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The Evangelical Quarterly

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THE AUTHORSHIP AND AUTHENTICITY OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

POSSESSION is said to be nine-points or tenths of the law. And not unjustly so; for the vast majority of property-owners possess an unexceptionable title to their estates. May we not, in fact, extend the adage to literary property in general, and affirm that the accredited author of any book, by that very circumstance, supplies a kind of prescriptive title to what is held to be his patrimony? The exceptions are remarkably few and far between. Here is a case where common report deserves to carry weight. Why do we ascribe the tragedies of Aeschylus or the comedies of Terence to their respective authors? Mainly because they have come down to us with the sanction of antiquity under these names, and internal evidence bears out the traditional ascription.

We live, however, in an age of hypercriticism, crazy with suspicion of the past, a day wherein that Red Indian up to date, the Biblical tomahawker, decorates himself with the scalps of time-honoured opinions, largely for the sake of the prestige he wins by the feat. To-day alas! almost all the books of Scripture have to run the gauntlet of challenge, being brusquely indicted as defaulters or dissemblers till they prove their honesty up to the hilt! It may not be amiss then at the outset to remind ourselves how rare a phenomenon literary personation is, and how dependent on a combination of favourable circumstances. An eminent man of letters has remarked that Defoe is nearly the sole English author known who has so plausibly circumstantiated his false history as to make it pass muster with fairly competent judges. Exposure dogs such frauds as soon as a keen searchlight is focused on the deception. True, obscurity may shelter a spurious composition such as the epistles of Phalaris or the *γνώμαι* of the pseudo-Phocylides for centuries; but a work of

loftier range, stamped with a distinctive impress, like the principal rivers of the globe, will almost inevitably be traced to its authentic source. The authorship of the *Provincial Letters* was sedulously concealed at the time of their publication; but not for long. Who that has examined their credentials, or noted the litness of their dazzling fence, stands in doubt that Blaise Pascal was the fencer?

Now the Gospel of John belongs to the category of books that tingle with vitality. It is one of the immortals. It has riveted the minds and captivated the hearts of millions, and is still entrancing countless readers. Nor is any proof forthcoming that it ever positively ranked as an anonymous production. The "beloved disciple" of whom it speaks was manifestly known to its first readers, just as the writer to the Hebrews must have been to his.

And, unlike that Epistle, the authorship was fixedly treated as a settled question. The Christian Church, its proper consignee and guardian, has delivered it to posterity as Johannine by a continuous line of tradition stretching from the second to the nineteenth century. That award has been called in question only since the uprising of our present-day theological detective agencies, whose staple aliment is mistrust. Not only does this same catholic consensus of opinion, as with any other historically attested statement, throw the *onus probandi*, or rather *improbandi*, on its gainsayers, but it ought also to count as a warrantable ground for favouring the cause of the party found in occupation of the premises. At any rate that is how we act in other cases. On finding Livy (e.g.) in possession of the copyright, so to speak, of his history, we accept the current tradition that it is his progeny, despite the fact that no MS. of Livy dates less than 500 years after his lifetime; and we do so without troubling ourselves to ascertain the alleged "patavinity" of his Latin. I stress this point because our critical novelisers seem to labour under the delusion that the world began with themselves, at least the world of superior persons, of whom they are chief. They find it convenient to ignore or decry the validity of historic notification, mounting in John's case much nearer the fountain-head than in scores of others entertained without the least demur.

I

Let us then start by employing the ordinary means of historical proof at our disposal, to wit, the *external evidence* in support of St. John's authorship of the Fourth Gospel.

It is well known that the Tübingen School of the last century, now happily defunct, spent immense pains on the vain endeavour to relegate it to the second half of Century II. They were met by the production of evidence of its recognition in the apostolic Fathers; and quite recently the *coup de grace* has been dealt to such vagaries by the discovery of a fragment of the 18th chapter in a papyrus-leaf, dated by the palaeographers quite early in the second century. Few dispute that it was the last written of the Gospels. The prevalent voice of antiquity makes John the latest survivor of the apostolic college, and regards his Gospel as composed in his closing years at Ephesus, the capital of proconsular Asia, commonly assigned as his final residence and burial-place. The internal evidence moreover, as we shall see, looks that way. If that be so, the traces of acquaintance with it "proved to demonstration", according to Dr. Burney, discernible even in the curtailed version of the letters of Ignatius, stand quite near its original wellspring. So do allusions found to it in the surviving fragments of the heretic Basilides, who lived about A.D. 125, and in the remains of the slightly later Valentinian School, which sought to enlist this Gospel in the cause of Gnosticism. Heracleon, a pupil of Valentinus, we learn from Origen, actually composed a commentary upon it. These data warrant the inference that John's Gospel was the common property of the Catholic Church before these seceders left it. They do not, of course, testify directly to its authorship: but they do bear witness to its presence and authoritative status at a period within a generation of that usually assigned for John's decease; and thus go far to confirm its apostolicity. No sooner indeed does occasion arise for the specification of his name than we find Theophilus of Antioch and Irenaeus positively ascribing it to the apostle John. The sole dissentient voice (if such it be) is that of Papias, to which we shall return by and by. Dr. Salmon has shown how distinctly Justin Martyr alludes to the Fourth Gospel, and his pupil Tatian's Harmony opens with its prologue. Irenaeus's testimony carries the greater weight, because his career familiarized him with the

traditions alike of Asia Minor, Rome and Gaul. He declares that neither more nor less than four Gospels were acknowledged by the church catholic, and that this sacred quaternion held a position absolutely unique. His evangel is, in his own phrase, τετράμορφον. *The Gospel* (often written in the singular, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) read in the ancient church was a fourfold document, as indeed the title *Diatessaron* itself implies. And so Archbishop Bernard (in the I.C.C. Commentary) has to admit, in contrariety to his own prepossessions, that for Hippolytus and Tertullian, for Origen and Clement of Alexandria (the most critical minds of their day, observe), there was no Johannine problem whatsoever (*Introd.* p. liv). One insignificant heterodox sect, the Alogi, or Irrationals, (for Marcion's case is disputed) are known to have entirely rejected John. The sceptic Celsus moreover treats this Gospel as an official Christian document, for whose statements Christians can be made universally answerable. Furthermore, the earliest ecclesiastical canon we possess, the Muratorian, not only endorses its authenticity, but supplies an interesting tradition of its Ephesian origin in John's old age, at the urgent suit of his co-presbyters. Here is what Liddon terms a "solid block of historic evidence", not to be blinked or put by. Need we say that no like testimony of genuineness could be produced from the century subsequent to their decease for such contemporary works as Tacitus' *Annals* or Juvenal's *Satires*? No wonder Eusebius gives it a place among the undisputed books of the N. T. Canon.

II

It is time, however, to scrutinize the *internal* evidence furnished by the Gospel itself. One or two preliminary considerations here demand notice. The First Epistle of John cannot possibly be divorced from the Gospel it supplements, and by well-nigh universal consent that Epistle emanates from the apostle John. Its striking peculiarities of style and matter bear his impress as incontrovertibly as though we possessed his autograph. Westcott holds that the Gospel and Epistle were bound up together and circulated conjointly. Be that as it may, they seem to be St. John's parting legacy to the Church. Irenaeus expressly states that he lived till Trajan's reign, at Ephesus. This perfectly sound tradition has been recently impugned by certain sturdy doubters, but it accords too

closely with the contents of the Fourth Gospel to be lightly surrendered.

Consider for a moment its peculiar function and character. Starting with a sublime prologue which betokens a theosophical environment whose misleading influence it proposes to rectify by the true doctrine of the Logos, this Gospel, at once complementary and supplementary, constitutes an independent narrative of Christ's words and acts, with special reference to his Judaean ministry, presumed (Matt. xxiii. 37, Luke xiii. 34) but not recounted by the Synoptists. Eusebius rightly maintains that it assumes their priority and antecedent circulation. In proof of that it suffices to remark that the Twelve Apostles are introduced without enumeration or reference to official call; that the Baptist's imprisonment is supposed to be already known to the reader; that Mary Magdalene's name and that of Judas Iscariot occur without prefatory remark. The total omission of the Transfiguration and Ascension, and the oblique glance cast at the Incarnation, show that a complete history was by no means the writer's design. In fact, scarcely more than twenty days in our Lord's ministry are dealt with at length. St. John's aim, as he tells us, is to transfuse into our breasts that overmastering conviction of Christ's Deity which the spectacle of His glory, even when veiled in a mantle of flesh, had kindled in his own soul. Neutrality John cannot brook. His Gospel paints by representative scenes the alternating phases of attraction and repulsion which the immediate presence of Jesus elicited, the growth side by side of faith and unbelief, till the latter culminates in the venomous malice and brutal fury of His crucifiers. Like his Master, the disciple He loved cannot be hid. He reveals himself in divers ways. Under Westcott's masterly pilotage, we can discriminate the concentric rings which may be drawn around him.

1. He is *an Hebrew of the Hebrews*. Linguistically that can be maintained only with certain reservations. For, whatever explanation we may adopt of the solecisms of the Apocalypse, there are none in John's Gospel.¹ Though not idiomatic, his Greek is of a good build; but the genius of an Israelite indeed interfuses it throughout. His diction bears little or no affinity to that of thoroughly Hellenized Jews such as Aristeas, Philo or Josephus. "The words are Greek," concludes Westcott, "but the spirit

¹ Perhaps the most noticeable, the *ὅτι μὴ πεπίστευκεν* of iii. 18, can be paralleled from Lucian and Philostratus, neo-Atticists though they were.

that lives in them Hebrew." Deissmann's crusade against Hebraic Greek leads him to dispute one of its plainest tokens, the *paratactic sentences* so frequently introduced by a copulative *καί*. For this usage Deissmann furnishes a few semi-parallels, chiefly Egyptian, from the papyri, not improbably due to Semitic influences. But that feature does not stand alone. John is fond of *anadiplosis*, especially of repeating keywords, and of Hebrew *parallelism*, both positive and negative. His marked use of the figure *chiasmus* appears to be overlooked by our New Testament scholars; but this we take to be a Hellenistic rather than Hebraic trait; for bilingual he must needs have been. On the other hand, he displays the minutest acquaintance with the Old Testament, and the Levitical economy; and, whilst currently quoting the LXX., never adopts that version by preference, and in crucial instances, such as xix. 37, reverts to the Hebrew text, a deviation, by the way, from the LXX. exactly reproduced in Rev. i. 7.

2. *Every class of Jewish society, and every current Jewish usage and sentiment, are familiar to him.* His exhaustive knowledge of the spirit of Pharisaism sufficiently evinces that fact. A single objection to this estimate has been mooted by sundry German critics, which founds itself on the peculiar fashion in which the term *οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι* is used to designate the party of Christ's enemies. But that phraseology, like the appellation, *the Sea of Tiberias*, only reflects the later date of this Gospel, written outside the bounds of Judaea and after the deadly hostility of carnal Judaism towards Christianity had shown itself in a hundred forms. In effect, John has prepared us for this representation in his first chapter by the sorrowful announcement, "He came to τὰ ἴδια, His own land, and οἱ ἴδιοι His own folk, received Him not." And when the unquestionable Gentile aspect of the Gospel is deemed un-Jewish (for John interprets Jewish words and customs for his prospective readers) we reply that the spirit of the new dispensation has by this time broken down the middle-wall of partition so long jealously kept intact, and introduced a purely catholic outlook.

3. The author *hails from Palestine*, as his perfect knowledge of its topography demonstrates. He displays all the familiarity of a Galilæan fisherman with the shores of the Galilæan lake. Note, too, how carefully he discriminates place-names, such as Bethany (not Bethabara) beyond Jordan, Aenon near Salim, Cana of Galilee, and Ephraim next the wilderness. He has no

more to learn about Jerusalem than the Euston taxi-driver about his London, as Dr. Rendle Short crisply phrases it. Bethesda, with its five porches, rediscovered in recent years, the adjacent sheep-gate and intermittent spring, the gorge of the Kidron, the pool of Siloam, the exact distance of the suburban Bethany from the capital, the temple precincts with the treasury situated in the court of the women, and the fact that the warmest side of the temple in winter was Solomon's porch, the locality and associations of Golgotha and Gabbatha and of the garden-tomb,—what stranger could have palmed off all these nice particulars on his readers by way of deception?

4. We have here *an eye-witness*. All manner of minute touches evince that. His timing of events is precise (a mark of the Apocalypse too), and to him we owe our knowledge of the duration of our Lord's ministry, left undefined by the Synoptists. Who but a looker-on would have counted the number of the Cana water-pots, or noticed that they were brimful, or told us that the Samaritan woman left hers behind in her pre-occupation of mind, or that the Bethsaida lad had five loaves and two sprats in stock, or that the perfume of Mary's spikenard filled the house, or given us the weight of Nicodemus's myrrh and aloes, or totalled the miraculous haul of fish as only a fisherman *would* do, with a note of surprise that the net was undamaged? The rich harvest of a keenly observant eye greets us everywhere in his narratives. He espies the scourge of small cords wielded in the first cleansing of the temple, observes how a boulder barred Lazarus's grave, how his face was wrapt in a napkin; he notes that the captors of Jesus carried lanterns and torches, that the air that night was so chilly that the servants lit a fire, that Pilate gave judgment from a *bema* outside the *palatium* proper, that the Saviour's legs were not broken, yet His side was pierced, and that His discarded grave-clothes were thus and thus arranged. It would have tasked the wittiest invention to have fabricated these graphic details. Novel-writing is a modern development, and the artful circumstantialities of the present-day romancer appertain to the *mises en scène*, the stage-effects, of a professional school of fiction, and must be reckoned by every fair judge to be altogether foreign to the simple witness of these followers of Him in whom lurked no vestige of guile. These men were believers, honest as the day, not make-believers, nor toys with puppets of their own framing.

5. Let us draw the net closer. Manifestly the author was an apostle, and *a member of the innermost circle*; for he can inform us of the impression made by the Master's utterances on individual parties included in the apostolic band. This silent but searching observer reads their feelings with familiar intuition. He unveils to us, moreover, the mind of Christ Himself as His privy confidant, and defines His relations with every section of the community. It is obvious that only one of the inner triad chosen to be the Lord's intimate associates could occupy such a coign of vantage. Nobody suspects a Petrine authorship of the Fourth Gospel. James the Zebedaeian was too early martyred to enter into the reckoning. So the method of exhaustion leaves none available for the task except John himself. And who so qualified as he by sympathy with his subject? Must not the disciple whom Jesus loved unburden his soul ere his departure concerning his transcendent Lover? To be thus loved lays a mandate on the beloved to break silence; for love "lends a precious seeing to the eye," a supersensitive hearing to the ear.

A cable composed of so many stout strands cannot easily be broken. Consider then, in conclusion, the terms in which the writer half veils, half unveils, his identity. When in c.1 he narrates Andrew's call, an unnamed disciple bears him company, in whom the great bulk of expositors recognise John himself, hitherto a disciple of the Baptist. Indeed his hand betrays itself in the simple designation *John* which, unlike the Synoptists, he applies to the forerunner; for we do not confuse ourselves (though others may do so) with our own namesakes. And "another disciple", surely the same, reappears in c.xviii. 15, as the comrade and fugleman of Peter. Then in xix. 35, we may read his own solemn attestation at that memorable hour when, after Mary's consignment to his charge, he beheld the water and blood issue from the Saviour's riven side.¹ Once again we hear either his own reaffirmation or the affidavit of the Ephesian elders in xxi. 24. Evidently to its first readers the author of this Gospel was no anonymous scribe, but a well-known figure in their midst. And does not xiii, 23-5 show who he is?

¹ Bernard argues that the *ἐκεῖνος* here precludes any reference to the author. But Professor Torrey (*Our Transl. Gosp.* p. 52) reaches precisely the opposite conclusion, insisting that the pronoun represents a common Aramaic periphrasis for the first person. Little as we accept Torrey's theory of an Aramaic original for John, we welcome this suggestion as casting light on the Johannine use of *ἐκεῖνος*.

Nor must we fail to notice how well both it and its epilogue, the First Epistle, comport with the apostle's known character. He was a son of thunder, and Raphael and Titian have done him grievous wrong by depicting him as a languorous, long-haired Romish pietist. There was in John's temperament an Elijah-like vein that drew him first to the feet of the fiery Baptist and then to those of his zeal-eaten Master; a spark of sacred vehemence, prompt to call down vengeance on his Lord's detractors. That native cast of mind, however, was blended with a glow of fervid aspiration latent underneath the calm surface of a nature which stored up its liquid fuel till the hour struck for the overflow of the pent-up stream. In its first stages his attachment to his Enrapturer resembled, though it far excelled, the dumb devotion of a dog to its master; but it mellowed into a grand assimilation to His Lodestar, the Light and Life of men, to whom all the petals of his secretive soul opened wide. His inborn reserve suppresses not only his own name, but his brother's and mother's and that of the Virgin Mary; nor can we bide long in his society without catching that accent of severity which spurned love arouses in the breast of ardent devotion. All these traits interchange and commingle in this wondrous evangel, and they are the index of a soul born for contemplation rather than action, for solitude rather than society. A dreamer, if you will, but withal an inspired seer, and interpreter of heavenly mysteries. "His style," says Farrar, "is supremely beautiful, yet unlike that of any other writer, sacred or profane." What lightning-sketches of character he draws, and how inevitably his central Figure dominates every scene! How those fathomless I AMs and adamant *Verily Verilies* of the eternal Son peal through the discourses given us by this private-secretary of Immanuel; and what grand pulsations ever and anon throb and swell beneath the limpid surface of his shoreless ocean of truth! Augustine styles his prologue a thunderclap, not unsuitably, at least as regards the abrupt opening of that prelude to his mighty Oratorio. Note, too, his superb economy of wording. How he renders the outer darkness of the betrayal palpable by the simple juxtaposition: "Judas went out, *and it was night.*" How John's tenderness finds vent in the tersest of sentences: "*Jesus wept,*" and how in the eerie glint of dawn his tremulous affection upwells in the quick ejaculation: "*It is the Lord!*" Yet he can pause midway in his eagle-flight to remark subtle correspondences between type and antitype,

or to pen what we may call *footnotes* or parentheses to his transcendent theme.¹ But the heavenlies are his proper region. He alone could chronicle the High-priestly Prayer, or record that ringing note of triumph, *τετέλεσται*, which burst from our unswerving Champion in the invincible might of His weakness as He drove the embattled hosts of darkness single-handed in rout before Him, and "death in dying slew." If ever a scroll bore an authentic signature, it is this one. But there must be congeniality between the percipient of such a "spiritual Gospel" and the thing perceived. Right well did Origen declare that none can appreciate it aright except those who have themselves leaned on Jesus' breast. The critical quibbler is quite out of his depth here, nay, out of his element!

III

Hitherto we have enjoyed plain sailing. But before furling canvas we must steer a passage past the tortuous shoals and sandbanks of unbelief; and that will tax our skill in navigation, even with the aid of our celestial planisphere. Let us make this trial-trip (in more senses than one) as brief as may be. Our task is in some respects lightened by the glaring discordances in the charts laid down by our mappers out of cloudland. Many of them are at loggerheads among themselves. "The results," says Dr. Howard, "must be disappointing to those who have looked forward to definite progress along a clearly marked route."² Just so; but eminently satisfactory to the old fogies who are not scared, as he is, by the dire reproach of conservatism. Sayce deliberately pronounced subjective criticism a "worthless pastime," and he spoke as one of its quondam votaries. It is ever weaving a Penelope's web, doomed in perpetuity to the toil of "dropping buckets into empty wells and growing old with drawing nothing up." And never are its labours more futile or pretensions emptier than when (as Warfield has pointed out) it applies the test of successful fiction, verisimilitude, to documents purporting to be historical records of fact. For truth is often stranger than fiction; in Boileau's line, *le vrai peut quelque-*

¹ Obvious misapprehensions St. John does not stay to correct, but he annotates other matters for us. "Jesus did not commit Himself to them; for He knew what was in man." "But He spake of the temple of His body." "For the Jews do not consort with the Samaritans." "As the manner of the Jews is to bury." "This spake He of the Spirit." "This He said, signifying what death He should die." "This Judas said, not that he cared for the poor." Living touches these!

² *The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism*, p. 103.

fois n'être pas vraisemblable. The critical touchstone of bare likelihood would in fact invest every masterpiece of romance with actuality, and consign every antecedently improbable chain of events to the limbo of illusions. "No matter," says De Quincey, "if the chances against a fact were a thousand to one before examination; if on application of proper tests the results be in its favour, it will be as firmly established as if the chances had been just the other way." That is to say, experience has to bow to testimony; for on testimony ultimately it rests; whereas subjective consistency of theory is no guarantee whatsoever for objective reality. Macaulay complains of Niebuhr that he seeks to force a theory of historical events on our acceptance merely because it "solves the phenomena so neatly." But the evidence forthcoming, not the ingenuity of the hypothesis advanced, must turn the scale with a sterling inquirer. A narration may transcend our experience; "wireless" did so a short while ago; but experience (and experimental science to boot) admits of constant supplement and revision. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in the most modern modernist's philosophy. So his limitary horizon cannot be made the gauge of possibility, nor his critical alembic the final criterion of truth. Even the conceivable is not the measure of the real to the theist. That man is "the measure of all things" was the false axiom of Protagoras, and of Hegel as well; but minds not bent on the evasion or elimination of the supernatural learn to shun the error signaled by Wordsworth of "dreaming our puny boundaries are things that we perceive and not that we have made."

To descend from generalities to particulars. How shall we classify our negative positivists? There are the *Discreditors* of John's authorship of the Fourth Gospel and their auxiliaries, its *Vivisectors* and *Compositors*.

Some critics confine themselves to the task of sundering the apostle from the Gospel bearing his name. A first-hand witness is unpalatable to them, for reasons best known to themselves. What then are the pretexts alleged for this flat reversal of the sentence of past generations? Let us reconnoitre the chief items of objection.

No. 1. A chorus of voices harps upon the seventy years' interval elapsing before we hear Irenaeus asseverate the Johanne authorship. A most unfair cavil this! We have shown already how intermediate evidence exists of this Gospel's

exceptional status and general reception, such as brings it distinctly within hail of apostolicity. Furthermore, the fragmentary remains of the second century cannot be expected to furnish the detail demanded, which *is* forthcoming, however, as soon as a canonical conspectus like the Muratorian looms in view. Moreover, Irenaeus had met Polycarp in his youth, and Polycarp had himself hung on John's lips. Half the writers of antiquity would be ejected from their holdings by insistence on the supposed test of genuineness.

No. 2. Uneasily conscious of the flimsiness of this line of attack, our theological sappers spring another mine under the beloved disciple's feet. Daniel Webster exclaimed in one of his legal conflicts, "the past at least is secure". But he had never met with our latter-day "thinkers-out of history" and prescribers of its permissible sequences. To them the firm landscape of the past ranks as little more than an imposing pageantry to be seen through and recast, if it be sacred history, on *a priori* grounds of religious development, by every licentiate in theology who has brass enough for the enterprise. Accordingly a group of critics, including Wellhausen, Moffatt, Burkitt and Charles, have adopted a cock-and-bull story of John's early martyrdom along with his brother or else the other James. This myth floats on the bladder (1) of a Syrian church-calendar of the fifth century, when martyrdom had grown to a fetish inseparable from the reputation of an apostle. The frail flotation is (2) buoyed up by a still later rumour of the ninth century, that both James and John had been slain by the Jews. Even then the latter's martyrdom might have occurred late in the day at Ephesus through Jewish instigation. But the stable patristic tradition and the contents of the Gospel itself suffice to shatter this cockleshell craft. In his wayward but ingenuous volume, *According to St. John*, Lord Charnwood comments thus caustically on this paltry fable:—

"There could be no better example of a vice which microscopic research often induces, that of abnormal suspiciousness towards evidence which satisfies ordinary people, coupled with abnormal credulity towards evidence which is trifling or null. . . . It is plain that a large class of N.T. Critics who aim at being up-to-date condone on the part of themselves work which would gravely discredit a man occupied in other branches of study." (pp. 35, 6).

Dr. Peake's scepticism also assumes a wholesome cast at this point. He writes:—

"The alleged martyrdom of the apostle John I firmly disbelieve. It has gained a credence amazing in view of the slender evidence on which it is built, which would have provoked derision, if it had been adduced in favour of a conservative conclusion."¹

Habemus confitentem reum! It is refreshing to listen to an influential critic's shrift respecting the humoursome bias deemed compatible with what passes for "scientific criticism". Certain it is that judicial appraisal of evidence is not the average modernist's forte. Trifles light as air are to the squint-eyed confirmations strong as proofs of Holy Writ! Dr. Bernard dismisses his scrutiny of this nightmare of the Dark Ages with the conclusion that "no inference can be drawn from a corrupt sentence in a late epitome of a work of a careless historian". (*I.C.C., Introd. xlii.*) We should think not, except by connoisseurs in mare's nests!

No. 3. This objection fastens on the alleged *imitation* by the writer of *Mark's language* in certain passages as incompatible with the ascription of this Gospel to John. But it does not appear why, especially where spoken utterances are rehearsed, a close approximation or overlapping of the reports should indicate pilfering, and not show the singular fidelity of the reporters. One writer finds conclusive evidence of copying in the employment by both evangelists (Mk. xiv. 3., Jn. xii. 3) of the rare phrase *ναρδὸς πιστικῆ* for Mary's spikenard. But if Grimm and Moulton and Milligan are right in holding that *πιστικός* here signifies *genuine*, the term may have been technical; and Pliny's use of the counterbalancing term *pseudonardus* (*Nat. Hist. xii. 12, 26*) confirms this supposition.

No. 4. The critics are hard to please. They find fault alike with correspondences and *discrepancies*. These latter are, broadly speaking, of two sorts, those incongruities that appear on the surface and are confessedly *cruces interpretum*, and those that are artfully manufactured. To the former class pertain such difficulties as the omission of the Supper in John, in regard to which we refuse to avail ourselves of the postulated Eucharistic reference of John vi., and his date for the crucifixion. But if the priority of the accounts of the institution of the Supper by three evangelists and the apostle Paul be conceded, the beloved disciple might well pass it by in a Gospel little concerned with points of ritual. As to the second problem, it is to be borne in

¹ *Holborn Review*, June 1928, p. 384: quoted by Howard.

mind that any resolution of a discord between otherwise consentient testimonies satisfies a fair-minded historian. We have no room to enlarge on this point: but more than one feasible solution of the riddle has been propounded.

A word or two on fabricated discrepancies. The story of the night storm on the Lake may be cited by way of specimen. We are informed that the author deliberately expunges the miracle of Christ's walking on the sea, so prominent in the other accounts. What then about the explicit phrase he uses in vi. 19, περιπατοῦντα ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης? "O that must mean *on the shore*" is the facile reply, inasmuch as that is the sense it carries in xxi. 1. Now this is a most disingenuous ruse. For in nineteen cases out of twenty ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης does undeniably mean *on the sea*; nor would it be easy to find any other prepositional phrase for that idea, the proper antithesis of ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Indeed, the Apocalypticist, whom we, in common with many first-rate scholars, such as Theodor Zahn, beg leave to take for the apostle himself, as he plainly intends his readers should do, employs this phrase four times running in that sense (Rev. v. 13; vii. 1; x. 5, 8). What explains the varied meaning in John xxi. 1 is the addition of a place-name, "at the sea of Tiberias", where there is no greater ambiguity than in our own locutions *Weston-super-Mare*, *Stratford-on-Avon*, *Berwick-upon-Tweed*, or the French *Châlons-sur-Marne*, which no sane person construes *aupied de la lettre*. Besides, as Matthew states and John implies that the mariners were not off shore at the time, but half-way across the lake, how *could* Jesus be "drawing nigh to the boat", except across the interjacent surges? Ewald, rationalist as he was, forcibly remarks that in this context it must be rendered *on the sea* because the beholders were themselves afloat on the watery element.

The confusion of things that differ is an artifice no less culpable than the differentiation of things that do not. Of this device we encounter plentiful samples. Thus the official call of the Twelve is perversely identified with the individual calls of certain disciples, and the provisional cleansing of the Temple at the inception of our Lord's ministry confounded too with the ultimatum to Judaism attendant on that repurification narrated by the Synoptists at its close, though the two lastrations differ both in purport and particulars. By similar manipulation a cleavage is effected betwixt John's eschatology and theirs.

According to Dr. Anderson Scott, they anticipate Christ's immediate return, and his failure to do so occasioned a "great disillusionment". Yet, he subjoins, "the Church survived it", and "there is no trace of discussion or argument on the subject", apart from a negligible passage in 2 Peter.¹ We should like to ask the learned professor *why*, if the facts are as he fancies. Could such a frustration of prophecy coming from Christ's own lips have been buried in silence or provoked no lively discussion? The theory is erroneous on the face of it. And has he never read the parable of the Talents in Matthew, where (xxv. 19) "*after a long time* the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them"? John does not drape his eschatology in the same vesture as the rest, and good reason he should not; for the impending destruction of Jerusalem, whence the foregoing predictions had borrowed their imagery, had intervened, and bodied forth the end of all things in vivid outline. In this "Gospel of the believers" we may well expect stress to be laid on an aspect of things to come other than suited the promiscuous outer-court hearers.

No. 5. Dr. Howard instances *the omission* from this Gospel of *sundry events in which the favoured three figure*, and opines that John could never have sanctioned their suppression. Perhaps not, if he had been some pushing modern professor emulous of distinction and *éclat*. But the reticent John is no blower of his own trumpet, nor is pride of place a foible of his. Contrariwise, his exceeding weight of glory bows him down, till his meek and unassuming spirit effaces his own name from his Gospel altogether, not unmindful maybe of his Lord's censure of self-seeking: "He that speaketh *from himself* seeketh his own glory."

No. 6. Our purveyors of doubt also raise the query how John could have left out *the parabolic phase* of Christ's teaching from his representation. Surely because this is the Gospel of the inner circle and of hand to hand frays with unbelief, and those parables were addressed to the mixed multitudes. What does Mark say? "To you" (by way of privilege) "it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to others in parables" (iv. 11). And are not the allegories of the Vine and the Good Shepherd of the parabolic clan? These are not arguments, but the sophistries of forestalled minds.

¹ *Living Issues in the N.T.*, pp. 131, 132.

No. 7. But unbelief is hydra-headed, and has fresh exceptions to propound. The gradual *unfolding of the Messiahship* in the Synoptists is set at variance with its proclamation throughout by John. But had it not been announced once for all in the voice from heaven at the baptism of Jesus? And is it here divulged except to prepared ears and hearts? There *is* gradation in the teaching of the Fourth Gospel. That is indubitable; for the Lord Jesus Himself announces its stages of expansion. He spake as His auditors were able to hear; for He was no red-tapist of the schools.

No. 8. We cannot wonder that the *raising of Lazarus* should offend naturalistic minds. So that deeply pathetic narrative is "sicklied o'er with a pale haze of doubt" that robs it of all its fair lustre. "None save John relate it." Yes; but the Synoptists detail raisings from the dead left unmentioned by him; and his authority is co-ordinate with theirs. If probabilities are to govern our thinking, may there not have been peculiar reasons for its exclusion from notice?

We know that the Jews sought to put Lazarus to death; so potent a witness to a superhuman resuscitation was his very presence. And it seems not unlikely that the proximity of the family's residence to the capital rendered special precautions necessary for their peace or even preservation. If so, when the evangelist wrote the danger was past and no reason for reserve remained. The mention *by name* in John of Malchus and his assailant may be explained on similar grounds. It is also to be noted that this miracle casts an illuminating light on Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem amid the plaudits of the populace (John xii. 17, 18).

The thick of the fray, however, gathers round the last objection we shall name, the diversity of our Lord's teaching in John from the Synoptic model. Before adverting to this point it seems advisable to clear out of the way with all possible speed the auxiliary troops brought into the field; whom we have designated Vivisectors and Compositors respectively.

Smitten with the critical mania for disintegration, Moffatt, Bernard, Macgregor, etc. tamper *arbitratu suo* with the text of the Gospel by way of improving upon Holy Writ, transposing (e.g.) chapters v. and vi., slitting chapter x., and dovetailing at their own indiscretion the hallowed Discourses in the Upper Room. Thus doctrinaires "rush in where angels fear to tread!"

The sole pretext worth naming for these impertinences consists in the acknowledged uncertainty attaching to a verse (4) of chap. v., and to the *Pericope adulterae* at the head of chap. viii. In the latter case there are unquestionably grounds for suspension of judgment as to its placement, such as its omission from leading uncials, multiplied variety of readings, a perceptible change of style, and the transference of the entire passage to Luke's Gospel in four cursives. But the other tinkering and redistributions are sheer acts of vandalism, and the wrenched members cry out for reinstatement *in statu quo*.

The same censure applies to Dr. Garvie's partition of the Fourth Gospel between a putative witness, a putative evangelist, and the critics' friend in need, ever within call, a putative redactor. We leave these dissecting puzzles to those in love with fancy goods of German make, these puerile *Vexierspiele*, to borrow their own term. Nor need we waste time over Professor Bacon, of Yale's, dissolving-views, shifting as the vane on a steeple, the gyrations, as Denney styled them, of a wild man on a monoplane. So pervasive is the nexus of the whole book, including c. xxi, whether viewed as an appendix to the rest or not, and so unified its idiosyncrasies of manner and matter, that Strauss himself, spite of all his disbelief in its contents, entitled it a seamless robe; and every intelligent student of its symmetrical fabric has to echo that judgment. That lynx-eyed critic who detects therein a patchwork quilt must be what Shakespeare dubs "a purblind Argus, all eyes and no sight."

As to the Compositors, they set up some duplicate John of their own in lieu of the real one, a lay figure not so inconveniently linked with the original scenes as he, yet unaccountably mistaken for him by the blockheads of the next generation or so. This mannikin clings for support to a dubious statement of Papias, a second century bishop of Hierapolis, quoted by Eusebius. He, however, warns us that Papias was a man of very weak understanding; and the three or four paragraphs of his extant fully bear out the imputation. Sooth to say, so incurably does he "blunder round about a meaning" that the waste of paper and ink spent in endeavours to fix a definitive sense on his statements has been prodigious. In one passage he refers to John the Presbyter, whom he styles "the Lord's disciple," a term applied by Irenaeus to the apostle, apparently signifying a member of the original band; for the term *μαθητής* is *entirely dropped*

in the N.T. after Acts xxi. This "mystery-man" the critics welcome with his "helps" as John's *proxy*. But what need of an *alias*? For the apostle himself assumes that very title, so appropriate to him as the veteran survivor of the apostolical college, in his Second and Third Epistles; and of any other John with the reputation of a writer no trace can be unearthed. So Dean Farrar and others have furnished grounds for holding this dummy to be a pure figment of the brain. Even granting his substantive existence, we think Armitage Robinson, himself a patristic authority, perfectly correct when he declares that in any case "such a mole could never have produced such a mountain" as this profoundest and most intimate of all Divine portraitures.

No. 9. We now return to the final and outstanding objection urged against the authenticity of the Fourth Gospel, namely the *disparity of Christ's presentation and mode of instruction* therein from the synoptical pattern. That is no recent discovery, but appreciable by every reflecting reader. A comparison has frequently been instituted between the case in hand and the diverse portraits of Socrates drawn by Plato and Xenophon. A resemblance exists beyond doubt; yet it is well to remember that in the Athenian instance Plato does lie under suspicion of having embellished the canvas. But we have no right, even on the human plane, to predicate any such process concerning the unsophisticated, plain-dealing Nazarenes. Nay, they would not have idealized their Master if they could; for truth was to them the most sacred of trusts; nor could they have done so, if they would; for He was diviner by far than fancy could have painted Him, to begin with.

What wizened, starveling conceptions of Jesus these vaunters of broadmindedness have, to be sure! Must the Supreme Teacher employ a single method or medium of instruction alone? Must He be as shackled and stereotyped as His would-be censors? Are His private pupils to be coached in the self-same style as the motley crowd outside? How irrational such a demand for peddling uniformity on the part of the manifold Saviour! Who shall say how many facets the Kohinoor of heaven may flash on our wondering gaze? And are there not reconciling elements to be taken into account? Passages occur in Matthew and Luke which have been well called "erratic blocks of Johannine rock." What casual reader would not be confident that Matthew xi. 25-27, Luke x. 21-22 formed part of

the Fourth Gospel? Godet, too, has specified twenty-seven Johannine verses that are redolent of characteristic synoptic phraseology. Our opponents are fond of appealing to Schleiermacher's idol, "the Christian consciousness" as their oracle. For once let us do the same. Ponder, reader, this most significant fact. The historic Christian Church of all ages, never quite insensible to the allogeneity of John's representation, has notwithstanding never reckoned it *heterogeneity*. She has never detected in it "another Jesus," but only a fuller-orbed homogeneous image of her one indivisible Lord. Her verdict has uniformly been that the dual picture presents one coincident personality; that it is, so to speak, stereoscopic. And centuries of vigilant inspection have ratified that deliberate judgment of those who stood nearest to its Prototype.

But the assertion is often broached nowadays that John has arrayed Jesus in his own garb and made Him use his own mannerisms, that, in Harnack's musical metaphor, he has "composed fugues on the themes of Jesus." The modicum of truth in these assumptions lies in the consideration that some of these discourses seem to be given to us in a condensed shape, and that the line of demarcation between the Master's own words and the servant's interpretation of them is not always visibly drawn. Yet we could point out divergences (e.g. in the matter of interrogations, which John himself eschews) between his style and his Lord's. But, however close the approximation, let the favourite canon of probability be our arbiter; and let us ask which is likelier, that the bosom-friend of Jesus should have caught his Master's manner, or foisted his own into his Master's mouth. Which, then, was the fashioner of the other, Jesus of John, or John of Jesus? Sane thinkers can give but one answer to that question. And was not this same apostle he who gave us that stringent proposition: *No lie is of the truth?*

Our critical fowlers seek to lure us into their snares by a lavish use of such catch-words as "personation," "creative imagination," loaned them from the aviaries of fiction: but in vain is the net spread in the sight of any wary bird. The suggestion, for instance, of Dr. Scott that John's history became "plastic" in the writer's hands—and he attributes it to that fantastic panjandrum, a "corporate mind"—is as shallow as it is inept. A single reflection might have given him pause. For if a Figure so divine, so human, so realistic, so entrancing as

that here portrayed is so much of a fabrication that in his own language, penned with no visible sign of compunction, "we do not know with regard to any event in the Gospel that it happened exactly as it is recorded, or with regard to any utterance of Jesus that it actually came from His lips¹" this joint-stock corporation of his has attained an altitude of dramatic genius so signally outstripping Shakespeare's that it has convinced millions that its craftsmanship is no invention at all. And what follows? This at least, that every established canon of truth and falsehood calls for remodelling or rather abandonment; for in that case which is the mocking-bird among the voices of the past and which the genuine songster of the woods let none henceforth presume to say! "If this narrative deceives us," exclaims Henry Rogers with reason, "sincerity itself has played us false, and dupes we must be."

Think for a moment what these obscure evangelists have achieved. Claiming for themselves no immunity from imperfection, four of them, of whom John is one, have drawn perfection to scale, moving sinlessly among sinful folk without contracting a solitary stain. The creation of one paragon of spiritual beauty so radiant defies all powers of invention; but in what terms shall we stigmatize the notion that John or his understudies could have concocted a modification of the fair Epiphany equally flawless and uneffaceable, and universally identified with the first? It savours of a mind diseased.

At this point surely we may take the offensive against our nebular theorists, and ply them with a few queries of our own. How came it about that these unassuming limners, and they alone, have succeeded in escaping "artistry's haunting curse, the incomplete," succeeded where the highest human genius has failed, in striking a perfect chord on their homely instrument? How have they contrived to paint with their primary colours an immaculate Being fairer than the sons of men, not shrouded in hermit seclusion, but exposed to all manner of rude tests and casualties, and to pour grace untold into His lips? How have these inexperienced draughtsmen exhibited Him performing works which no other man ever did, without giving rise to any painful sense of incongruity? How have they managed to localize infinity, to domicile the Godhead in an obscure grade of society, and to render Incarnate Deity our tangible possession

¹ *Living Issues in the N.T.*, p. 90.

without violating all the laws of possibility and propriety? And how, to crown all the rest, have their unfaltering pencils portrayed their Lord's cruellest humiliation, lingering as nowhere beside over the heart-rending anguish and unspeakable scandal of the accursed tree without impairing by one iota the majesty of their illustrious King of Glory? Last, but not least, how have they brought their Prince of Life back scatheless from the maw of the grave, with dyed garments from His Bozrah, transfigured yet unchanged, preserving His identity intact across that yawning chasm of dissolution, the self-same Jesus as of old, albeit robed in the new investiture of a risen body and travelling in the greatness of His strength to His sovereign seat above? It will take more than the clumsy apparatus of modern criticism to persuade some of us that this translucent mirror does not reflect a supreme reality. To fancy that John, or for that matter a hundred Johns rolled into one, could have "faked" a single lineament of that matchless image of God manifest in the flesh verifies Pascal's pungent laconicism: *incrédules les plus crédules!*

These Brocken Spectres of subjectivism melt into thin air when confronted with yonder reflection of the manifested Life Divine. And those who have not lost their Bibles in the mazes of a falsetto culture do not need to grope for a philosophy of religion tricked out in terms of evolution to give them a clue to their bearings. To us at least Christianity is not a growth sprung from this nether soil, but a deposit from on high. And if revelation be not a mockery, that inspiration which the modernist scouts is its proper correlative. If God has broken the silence, and entered this arena of sin and death in the person of His Son, a trustworthy register of that supreme intervention becomes essential to its preordained fruition. Human progress hinges on an alphabet, and a written script is the *vinculum* binding the ages together and conditioning all knowledge. "Truth from error cleansed and sifted"—is not that our most clamant need? We are battling here *pro aris et focis*; for no gossamer-web of guesswork and peradventures, nor yet of "pious frauds," can constitute the pabulum of our souls. Woe betide us if a cunning fabler has put into Christ's lips such holdfasts of faith as "My peace I give unto you", or "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out". Then should we be destitute indeed, and the ramparts of our fenced city would be dismantled. For we cannot live on the starvation-diet of syllabubs simulating solids

and romances retailed for realities. But we can both live and die upon every word proceeding out of the mouth of God and God's Son. Professor Scott enumerates his quasi-John's sources of information, but totally ignores the co-operant Spirit, with reverence be it said, the Senior Partner of the firm. It is a fatal omission; for such a deficient survey of John's handiwork misreads the phenomena submitted to its scrutiny, and will inevitably misconstrue what it professes to elucidate.

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