
A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

THE AUTONOMY OF JESUS: A STUDY IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

FINALLY (iv.), the same studious tendency to acquit Jesus of being motived by human influence, or of complying with a direct request, comes out in the well known tale of his behaviour when the news reached him that Lazarus was ill (xi. 1–16). He does not move at the appeal for help and pity (*v.* 6).[1] When he does so it is expressly and deliberately said that the journey is undertaken owing to his superior wisdom. He himself knows best the proper time; his actions are mysteriously and absolutely his own, springing from his inner impulse; they are not to be explained, as they were not prompted, by what transpires on ordinary human levels.[2] This line of pragmatism seems quite as congenial to the author as that which leads him to emphasize Christ's delay from a desire to make the miracle as great as possible. Even when the tenderest appeals meet him directly from a human heart, he remains self-poised and imperturbable. The heart and rule of his life was absolutely inward, and any attempt to form a connexion with himself from the outside was steadily rejected as incompetent. To the author of this gospel, in fact, the

[1] Even in the Epist. Diognet., some thirty or forty years later, a more humane and human view of Jesus is presented. God sent him, this graceful author writes, *ἐν ἐπιεικείᾳ καὶ πραΰτητι . . . βία γὰρ οὐ πρόσεστι τῷ θεῷ* (vii. 4). So Milton in *Paradise Regained*, bk. i. lines 215–222.

[2] Here again Mr. Hutton rather minimizes the tendency of the passage. The author, he explains, "lays stress on the circumstances that show the law of Christ's nature to be mysterious and given from above, and not determined by the small occasional motives which make sport with human wills" (*op. cit.* p. 185). How can a friend's distress be described as a small and occasional motive for help? Are appeals for pity and sympathy, rising out of the circle of human relationships, to be considered as sportive inroads upon a human will? If so, the synoptic representation of Jesus is strangely compromised. There is more appositeness in a subsequent remark of the same writer that when Greek "religion was highest and truest, it consisted in the assertion that right and good are eternal and immutable, liable to no personal control at all" (p. 190).

character of Jesus was apparently too ethereal to be exposed to common influences, of too fine a texture to be subjected, even innocently, to the calls or claims of human life.

Hints of the same tendency are not awanting in the minor touches and general treatment of the story. From the outset it is patent that the writer wishes to represent Jesus as independent of and superior to the Baptizer, but even beyond this particular trait he exhibits the movements of Christ as based upon some mysterious and inward principle. He always anticipates human insight; he is first with every man, even with the keenest (i. 38, 42, 47–48; "before Philip called thee, I saw thee, when thou wast under the fig tree"). He forms his own plans, carries out his own intentions, knows when to hold aloof from human nature, needs no interview, and requires no information[1] as to the temper and attitude of men towards himself (ii. 24–25; contrast the synoptic "Who do people say that I am?" Mark viii. 27 and parallels). Neither in Judas nor in the people

[1] This mental perception is not gained as the result of long and painful experience. The author represents it as an intuition full-blown and active from the outset, and evidently intends to picture it as something supra-natural, higher even than an abnormal development of what has been called the "illative faculty" (Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, chap. viii. § 3), by which inferences can be drawn rapidly and accurately from one's experience of men and things. The endowment of omniscience possessed by Jesus in the Fourth gospel is an inheritance, not an attainment; full-orbed from the first, it requires neither to be sustained nor matured by new accesses of experience. Such a representation is the pictorial expansion of an idea like that already enunciated in Col. ii. 9 or Heb. iv. 12–13, where the Logos is portrayed as living and energetic, with penetrating insight into the secret life of men: "And before him nothing created is concealed, but all things are bare and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." In the Apocalypse, upon the other hand, the Logos (xix. 13) resembles the martial and invincible Logos of the older Wisdom literature (e.g. Wisd. Sol. xviii. 15 f.), which leaps from the royal thrones in heaven "into the midst of the doomed land as a stern (ἀπότομος) warrior, bearing the sharp sword of thine unfeigned commandment, and filling all things, as it stood, with death." But if the conception of the Logos in the Fourth gospel is naturally carried into much higher and wider levels of religious speculation than were accessible to the Apocalyptic prophet, it is at the same time rendered so superhuman that it almost fails to preserve the tenderness and sympathetic humanity assigned in Hebrews to the earthly Jesus.

of Jerusalem is he deceived. His plans also are his own; not even his intimates and relatives can fathom or forecast them (ii. 2; vi. 6; xiii. 7). His power works by itself, unmediated (iv. 50–53). He choses his disciples, not they him (xv. 16); and with consummate skill he finds out men, rather than is found by them (i. 43; ix. 35; xi. 42, etc.). He takes the initiative (vi. 5, a tacit correction, as editors properly observe, of Mark vi. 36, viii. 4), showing himself perfectly conscious of all that is transpiring (vi. 61, 71), or that is to transpire towards the end of his life (xiii. 1, 3), when initiative is denied him. Yet even in the Passion, as has been already indicated, he is active and self-possessed. Activity, in fact, is a note of the Passion in the Fourth gospel (xiv. 2 f., 12, etc., 22; xvi. 5, 7, 22, 23; "I go"[1]); "Arise, let us go hence" (xiv. 31). The Passion is no drift, but an open-eyed choice, calling into exercise the full powers of thought and energy, and exhibiting, in spite of apparent degradation and impotence, the marks of a royal advance (xviii. 37). Jesus is not swept into the grasp of death, nor does he yield to any constraint or pressure from without. "I have the right to lay down my life . . . I consecrate myself." Similarly, after death, he addresses his friends first (xx. 14–15); he knows Mary before she knows him. All human recognition of his person is due to himself (1 John iv. 19). He is removed from human touch, too holy for ordinary endearments (xx. 17, "Touch Me not"—plainly a correction of the earlier tradition in Matt. xxviii. 9, "They grasped his feet," which conflicted with the author's high conception of the heavenly Logos). Up to the close he takes the lead (xx. 19 f.; xxi. 5 f., 6, 10, 13, 22); the priority remains his in action and in thought alike (cf. iv. 23, ζητεῖ of God). Human ties then more than ever, as this writer feels, must

[1] ὑπάγειν is a favourite word of the author; it occurs more than a dozen times in his book, and always in the mouth of Jesus.

have been obtrusive or unbecoming; Christ's end was not to submit to these, but to go to the Father, and nothing must stand in the way of this exaltation.[1]

After allowance has been made for so much of this as is common to the Synoptic tradition and might have been generated from a study of that tradition, also for the subordinate and secondary character of a portion of these materials, it is undeniable that a considerable body of evidence remains which admits of only one explanation. Without doubt, the author conceived the ideal personality of Christ in such a way that voluntary choice or self-determination was essential as a prominent factor in his Divine majesty. In his case anything like suggestion or influence would have been irrelevant; and indeed influence, in the writer's mind, spells interference so far as Jesus is concerned. His supremacy involved his spontaneity. It implied that outward events never afforded a direct reason for action upon his part, that no human soul shared in his resolutions, that his plans could be thwarted as little as they could be furthered by an outsider, and that his convictions sprang ready-made from the secret of his inner consciousness. Consequently, as the idea came to be worked out in detail, Jesus (who is the true Logos, the supreme Revelation and Agent of God for men) was described and delineated as one who was bound by no human ties either in the common events or in the great crises of his life, whose actions were resolved upon by his unaided wisdom and executed by his own power. Rising from the

[1] The Jesus of the Fourth gospel hardly needs to pray (xi. 47); on the contrary, and this is a new development of thought, he is prayed to by the disciples and the church (xiv.). Note the significant omission in John vi. 15, as compared with Mark vi. 46, Matthew xiv. 23. Not prayer, as the expression of dependence upon God and the confession of human need, but the resolve to avoid premature and unthinking pressure from the side of men, is given as the motive for Christ's retirement after the miracle in question. He also carries his own cross (xix. 17 as against Mark xv. 21 and parallels) unaided, and needs no food.

lonely depths of a unique personality, they were subject to a higher law than that of ordinary causation. In a word, the Jesus of the Fourth gospel really never acts upon the direct initiative of others, but always upon his own. Persons and things seem to have produced little impression upon him. Sovereign and spontaneous, beyond the reach of accident, and set above the clash and play of ordinary motives, the Logos moves in a relative independence of limitations. His inner life is serene and secure as a fortress with the gates closed. Hence, in keeping with this autonomy of his being, no place is found for human birth or human temptation. These, with the family ties of Jesus, pass into the background, leaving the transcendental freedom of the Logos unimpaired, so that from the outset he is inviolate amid the exterior claims and conditions of his age. Not merely, in this study, is he not determined by circumstances of time and place; he is hardly influenced by them at all, so careful is the author to prevent anything local or concrete from affecting or seeming to infringe his power of self-determination. In his vocation he remains king of himself; no exterior cause is ever allowed to tie his hands. And even when he is occasionally represented as having adapted himself to circumstances—which of course was necessary if the sketch of his life was to possess any claims to naturalness and reality—the writer is scrupulously careful to safeguard his autonomy, in order to prevent the erroneous idea that Jesus, as the true Logos of God, was very closely entwined with the details of contemporary life. He seems to have feared that his hero's spontaneity would have been drowned, had it been associated with even the simple phases of human influence or suggestion. To him the personality of Jesus had superhuman and abysmal depths; but these depths included, besides pre-existence and subsequent exaltation, an inviolate sphere within the human spirit whence it acted upon

the world without, while at the same time it shrank from admitting any impulse in return.

In the hands of a less able writer, and at a greater distance from the impressive personality of Jesus as that was mediated by the synoptic tradition, such a combination of ideas as that reached along this line of treatment might have led to a somewhat cold elevation of the central Figure, until it lost much if not all of its interest both in and for mankind. To withdraw Christ as far as possible from all contact with pain and sin and poverty would have destroyed his humanity, just as his personality would have become unreal if all motive and inlets of suggestion had been shut off from his life on earth. In that event, the portrait of Jesus might have resembled that of Henry VII. as Bacon draws it,[1] the portrait of one who admitted no claim to sway his opinions or to direct his actions, but preserved a somewhat mysterious exclusiveness and majesty. And as such criticisms have actually been passed upon the Fourth gospel as a biography of Jesus, it is important to define precisely what is meant by this feature of autonomy in his character as there described, to discover the sources, and to determine, if possible, the object of this fundamental category.

For one thing such a conception of autonomy is not a mere emphasis upon unworldliness or abstinence from common life for the sake of purity. Nor is it an expression of the desire, which frequently becomes mere selfishness and

[1] "*Hee was of an* High Mind, *and loved his owne* Will, *and his owne* Way; *as one that revered himselfe, and would* Raigne *indeed. Had he been a* Priuate-man; *he would have been termed* Proud. *But in a wise* Prince, *it was but keeping of* Distance, *which indeed hee did towards all; not admitting any neare or full* Approach, *neither to his* Power *or to his* Secrets. *For he was governed by none. . . . His* Mother *hee reverenced much, heard little. . . . Hee had nothing in him of* Vaine-glorie, *but yet kept* State *and* Maiestie *to the height. . . . To his* Confederates *abroad he was* Constant *and* Iust, *but not* Open. *But rather such was his* Inquirie, *and such his* Closenesse, *as they stood in the* Light *towards him, and hee stood in the* Darke *to them.*"

pride, for a clear course of self-development, by which a man gets quit of responsibility and interference in order to live his own life. Such an idea is unthinkable in connexion with Christ. Besides there is no development, practically speaking, in Christ's character throughout the Fourth gospel, and the note of unselfish sacrifice[1] is deep and frequent. Still less can this feature anxiously attributed to Jesus be identified with the loneliness and reserve of a nature which is truly sympathetic, or with the desire to preserve one's inner peace and freedom amid the interpositions and encumbrances of life—

> Within the soul a faculty abides
> That, with interpositions which would hide
> And darken, so can deal that they become
> Contingencies of pomp, and serve to exalt
> Her native brightness . . . virtue thus
> Sets forth and magnifies herself; thus feeds
> A calm, a beautiful, and silent fire
> From the encumbrances of mortal life.

Nor is this isolation in the Fourth gospel parallel to the method by which a strong nature preserves and asserts its independence with a view to mould others into its likeness; for there is little or no propaganda in the book, the dualism (almost the fatalism) of light and darkness overpowering anything like a conception of great and gradual changes in the people round Jesus. We come nearer the truth when we think of spontaneity as a force breaking out of its own accord and impulse, and thereby securing for itself a fertile and varied expression; or when we imagine a self-reliant majesty of nature, rich in inner resources and calmly sure

[1] Jesus, in this gospel, comes to live and die for men; the whole meaning of his existence is to carry out an eternal purpose of God for mankind. But it is a curious proof of the abstract standpoint held by the author, that (if we except —and the exception is only partial—Christ's private circle of adherents) he did not make the life of those among whom he lived an object of immediate and loving concern to any marked degree. Cf. Hutton on this, "the weaker side" of the gospel (190 f.).

of its treasure, which does not require any outside stimulus or co-operation—like Amphiaraüs (for example) in the *Septem contra Thebas* (590 f.).

> οὐ γὰρ δοκεῖν ἄριστος, ἀλλ' εἶναι θέλει,
> βαθεῖαν ἄλοκα διὰ φρενὸς καρπούμενος,
> ἐξ ἧς τὰ κεδνὰ βλαστάνει βουλεύματα.

But even these ideas do not take us to the psychological centre of the idea, as it is handled by the author of the Fourth gospel. What he seems to feel, and what he tries to bring out, is that for a personality so mysterious and deep as that of Christ (when viewed under the category of the Logos) receptivity would be a mark of inferiority. The height to which Jesus had risen, as the church came reverently to reflect upon him in the course of the years, made it almost an irreverence (in this writer's judgment) to think of him as actuated by motives such as those which sway a common life. Were he subject to advice or influence, he would become a satellite of circumstances, and undue yielding upon his part to pity, sympathy, or love, might indirectly trespass on his divine authority. Some such feeling as this apparently underlies the treatment of Christ's person in the Fourth gospel, a feeling which (as the gospels of Matthew and Luke indicate) had for some time been spreading in the church, but which had never so completely mastered the primitive tradition of his earthly life. It is not, of course, as though everything yields to him at once in the narrative of the Fourth gospel, or that he is able invariably to carry his will and dispose of everything according to his purpose. As the drama develops, check and retreat are conspicuous features of his life, nor does he ultimately win all and each by his potent influence. But the point is that he never abandons himself freely to the claim of the moment, nor does he suffer himself to be swayed even by apparently innocuous advice. Sustaining himself apart,

he moves through life with a sense of detachment, his independence never compromised even when it is working in line with others or under the compulsion of necessity.

The counterpart of this autonomy in action is the inward omniscience which, following hints in Luke (v. 4, 20, etc.), the author heartily predicates of Jesus. To a far greater extent than the synoptic Jesus, the Christ of the Fourth gospel knows all from the first and possesses a knowledge of his own career and fate which is not deduced from experience or limited by uncertainty upon details. His hour—its time and place—stands clear before his soul (ii. 4); his future is mapped out before him; actually, though not verbally, he is entitled (as Holtzmann points out) to the Divine name, *καρδιογνώστης*,[1] possessing in this unerring acuteness or intuition a power of self-guidance which acts by itself unchecked. He is *αὐτοδιδάκτος* (i. 48, iv. 17–18, 35, v. 42, vi. 15, 61, 64, viii. 40, xiii. 11, 18, xvi. 19, etc.). "Nothing to him falls early or too late." Over this true human Logos the world can exercise no power (i. 5, vii. 26, 44, viii. 20, 59, x. 39, xiv. 30); God alone controls him (xix. 11) and his life. It is part of his greatness and glory that in virtue of this omniscience he is enabled to exercise choice (v. 21) and act unexpectedly,[2] as he pleases, subser-

[1] It is this quality of marvellous insight which impresses and even convinces other people more than anything else: cf. the cases of Nathanael (i. 47–51), the Samaritan woman (iv. 19–29), and the Jews (vii. 15). Part of his function as the true and capable Shepherd is to know every individual entrusted to him (x. 14, 27; cf. i. 42, xx. 16).

[2] E.g. i. 43, iv. 46, viii. 12, xii. 44. The abruptness of xii. 44–50 is eased, however, if the paragraph be restored to what is probably its original position between *vv.* 36*a* and 36*b* (so—after Wendt—*Historical New Testament*, pp. 520, 692). Also it is possible that the gap between vii. 52 and viii. 12, when the spurious pericopê is removed, originally contained some paragraph which has gone amissing (for conjectures, see *op. cit.* pp. 691–692). Otherwise one must try to find some connexion between viii. 12 and vii. (which Wendt boldly does by omitting vii. 30–32, 36, 39, 44–52 as additions made by the evangelist to his source, *das Johannes-Evangelium*, pp. 63 f., 86–90, 136 f.), or simply take viii. 12 as the prelude to chap. ix. To ease the latter view, Mr. P. M. Strayer has recently conjectured that x. 22 has been displaced from its true position

vient to no standard of human thought or wish ; while even the process of his suffering, as Weiss has rightly noted (*Neutest. Theologie*, E. Tr. ii. 340 n.), is described as not merely foreseen but foretold by himself in all its mournful and exact details.

How consonant this emphasis upon autonomy is with some features of Alexandrian speculation upon the Logos, hardly needs to be pointed out. That semi-personal principle, which had become familiar in Hellenistic circles of Jewish Christians, was essentially operative and active, the vicegerent of God in this world, subject to Him alone and by reason of its divine intelligence enabled to master all ideas and energies throughout the lower cosmos. The use of this category (along with others [1]) in the Fourth gospel to explain the significance of Jesus was naturally conditioned by its aim. Here the Logos is no mere embodiment of an abstract idea, nor a Divine force freely personified in a poetic or mystical style. Though one may substantially agree with Weizsäcker that this gospel is a history mainly in form, its contents being virtually a science of the history, still the author has too much artistic taste and historical sense to represent the living Jesus as a mere symbol of the Logos idea. The latter is dexterously confined to the prologue, although its contents underlie the subsequent speeches and narratives, which are interpenetrated by its spirit. Yet its exploitation must have led to unexpected difficulties. To graft it upon the synoptic tradition was obviously a problem of extreme delicacy, for the two factors, if not incommensurable, presented several points of considerable disparity, and any speculative interpretation such as this inevitably involved some readjust-

immediately before viii. 12 (*Journal of Theological Studies*, 1900, October, pp. 137–140).

[1] In John i. 14 Dalman observes (*Worte Jesu*, i. p. 189) three essentially Jewish factors are represented as having been manifested in Jesus: מֵימְרָא (=ὁ λόγος), שְׁכִינְתָּא (=ἐσκήνωσεν), יְקָרָא (=δόξα).

ment of the facts at the writer's disposal. Still this is the clue to the author's general conception of Jesus, and to any particular trait in it—this attempt to harmonize the two aspects of a human Jesus and a mysterious Logos; very much as the Deuteronomist's idea of law elucidates his sketch of Moses the lawgiver, or as Plato's view of philosophy and its function affords the only proper standpoint from which to estimate his biography of Sokrates. Idealism is not an altogether inaccurate motto for this method of the Fourth evangelist. Over and again, under the power of reverence and speculation, he transmutes the realistic Jesus of the synoptists into an idealized transcription; if we can hardly say that he conceives it his business

> Not to catch men with show,
> With homage to the perishable clay,
> But lift them over it, ignore it all,
> Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh,

nevertheless his general aim is in that direction; and the total effect of the book is to produce a strong impression of one who was a representative personality, to convey a definite conception of this Life and its significance, rather than to delineate in any photographic or topographic fashion the details of a particular career. This criticism would apply indeed to all the four gospels, even in some degree to Mark. But the feature becomes well defined and dominant only in the pages of the Fourth gospel, thanks to the speculative atmosphere in which it was composed.

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(To be continued.)