards its phraseology, was revised by the elders and bishops of the Province of Asia.

II

In the Gospel itself there are several indications of the authorship. At the close of the twenty-first chapter—a post-script perhaps, but certainly an integral part of the Gospel—certain persons, the elders of Ephesus, presumably, attest that he who “wrote these things” was the disciple whom Jesus loved (verse 24). In the nineteenth chapter the piercing of our Lord’s side is mentioned with this attestation: “He that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true” (verse 35). And in the first chapter the account of the calling of Andrew and “that other disciple” seems to strike a firm biographical note. Accordingly, we have in the Gospel itself the definite assertion that it was written by the disciple whom Jesus loved, that he was one of that little company who stood beneath the cross, and we have the high probability that this witnessing and beloved disciple was John the son of Zebedee.

Many fanciful identifications of the beloved disciple have been ventured on—that he was a purely ideal figure, the spiritual brother of Jesus, that he was the Christian Church in the freshness of its youth, that he was Andrew, St. Paul, Nathanael, Lazarus, the young man of Mark xiv. 51, the rich young ruler, a Jerusalem disciple of priestly family, etc. The strangest opinion of all is the identification of the beloved disciple with Judas Iscariot. At least two German scholars have propounded this amazing theory, and an English Commentator has so far lapsed from a sane judgment as to confess that there is something to be said for this astounding conclusion.

Let us consider the facts.

The disciple whom Jesus loved was one of the Twelve. He was at the Supper Table with Jesus, seated next to Him. He speaks of the position which he occupied there as a proof of the Master’s affection, as if the Lord has requested him to sit by His side in sympathetic understanding (xiii. 23). He had come from Gethsemane, following the Lord and His captors, and was followed in turn by Simon Peter; He went in with Simon into the High Priest’s Palace. It was to this disciple that Jesus entrusted the care of His mother. John was presumably a cousin of Jesus—his

mother, Salome, and Mary being sisters (John xix. 25, Matt. xxvii. 53)—in comfortable circumstances (Mark i. 20, Luke viii. 3, Matt. xxvii. 55). Seeing then, that the brethren of the Lord did not believe on Him (John viii. 5) and were possibly married (1 Cor. ix. 5), what could be more fitting than that the mother of the Lord should be cared for by her nephew, John, one whose love had linked itself inextricably with the person of the Lord? The association of this other disciple with Simon Peter on the resurrection morning is a further proof that he belonged to the inner circle of our Lord's company. In the twenty-first chapter we read again of this other disciple. He is one of the Galilean group; he is neither Simon, nor Thomas, nor Nathanael, for these are named. He is a fisherman, he describes the occasion as to the manner born, and he counts his fish. He is to be spared to a great age (verse 22). It is he, then, who is the author of this Gospel, and he wrote it from personal knowledge—the testimony of an eye-witness.

Another text may be taken into this argument: We have already referred to it. In the first chapter we read of two disciples of the Baptist, one of them Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, the other unnamed. After an interview with Jesus, Andrew was the first to bring his brother to Jesus; the implication being that the other inquirer sought his brother also (John i. 40, 41). Soon after the Master calls Andrew and Simon, James and John, to become His followers. They respond at once, for they have already yielded their lives to Him. One cannot help feeling the thrill in the narrative as the evangelist recalls that day more than half a century gone, when he first looked upon Jesus and heard His voice. This, we believe, is that "other disciple," recipient of his Lord's loving-kindness, who wrote this Gospel. This personal experience strikes the key to which the entire composition is set. This treatise is not only a true history. It is a Gospel. It is a progress from faith to faith.

III

No one with any feeling for literature can doubt that the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle of John are by the same hand, and we have seen how the writer of the Muratorian Fragment uses the witness of the Epistle to confirm the truth of the Gospel. In this we have contemporaneous evidence of the most convincing character.

The fact that the two treatises are not bound together in our New Testament should not be allowed to weaken the force of the evidence. Bishop Lightfoot holds that the Epistle "was in all likelihood written at the same time with and attached to the Gospel," and that it was intended to be circulated with the Gospel. He adds: "This accounts for its abrupt commencement, which is to be explained as a reference to the Gospel which in one sense preceded it. This accounts likewise for the allusion to the water and the blood (I John v. 6f) as the witnesses to the reality of Christ's human nature, the counterpart of the statement in the Gospel narrative" (xix. 35).

The Epistles of Ignatius (c. A.D. 110) remind us in many places of the speech of St. John, particularly in this passage which is strictly parallel to John vi. 33, 48, 54: "I desire the bread of God, the heavenly bread, the bread of life, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became afterwards of the seed of David and Abraham. And I desire the drink of God, the blood of Him who is undying love and eternal life."¹ Dr. Burney extracts from the Epistles of Ignatius thirty-six reminiscences of the teaching of the Fourth Gospel, and adds to these eleven allusions to the First Epistle of John, and he gives this verdict: "Ignatius's knowledge of the Fourth Gospel . . . seems to be proved to demonstration."² Dr. Sanday's opinion is much to the same effect, but is expressed with his accustomed carefulness: "I do not think there can be any doubt that Ignatius has assimilated and digested to an extraordinary degree the teaching that we associate with the name of St. John. . . . He seems to me to reflect the Johannean teaching with extraordinary fidelity." And he concludes that we must either "fall back upon the tradition that Ignatius was an actual disciple of St. John," or else believe that "Ignatius had really had access to the Johannean writings years before the date of his journey to Rome, and that he had devoted to them no cursory reading but a close and careful study which had the deepest effect upon his mind."³

We have a chain of three witnesses: the Apostle John, who lived till the reign of Trajan. Trajan began to reign in A.D. 98, but the *Chronicon Paschale* relates that John lived on till A.D. 104. The second link in the chain is the life of Polycarp, who was a

¹ *Ad Rom.* 7.

² *The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 153ff.

³ *The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 241-245.

pupil of John. He died A.D. 155, so he cannot have been born later than A.D. 70. The third name is that of Irenaeus, a pupil of Polycarp, born in Asia Minor about A.D. 115; died at Lyons about A.D. 190.

Irenaeus writes to his former fellow-disciple, Florinus, of their intercourse with Polycarp: "I can describe the very place where the blessed Polycarp used to sit when he discoursed, and his goings out and his comings in, and his manner of life, and his personal experience, and the discourses which he held before the people, and how he would describe his intercourse with John and with the rest who had seen the Lord, and how he would relate their words." Irenaeus attributes the Gospel to "John, the disciple of the Lord" who reclined on the breast of Christ; he claims him as "a true witness of the tradition of the apostles." Tischendorf affirms that there are in the writings of Irenaeus no fewer than eighty direct quotations from John's Gospel.

Between Ignatius and Irenaeus (*c.* 180), whose testimony is of palmary importance, few Christian writings are extant. In the Epistles of Barnabas and of Polycarp we have approximations to the diction of St. John. The Valentinians (140-180) were evidently familiar with the Fourth Gospel. One of them, Heracleon, actually wrote a commentary upon it. Justin Martyr (*c.* 147) refers frequently to the "Memoirs of the Apostles," and tells us that they were read publicly in churches, and were esteemed as sacred books. He seems to quote the Fourth Gospel in these passages: "Christ has said, Except ye be born again, ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but that it is impossible that those who have once been born should enter into the womb of those who bore them" (*cp.* John iii. 3, 4). "The Baptist said, I am not the Christ, but the voice of one crying" (*cp.* John i. 20, 23). "And His Son, who alone is properly called the Word and Son, who was also with Him, and was begotten, before the works . . . is called Christ." Justin's use of the Fourth Gospel is now generally acknowledged. Tatian (*c.* 160) was a disciple of Justin, and helps to bridge the gulf between Justin and Irenaeus. He worked the Four Gospels into a harmony. This harmony, or "Diatessaron" as it is called, opens with St. John's arresting sentence: "In the beginning was the Word." After this, evidence multiplies that this Gospel was held to be authentic, and was generally received in all the Churches. Only an obscure sect,

¹ Eus. *Hist. Eccl.*, v, 20.

called the Alogi, did not acknowledge it as of authority, but they testified to its existence towards the end of the first century. These dissentients seem to have denied our Lord's true Deity.

IV

Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia, was born *c.* A.D. 72, and died *c.* 153. He was according to Irenaeus a hearer of John the apostle, a companion of Polycarp, who was "an ancient man" (i.e. a disciple from the beginnings of the Christian Church). About the year 100¹ he wrote in Greek "An interpretation of the Sayings of the Lord" in five books. It has perished, only a few fragments survive in the writings of Irenaeus and the History of Eusebius. Papias was a man of sincere piety and of considerable industry, but possessed a somewhat weak judgment—so at least Eusebius affirms.

Eusebius quotes from the preface of Papias' work a passage which has been much discussed :

But if anywhere anyone also should come who had companied with the elders, I ascertained (first of all) the sayings of the elders with reference to what Andrew or Peter had said, or what Philip, or what Thomas, or James, or what John, or Matthew, or any other of the disciples of the Lord had said, and (secondly), what Aristion and John the Elder, the disciples of the Lord, say, For I judged that the things to be derived from books were not of such profit to me as the things derived from the living and abiding voice.²

In this paragraph the name of John occurs twice, once with a past tense ("had said"), and once in the present ("say"). We may judge either that the two are one and that John, the son of Zebedee, had survived all his brethren and was known affectionately as "the Elder," that is, the venerable and venerated one—such a one as John the aged; or that two persons are spoken of here. John, the disciple of Jesus, and John the Presbyter, the second being, of course, later in time.

When it is said that John and Aristion were "disciples of the Lord" it is to be remembered that members of the apostolic company receive the same designation. So that it is at least possible that "John the Elder" was John the Apostle, the last survivor of that goodly fellowship.

On the other hand it is equally possible that an important member of the Ephesian Church at the close of the first century should have borne the name of John. But if so, he was a shadowy

¹ This is the date given both by Dr. Sanday and by Dr. Burney.

² *Hist. Eccl.*, iii, 39.

figure when contrasted with the son of Zebedee, and by no means such a person as we should expect to be the author of the Johannine literature of the New Testament. So far as we know there was only one John of sufficient importance to be an authoritative source of Christian doctrine.

There are a few fragments attributed to Papias by later writers, but these quotations are not at all reliable. One attests the martyrdom of John. Eusebius, who was aware of all that Papias had written, betrays no knowledge of the statements made by these writers.

We remember the saying of Jesus to the two sons of Zebedee, "Ye shall indeed drink of My cup" (Mark x. 39). John's elder brother suffered martyrdom (Acts xii. 2). Some have thought that our Lord's prediction points to martyrdom at the close of St. John's prolonged life; but this is not really implied in the Scripture. A monkish chronicler of the ninth century, Georgius Hamartolus, declares that "John the Apostle after he had written his Gospel suffered martyrdom, for Papias in the second book of 'The Sayings of the Lord' affirms that he was put to death by Jews, thus plainly fulfilling along with his brother the prophecy of Christ regarding them." There is confusion here. In an Epitome (seventh or eighth century) of the Chronicle of Philip Sidetes¹ (a church historian of the fifth century, but one of little repute), we read: "Papias says in his second book that John the divine and James his brother were slain by Jews." These two notes seem to depend upon one another, and that they are not accurate is more than likely because of the employment of the descriptive word "divine" applied to John, a title which certainly was not in use so early as the time of Papias. Besides, as Dr. Stanton remarks, "Philip of Sidé has proved to be a bungler." Archbishop Bernard similarly says: "Either Philip or his epitomiser was a blunderer."² It is very probable that Philip misinterpreted or perhaps through forgetfulness misreported, Papias. Hamartolus also, who quotes this alleged statement of Papias, refers, without demur, to the general belief of the Church, that the apostle was alive in Ephesus until almost the close of the first century. The widespread tradition regarding John the Apostle is that he died a natural death at an advanced age.

¹ Philip of Sidé, a town on the seaboard of Pamphylia.

² Socrates, the historian, who was a contemporary of Philip of Sidé, comments with great severity on his inaccuracy (*Ecl. Hist.*, vii, 26, 27).

The Syriac Martyrology, of date A.D. 411, contains the following commemoration : "Dec. 27 John and James, Apostles in Jerusalem." The date is too late to have any authority, and the commemoration contradicts a number of definite statements earlier in time and more authoritative in character. Also it seems to indicate that James and John suffered together. But Acts xii. 2 with the subsequent history, contradicts this. Five years after the death of James, St. Paul received the right hand of fellowship from John the son of Zebedee (Gal. ii. 9).

There is just one other witness to John's martyrdom. Aphrahat, a Persian writer, gives us the following under date A.D. 343 : "Great and excellent is the martyrdom of Jesus . . . to him followed the faithful martyr Stephen whom the Jews stoned. Simon also and Paul were perfect martyrs. James and John trod in the footsteps of Christ."

It is worth remembering that in the Apocalypse the word "martyr" is used of every faithful witness to Jesus who has maintained his testimony at price. This John, the beloved disciple, undoubtedly did.

V

The argument from internal evidence would require a volume to do it justice. It usually is drawn out along lines such as these : The writer was a Jew, a Jew of Palestine¹ ; he was familiar with the land, the people, and their customs, as these existed in the time of our Lord, before the desolating scourge of Rome passed through ; he was an eye-witness of the events narrated ; he was one of the apostolic company, and by inference John the son of Zebedee. This line of argument is fully drawn out by Bishops Lightfoot and Westcott, and has been followed by others, even to our own day.

As to the time when the Gospel was written : the traditional belief of which we have spoken more than once indicates a date near the close of the first century, and this is generally received. Dr. Vacher Burch is of opinion that the Fourth Gospel, substantially as John wrote it up to Chap. xix. 35, began to circulate "near to the time of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ." It would probably be more correct to say that many of the great truths enshrined in the Gospel were orally communicated to fit audiences

¹ This is so obvious that Dr. Burney has written a volume to prove that the Fourth Gospel was written in Aramaic (Oxford, 1922).

from a very early date. Dr. Burney suggests some time between A.D. 75 and 80, possibly even earlier, for the Gospel as we now have it, and this is not impossible. But we may content ourselves with the traditional view that the Gospel comes to us from somewhere near A.D. 90. It is not likely to have been much later, for, as we have seen, the Epistles of Ignatius are "full of Johannean theology."

But in recent years a number of "composition" or "partition" theories have been set forth with labour and learning.

With the exception of John vii. 53-viii. 11, which may be regarded on textual grounds as possibly a section of the "Apostolic Teaching" which has strayed into the text from the margin, and the twenty-first chapter, which was apparently added to remove a misinterpretation of a saying of Jesus, the impression which the Fourth Gospel leaves upon the mind is that of strict unity. This impression is still strongly felt by students of the Gospel. Dr. Sanday, for example, remarks: "The one rock on which it seems to me that any partition theory must be wrecked is the deep-seated unity of structure and composition which is characteristic of the Gospel."

To show this in detail would carry us far beyond our range; but we may confirm this impression by the significant fact that those who break up the organic unity of this Fourth Gospel come to no sort of agreement among themselves. Their views are so discrepant that they may be said to eliminate one another. Let us glance at one or two of these readjustments.

Wendt suggests that the Fourth Evangelist had before him a source composed of *logia* of Jesus. He composed a framework in which these might be inserted, describing the occasions on which the words were spoken, and adding discourses of his own.

W. Soltau feels that the invention of the framework of the Gospels is too stupendous a fraud to be credible. Accordingly, he postulates two sources—one a collection of sayings, the other a narration of events. This second narrative shows two strands—Johannine legends, and statements taken from the Synoptic Gospels. These three sources are combined either by the narrator or by a later editor.

Wellhausen postulates "a foundation document" which is largely narrative, and which may account for perhaps one-third of the contents of the Gospel. It passed from hand to hand within the group of Asian Christians of the second century. Not one or two,

but many were employed in the elaboration of this first sketch. They revised, recast, amplified, added, apparently at pleasure, the great sayings of Jesus being among the unauthorised additions.

Dr. Garvie distinguishes three strains in the Gospel. First, there is the testimony of the witness which often passes over from direct testimony to reflections upon the matters attested. This witness is not the son of Zebedee, but he is the disciple whom Jesus loved. In the second place, the contribution of the witness is worked over by the Evangelist, who, Dr. Garvie thinks, may have been John of Ephesus, the Elder. Then came the Redactor, or Editor, probably a Roman, a contemporary of Papias, Polycarp, and Justin Martyr. He gave to the Gospel its authoritative currency by identifying the disciple whom Jesus loved with the son of Zebedee, and by ascribing to him the writing and the testimony.

We may add this consideration. Those passages of the Gospel which are attributed to a second or third hand contain some of the most solemn and heavenly of our Lord's sayings—such as the sacramental discourses, His intercessory prayer, and His own Self-witness. In reading these sections of the Gospel one seems to be bathed in spiritual purity and light, and to have drawn as near the absolute Truth as one can reach on earth.

Let us suppose that a redactor, whether Roman or Greek, had invented some of these great utterances. Would he not have been guilty of an insupportable irreverence? For instance, could anyone who loved Jesus and called Him Lord have dared to compose a prayer appropriate for His use in that solemn hour between the Last Supper and the Agony in the Garden?

VI

I have tried to indicate (one can do no more) the main line of argument for the authenticity of the Fourth Gospel. But many even of those who admit that it comes to us bearing the signature of one who was "an eye-witness and minister of the Word" are unwilling to receive it as veritable history. The objections urged are for the most part mere literary judgments which appeal with varying force to different persons.

(a) We are told for example, that this treatise is by the confession of its author a Gospel, not a history. To say this is to misapprehend the apostle's meaning. What he does say is,

“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 ” (xx. 31). The story is told, the incidents are related, with this view, that the readers of the Gospel may be led to faith in the Saviour. But faith must have its warrant in truth, and the truth regarding Jesus is embedded in facts of history. The first duty of the evangelist, who wishes to convince his readers of the truth as truth is in Jesus, is to be historically veracious. Otherwise faith has no foothold. We dishonour an apostle, and in him we do despite to the Holy Spirit of inspiration, if we suggest that this evangelist is indifferent to the historicity of the facts which he records.

(b) Or, it is said, If the Fourth Gospel is the work of St. John's old age, may we not expect to find that his recollection has become obscure or faint ? Tradition (Muratori Fragment, etc.) makes it clear that John had often told the incidents recorded in his Gospel, and we are sure that in the first telling, with a fresh memory and a vivid apprehension of the events narrated, he would be scrupulously careful to report with exactness the things which happened, and in particular to give his Lord's words with careful precision. After a number of repetitions channels would be worn in the mind, and the story of Jesus as related by him would become fixed, and as it were stereotyped.

(c) Would it be possible for one to recall exactly those long discourses of Jesus, and His High Priestly prayer ? To do so would not be beyond the power of those in our own time who are endowed with a highly retentive memory. But there are special considerations which apply here. In the first place, our Lord's discourses, were conversations rather than addresses ; and points in an animated conversation or controversy might easily fasten themselves in the recollection of an interested auditor. Even the sacramental discourses move from point to point according to the mental response or verbal questioning of the hearers. They are involved, as Vinet remarks, in “a divine confusion.” One whose mind is strained to high nervous excitation could hardly fail to remember impressions made upon the spirit at such a time. This would especially be the case when John in the most solemn moment of his life, as we may believe it to have been, accompanied his Lord into the Holiest of all in the High Priestly Prayer. We must remember also that our Lord, before He passed from earth,

promised His disciples that the Comforter, the Holy Spirit of truth, would bring to their remembrance all that He had spoken to them (John xiv. 36). It is John who recalls this assurance ; we may believe that he had found it true in his own experience.

(*d*) It is alleged also that the outline of the ministry of Jesus, as it is traced in the Synoptic Gospels, is different from that which is given in the Fourth Gospel. The tradition informs us that one object of the writer was to supplement the other three. They had stressed the Galilean ministry, he emphasises the Judean. But there are numberless threads which pass from the one Gospel to the other three, interweaving into one harmonious pattern the life of the Son of Man. As, for example, when the Synoptists say, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together" (Luke xxiii. 34). Or, where John speaks incidentally of the Galilean ministry (i. 43, ii. 1, 11, iv. 3, 43, 45, 46, 47, 54, vi. 1, vii. 1, 9, 41, 52, etc.). Bishop Westcott in his Commentary instances some scores of passages where those "delicate filaments" cross.

(*e*) Another difficulty, of which more has been made than seems just is the similarity of style between our Lord's sayings and the narration of St. John. Two things may be mentioned in this connection. First, the assimilation of mind which brought the beloved disciple into ever-growing likeness to Jesus would react on everything he said and did : It would influence, among other things, his style of writing. Second, the sayings of Jesus were for the most part uttered in Aramaic, and St. John translates them. Naturally, the translation would bear traces of the style of the narrator.

(*f*) The difference of subject and expression between the Synoptic Gospels and the Fourth Gospel has often been remarked upon. We must remember the audience to which each Gospel was addressed. The first three were to young converts and inquirers. The basis of the Synoptic Gospels was the "teaching of the Apostles" (Acts ii. 42) and this took form immediately after the Great Pentecost ; whereas the Fourth Gospel was addressed to mature believers, many of them belonging to the second generation of Christianity : these would be able to receive those lofty teachings which St. John records. But we must not exaggerate the difference. There is nothing in the Fourth Gospel that passes beyond such a saying as that of Matt. xi. 27 : "All

things have been delivered unto Me of My Father ; and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father ; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal him." " This," says Dr. Forsyth, " is the Fourth Gospel *in nuce*." It is important to remember also that the Synoptists, recording as they do, the events of our Lord's Galilean ministry, report the words he addressed to plain men—husbandmen, fishers, and craftsmen ; whereas the Johannine records are reminiscent mainly of Jerusalem and the temple, where our Lord had a highly-trained auditory. The one exception to this is John vi. 22-59 ; and there it is evident that the Lord is engaged in controversy with the doctors of the law.

(g) It is sometimes alleged that the figure of our Lord in the Fourth Gospel is different from that given in the other three. I do not think that this objection would occur to the first believers : they recognised at once the lineaments of their Lord. This presentation of the Master was accepted without demur by the Church in all provinces of the Empire. If John rises to the heavens of our Lord's fellowship with the Father, he also sounds the depths of the humanity of the Redeemer. It is he who tells us that Jesus wept, that He thirsted, that He was troubled in spirit, etc. In all the New Testament there is but one image of the Christ, and it is more radiant than words can paint.

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