

The Relation of the Fourth Gospel to the Synoptists.

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THE Johannine problem is always with us. Year after year, yes, and month after month, new suggestions are forthcoming. At least they pretend to be new. Not infrequently we find them to be but old friends with new faces; and this is well-nigh inevitable, for we are being gradually forced to the conviction that, given only our present available material, we can hardly hope to get much nearer to the final solution of the many-sided problem. And yet each contributor seems to bring forward some new point of view, and is in consequence welcomed, so that a restatement of some of the older points has often something more fresh, more interesting, more helpful about it than most of the fashionable novelties of the day. Presumably each investigator imagines that his work is quite independent, quite impartial; and indeed it is only in so far as this is really the case that we can hope to gain a little more insight into the possible conditions of the original writer. The only method by which such independence may be in some degree arrived at is in the determination that nothing shall be presupposed; an ideal hardly attainable under present conditions. We may be sure, however, that if we start from the avowed standpoint of any established critic or author, simply because it has been widely recognized; we shall at once vitiate our entire argument for that portion of the community that refuses to accept the conclusions of our own particular guide. Let us then once more start, with a mind as open as possible, to gather some impressions as to the relation between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptists; a field of study investigated times without number, with regard to which a mass of literature is extant, but as touching which no one has yet dared to claim that they have said the last word. This is a phase of criticism as yet not reached, but we are not without indications that some such claims may soon be put forward, with just that amount of modesty that is compatible with them.

I.

Was the writer of the Fourth Gospel acquainted with the other three narratives? No one will as yet venture to dogmatize upon this subject; but

with some little hesitation we may answer 'yes.' The most doubtful side of the question is that touching the First Gospel. We do not need to lay much stress upon the fact that the sentence *ἄλλος δὲ λαβὼν λόγχην ἔνυξεν αὐτοῦ τὴν πλευράν, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ὕδωρ καὶ αἷμα*, which is but slightly altered from Jn 19³⁴, appears in certain manuscripts of the First Gospel (*i.e.* \aleph B C L U T 5 48 67 115 127) at the end of 27⁴⁹. We have here strong attestation for the sentence, it is true, but there is also good authority for its omission (A D al Syr^{sin} and others), so that the probability is that it appeared upon the margin of some ancient MS., and that the copyist was unable to resist the idea that *εἰς ἐξ αὐτῶν* of v.⁴⁸ implied a following *ἄλλος*; the sentence is certainly out of place before v.⁵⁰. Apart from this, the only place where the Fourth Evangelist is in agreement with the First against the other two is Jn 12^{15, 16} = Mt 21^{4, 5}. This is merely in the matter of a quotation and proves nothing. There are certain subtle touches which incline us to believe that the Fourth Evangelist was acquainted with the Third Gospel; he most certainly must have known of the Aramaic original which underlies the First Gospel, but he makes no use of the matter peculiar to either of these narratives. He knew, probably, that these two writers had accepted and made use of the Second Gospel as giving in the main an accurate outline of the Life of Christ; but whether he knew it or not, he certainly adopted that plan himself; and this is the important thing to remember when we recollect the local tradition, *καὶ τοῦθ' ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἔλεγε· Μάρκος μὲν, ἑρμηνευτῆς Πέτρου γενόμενος, ὅσα ἐμνημόνευσεν ἀκριβῶς ἔγραψεν*. The authority upon which this Gospel thus rested was considerable, so that the all-important question to decide as far as may be is surely this, How does the Fourth Evangelist treat this 'Petrine' Gospel?

II.

When we take the places where the Fourth Evangelist tells of the same incidents as are dealt with by St. Mark, we cannot but be struck by the almost total absence of agreement, as we use the word, that is to say, with regard to the Synoptists

themselves. Our author tells of the Baptism of Christ, and in doing so agrees in a small way with the other accounts, but he only does so in order to introduce a totally different aspect of the testimony of John Baptist, and a totally different version of the first meeting of St. Peter with the Christ; a very important point. He tells too of the feeding of the five thousand and the subsequent incident of Christ's walking upon the water (Jn 6¹⁻²¹ = Mk 6³⁰⁻⁵⁶), but his purpose in doing so is obviously to show that St. Mark has given the text, but has omitted the sermon. He mentions the triumphal entry in Jerusalem (Jn 12¹²⁻¹⁹ = Mk 11¹⁻¹⁰), but does so simply to bring in his reference to the influence of the raising of Lazarus upon the minds of the people in Jerusalem. We shall find some such elements in all the passages where the two narratives deal with the same events. They are divisible into the following classes:—

(a) Those where we find the Fourth Evangelist dismissing in a few words events narrated at some length by the Second.

(b) Those in which he tells of incidents which St. Mark also records, but with regard to which the two accounts are completely different.

(c) Places where he makes additions to the Marcan narrative—

(1) By way of explanation,

(2) By way of supplement.

Let us take these in detail.

(a) The following are the passages in which the Fourth Evangelist is content to make, as it were, a passing reference to the more detailed account of St. Mark:—

Jn 7¹ = Mk 7⁴⁻³¹. Jn 18¹ = Mk 14³²⁻⁴².
 Jn 11⁵⁴ = Mk 10³²⁻⁵². Jn 19^{16, 17} = Mk 15¹⁵⁻²³.

If we take the first of these in illustration we see that the Fourth Evangelist sums up a considerable portion of the account of the ministry of Christ in these words, *Καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα περιπάτει ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ, οὐ γὰρ ἤθελεν ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ περιπατεῖν, ὅτι ἐξήτουν αὐτόν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἀποκτεῖναι.*

It is evident, then, that in this passage, and in the others mentioned above, the writer wishes to make it plain that it is no part of his scheme to repeat needlessly anything that has been correctly related in the Second Gospel. It is as though he said, 'For further details see St. Mark.' One such passage might be put down as a mere

curious coincidence, but with these examples before us we are bound to decide that we have here evidences of the purpose and scheme of the writer of the Gospel.

(b) This becomes increasingly clear when we see that in certain cases our author is at pains to tell us events already related by St. Mark, but with regard to which he entirely disagrees with that writer. The most striking examples are to be found in the matter of the cleansing of the Temple, and of the call of St. Peter and St. Andrew. Concerning the first of these there has been much controversy. There have been those who earnestly contended that there must have been two such events, the one at the commencement and the other at the end of Christ's ministry. Others have pointed out, somewhat gleefully, that the discrepancy is best explained by the fact that we have here one of the several instances not merely of the inaccuracy of the Fourth Evangelist, but of the very mistakes to which such a writer was open, and into which he actually fell in spite of his great care to represent himself as an eye-witness. But as a matter of fact the phenomenon is capable of far simpler and far more natural explanation. Had the writer wished to remark that there were in fact two cleansings he would certainly have been more explicit; and, on the other hand, it is impossible to suppose that he is here guilty of a foolish blunder when we consider that he was making use of the Second Gospel. It remains only possible to suppose that his order is deliberately chosen with the express intention of correcting that of the Synoptists.

The second example illustrates this more forcibly. Here are the two accounts; they are irreconcilable.

Mk 1^{16, 17}.

Καὶ παράγων παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας εἶδεν Σίμωνα καὶ Ἀνδρέαν τὸν ἀδελφὸν Σίμωνος ἀμφιβάλοντας ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ, ἦσαν γὰρ ἀλεεῖς· καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, καὶ ποιῶ ὑμᾶς γενέσθαι ἀλεεῖς ἀνθρώπων. καὶ εὐθὺς ἀφέντες τὰ δίκτυα ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ.

Jn 1⁴⁰⁻⁴².

Ἦν Ἀνδρέας ὁ ἀδελφὸς Σίμωνος Πέτρου εἰς ἐκ τῶν δύο τῶν ἀκουσάντων παρὰ Ἰωάννου καὶ ἀκολουθησάντων αὐτῷ· εὕρισκε οὗτος πρῶτον τὸν ἀδελφὸν τὸν ἴδιον Σίμωνα καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ Εὐράκημεν τὸν Μεσσίαν (ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνευόμενον Χριστός). ἤγαγεν αὐτὸν πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν. ἐμβλέψας αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν Σὺ εἶ Σίμων ὁ υἱὸς Ἰωάννου, σὺ κληθήσῃ Κηφᾶς (ὃ ἐρμηνεύεται Πέτρος).

Now what other purpose can our author have had than to give what he considered to be the true version of an all-important event in the life of one with whom he is closely associated in this Gospel (and elsewhere?), and upon whose authority, moreover, the Second Gospel was generally considered to rest? Any other explanation of the discrepancy is forced and unnatural, unless we are content to view the Fourth Gospel as a mere forgery. Another notable example in which explanation and correction are combined is to be found in the account of the feeding of the five thousand and the subsequent appearance of Christ upon the sea (Jn 6¹⁻²⁴ = Mk 6¹⁴⁻⁵⁶). The account given by the Fourth Evangelist is a mere sketch, but he adds little details omitted by St. Mark, and inserts vv.³⁻⁷ by way of fuller explanation. Thus in his narrative we have the locality more definitely stated, *πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Γαλιλαίας τῆς Τιβεριάδος*, in v.¹; the reason for the assembled multitude, *ὅτι ἐθεώρουν τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίει ἐπὶ τῶν ασθενούντων*, in v.²; the time of year, *ἦν δὲ ἐγγὺς τὸ πάσχα, ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων*, in v.⁴; the trial of Philip, vv.⁵⁻⁷; the *παιδάριον* in v.⁹; and the result produced, *Οἱ οὖν ἄνθρωποι ἰδόντες ἃ ἐποίησεν σημεῖα ἔλεγον ὅτι Οὗτος ἐστὶν ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον*.

And then the author goes on to point out that the miracle had a further and deeper significance, in that upon it Christ founded His teaching at Capharnaum. Again, in these examples we have strong evidence that the Fourth Evangelist intended not so much to write an independent, 'spiritual' Gospel, but that he wished to correct the existing accounts where they were wrong, as he thought, and to introduce such matter as he considered ought not to have been omitted.

(c) We have only to examine the additional matter in the Fourth Gospel in the light of the fact that the author admits the gigantic nature of an endeavour to tell of all that Christ did and said (indeed, his hyperbole expresses impossibility), in order to see all this more clearly.

(1) As an instance of the way in which he supplements the Marcan narrative by way of fuller explanation, we may take the events in the garden of Gethsemane in Jn 18¹⁻¹⁴. Our author sees no reason for a repetition of the account of the Agony, but to the story of the Betrayal he adds a few graphic details, *i.e.* the amazing result of Christ's self-revelation in vv.⁴⁻⁹; the designation

of St. Peter as the author of the attack upon the servant of the High Priest and the addition of the victim's name, *Μάλλχος*, in v.¹⁰; and the recording of the reason given by Christ for non-resistance, *τὸ ποτήριον ὃ δεδωκέν μοι ὁ πατήρ οὐ μὴ πῶ αὐτό*.

The whole account of the Passion is strikingly illustrative of this attitude of the Evangelist towards the Second Gospel. Compare Jn 18¹⁵⁻³⁸ with Mk 14⁶⁶⁻⁷²; Jn 19¹⁸⁻²⁴ with Mk 15²⁴⁻²⁸; Jn 19³⁸⁻⁴² with Mk 15⁴²⁻⁴⁶. A comparison of the last two passages will show what is meant.

Mk 15⁴²⁻⁴⁶.

42. Καὶ ἦδη ὄψις γενομένης, ἐπεὶ ἦν παρασκευή, ὃ ἐστὶν προσάββατον, ἐλθὼν Ἰωσήφ ἀπὸ Ἀριμαθαίας εὐσχημὼν βουλευτῆς, ὃς καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν προσδεχόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, τολμήσας εἰσῆλθεν πρὸς τὸν Πειλάτον καὶ ἠτήσατο τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ. 44. ὁ δὲ Πειλάτος ἐθαύμασεν εἰ ἦδη τέθνηκεν, καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος τὸν κεντυρίωνα ἐπρωτόησεν αὐτὸν εἰ ἦδη ἀπέθανεν. 45. καὶ γνοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ κεντυρίωνος ἐδωρήσατο τὸ πτώμα τῷ Ἰωσήφ. 46. καὶ ἀγοράσας σινδῶνα καθελὼν αὐτὸν ἐνείλησεν τῇ σινδῶνι καὶ ἔθηκεν αὐτὸν ἐν μνήματι ὃ ἦν λεηλατούμενον ἐκ πέτρας, καὶ προσεκύλισεν λίθον ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν τοῦ μνημείου.

Jn 19³⁸⁻⁴².

38. Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα ἠρώτησεν τὸν Πειλάτον Ἰωσήφ ἀπὸ Ἀριμαθαίας, ὢν μαθητῆς τοῦ Ἰησοῦ κεκρυμμένος δὲ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ἵνα ἄρῃ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ ἐπέτρεψεν ὁ Πειλάτος. Ἦλθεν οὖν καὶ ἦρεν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ. 39. ἦλθεν δὲ καὶ Νικόδημος, ὁ ἐλθὼν πρὸς αὐτὸν νυκτὸς τὸ πρῶτον, φέρων ἔλιγμα σμύρνης καὶ ἀλόης ὡς λίτρας ἑκατόν. 40. ἔλαβον οὖν τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ ἔδησαν αὐτὸ ὀθονίοις μετὰ τῶν ἀρωμάτων, καθὼς ἔθος ἐστὶν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ἐνταφιάζειν. 41. ἦν δὲ ἐν τῷ τόπῳ ὅπου ἐσταυρώθη, κῆπος, καὶ ἐν τῷ κήπῳ μνημεῖον καινόν, ἐν ᾧ οὐδέπω οὐδεὶς ἦν τεθειμένος. 42. ἐκεῖ οὖν διὰ τὴν παρασκευὴν τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ὅτι ἐγγὺς ἦν τὸ μνημεῖον, ἔθηκαν τὸν Ἰησοῦν.

It will be seen from the above, which is typical of several passages in the two Gospels (indeed, we might say that it represents one aspect of the relationship between them), that the story of the Fourth Evangelist is in no way a retelling of that of the Second Evangelist by way of repetition. The First and the Third Evangelists have been content to do that in a large measure. The Fourth Evangelist repeats not a word more than is necessary, and, as will be seen from the passages in spaced type, adds several important details.

2. There remains for discussion the purely

supplementary matter which our Evangelist inserts by way of amplification, and which marks off his Gospel from the other three. This, of course, forms a separate subject by itself. Many reasons have been put forward in order to account for it, but it becomes increasingly plain with careful study that this writer is by no means intending to give us all that has been omitted by the others, nor is it his intention to paint a different side of the character of Christ. His purpose seems to be threefold. He wishes to lay stress upon the events which occurred in Jerusalem and its immediate neighbourhood, because he considers that it is to these that we must look if we would really understand the ultimate trend of events; he wishes to emphasize yet more the note of universality in the teaching of Christ, so he almost adopts the position of the Gentile towards the Jews, tells of the events in Samaria, and records in the last discourses some very remarkable sayings on this head; but, above all, he wishes to lay stress upon that aspect of the Saviour's personality and self-revelation, together with its influence and result, which he considered that the Synoptists had passed over too lightly, namely, His insistence from the very beginning upon His Godhead, the acceptance of this by His chosen band, and the consequent close personal relationship between Himself and them because of this.

The much discussed miracle of the Raising of Lazarus may be less of a difficulty in the light of this purpose of the writer. He is convinced that it was the supreme point in our Lord's life. To him it seems to be intimately connected with the decisive hostile action of the rulers. The Synoptists have omitted the entire story, and for the very good reason that St. Mark got no such impression from St. Peter, but rather considered that the Raising of the daughter of Jairus was more important, because it was more widely known; probably he had completely forgotten the Lazarus incident when he wrote his Gospel. St. Luke in his researches finds only a tradition concerning a Raising at Nain. All this points to the fact that the Fourth Evangelist in looking back over events had formed an exaggerated estimate of the importance of this miracle, which may well have been a very quiet family affair. But he certainly is convinced of its tremendous importance, and he

brings this out, not only in the story of the miracle itself, but in his reference to it in the account of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Jn 12¹⁷⁻¹⁹). The present writer has shown¹ that the framework of St. Mark may quite well allow room for the insertion of this miracle and of the other matter peculiar to this Gospel.

III.

Here we have in brief outline a truly scientific method of studying the relationship between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptists. Its main importance lies in the fact that it may help to get rid of the dust-collecting cobwebs which ever-busy critical spiders are ever unremittingly spinning, and thus help to bring the discussion within its legitimate limits. It surely will make it abundantly plain that the author of the Fourth Gospel, knowing that the Second Gospel was founded upon what Jülicher calls 'the reminiscences of the Petrine circle,'² deliberately corrected it in many points, and added to it much of importance; that he was convinced that his authority would amply guarantee the accuracy of his statements; that he claims to have been an eye-witness without any apparent fear of contradiction. In addition to all this, such a plan of investigation strongly suggests that, broadly speaking, the Gospel as a whole is the work of a single author, working with a distinct and honourable purpose, who is amply qualified for the task that he has undertaken. Who could hope to speak with such authority? Who could expect to make assertions such as this writer makes without provoking immediate and indignant attack? It is not enough to say, with Weizsäcker, that 'the author of the book and the school of which he was a member were able to lay claim to the name of the Apostle.'³ Either the author was, as tradition tells us, John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee, or else he was a distinct John, not one of the twelve, but yet sufficiently intimate with Christ to be named *ὁ μαθητὴς ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς*, and afterwards known as the presbyter. There are doubtless many of us who are content for the present with this, even though we like to lean towards the traditional authorship.

¹ THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, October 1907, p. 43.

² *Introd. to the N. T.*, p. 319 (E.T.).

³ *Apostolic Age*, ii, p. 212 (E.T.).