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

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

Pope!" Thinking that this was rather strong partizanship for even the most ardent Wesleyan, I asked again, and this time he pronounced it a little differently, as "Bilesi Popu." He then said it was well known in the Bible, and all at once it flashed across me—"Beelzebub." This man had, with some confusion, read in his Bible of Beelzebub and also of serpents, and consequently adopted, quite wrongly, this name for the ancient *Kalou Vu* of his race.'

Mr. St. Johnston has confined himself to the folk-lore of the Islands and many a weird as well as many a childish story he tells. He has succeeded in making his book entertaining to the ordinary reader of books as well as valuable to the student of anthropology.

A pamphlet on *The Agricultural Labourer and the Minimum Wage* (Letchworth: Wardman; 2d. net), by the Rev. J. R. C. Forrest, M.A., Vicar

of Swanbourne, with a preface by the Bishop of Oxford, states temperately but impressively the case for Hodge, whose case cannot be left unconsidered much longer.

It is quite a small book that the Right Rev. J. W. Diggle, D.D., Bishop of Carlisle, has issued with the title of *Death and the After-Life* (Williams & Norgate; 2s. 6d. net); but there is an astonishing amount of thinking in it. The thinking is clear and the expression of it accurate. Easy to read, the book has all the facts we can be sure of, and it is very helpful.

Dr. Diggle does well to emphasize the difference between death and Christian death. We must sharpen these differences and compel the world to see them.

The four facts which the Bishop of Carlisle believes to be revealed regarding the heavenly life are Recognition, Reversal, Peace, and Awareness.

The Credibility of the Fourth Gospel.

BY THE REV. CANON H. H. B. AYLES, D.D., BURY ST. EDMUNDS.

It is rapidly coming to be regarded as a self-evident truth that the account given by the Synoptists is to be preferred to the narrative of St. John, and that when any statement in the Fourth Gospel contradicts (or seems to contradict) statements in the other three, St. John's presentation of the case must be regarded as unhistorical.

The object of the present article is to investigate how far this presumption is borne out by the actual facts. There is no lack of material for such an investigation. There are many contradictions, real or apparent, between the Synoptic Gospels and St. John, and a careful and unbiased comparison ought to show us pretty conclusively whether or no the preference is always to be given to one of these authorities, and if so, to which.

We have spoken of the Synoptic Gospels, but it is necessary to remember that it is not a case of three witnesses against one. St. Matthew and St. Luke have been content to adopt St. Mark's account practically unaltered. They have in some cases changed his order and in others improved his style, but their account is the same as his, and his limits are (as far as this discussion is concerned)

theirs also. Thus the comparison is not between the Synoptists and St. John, but between the author of the Fourth Gospel and the author of the Second.

The first thing that would strike an impartial observer would be that the author of the Fourth Gospel lays repeated claim to an intimate and personal knowledge of the events recorded. There is no need to labour the point, for it does not depend on one or two isolated passages, but on the whole standpoint of the Gospel.¹

Moreover, the author of the Fourth Gospel repeatedly corrects or modifies the statements of the Synoptists. Such a rejection of established tradition is inconceivable unless he possessed, or wished it to be supposed he possessed, superior information. The claim may be disallowed on closer examination, but no candid inquirer can ignore the fact that it has been made. No such claim is made in the Second Gospel, and no critic has advanced it.

It is sometimes conceded that the author of the

¹ The claim is recognized as early as the Muratorian Fragment.

Fourth Gospel had ample knowledge, but it is maintained that it was no part of his intention to give us the actual facts. His plan was simply to write an orthodox theological treatise. Lazarus—to take a single instance—was never raised from the dead, but the words put into our Lord's mouth in connexion with that fictitious miracle agree fairly well with the ideas contained in the Synoptic Gospels and may therefore represent what our Lord's teaching may actually have been on other occasions.

It is, of course, quite conceivable that the author of the Fourth Gospel—like the author of the Clementine Recognitions—intended to write an historical romance and not to narrate the actual facts. Such a view is, however, in flat contradiction to his own statements: 'He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.' 'This is the disciple, which testifieth of these things, and which wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.' When a writer makes such claims as these and yet deliberately composes a fictitious narrative, it is difficult to acquit him of deliberate fraud.

Moreover, we have independent testimony that the majority of the events narrated in this Gospel actually occurred. The Temple was cleansed, the Five Thousand were fed, the Supper at Bethany actually took place; the treachery of Judas, the denial of Peter, the trials before Caiaphas and Pilate, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection were part of the common Christian tradition. The plan of the author was not to disregard history altogether, but to distort it and to insert one or two fictitious narratives of his own. Here again we are driven back on the alternative of intended accuracy or intentional fraud. Intended accuracy is, of course, quite compatible with a large number of serious errors. So we turn to a consideration of the narratives in which the Synoptists and St. John appear to contradict one another.

The first clear instance is the Day of the Crucifixion, and some critics have gone so far as to say that if St. John is correct in this, his account must also be preferred to that of St. Mark in other matters. In this instance the contradiction between the two seems complete. In St. Mark we read that the disciples asked where they should prepare to eat the passover, that they went to the upper room and made ready the passover. Then in the evening our Lord came with the Twelve and sat down to the meal prepared. St. Matthew adds that our

Lord told the owner of the room that He was going to eat the passover there, and St. Luke states that our Lord definitely said at the meal itself that it was the actual passover He was eating.

On the other hand, in the Fourth Gospel we are told that the Last Supper took place a day before the actual Passover. Our Lord's accusers would not go into the hall of judgment lest they should be defiled and so prevented from eating the passover. The bodies were taken down from the cross that they might not remain there on the day following the crucifixion, 'for that Sabbath day was a high day.' They laid our Lord's body in the garden because of the approach of the same Sabbath, 'for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.'

In this case a closer examination shows signs of inconsistency in the Synoptic account and confirms the narrative of St. John. For the fifteenth of Nisan was the greatest day of the Jewish year and was of such supreme importance that the observance of the weekly Sabbath had to give way to it, if the necessity arose. Yet, according to the Synoptists, chief priest and scribe, ruler and multitude, united in disregarding it. The trials before the Sanhedrin and Pilate were alike held on that day. Simon the Cyrenian is depicted coming out of the country and apparently from his ordinary work. The chief priests and the multitudes alike poured out of the city to witness the Crucifixion. The work of preparing the ointments was done without a qualm on the greatest Sabbath of the year, but they put off the actual anointing and rested on the weekly Sabbath, 'according to the commandment.' The Synoptic account of the Day of the Crucifixion, teeming with incident and devoid of any special sanctity, is the best proof that St. John is correct and that our Lord was offered at the very time that the Paschal lambs were being slain for the coming feast.

Another point of contrast is our Lord's Judæan ministry. If we had only St. Mark's account, we should suppose that our Lord's ministry was confined to Galilee until His last journey to Jerusalem. On the other hand, St. John tells us that He repeatedly taught and wrought miracles in Judæa. Here surely the probability is in favour of the Fourth Gospel. It is inconceivable that our Lord, as a pious Jew, should have neglected the great annual festivals. It is equally unlikely, if He were present, that no notice should have been taken of the celebrated Galilean teacher or that our Lord

should have refused to instruct those of His own countrymen who desired teaching. It might be necessary to restrict His mission to the Jews and not to extend it to the Gentiles, but there was no apparent reason why He should refuse to teach a Jew merely because he happened to have been born outside Galilee.

We must not forget that the Gospel of St. Mark is rather a series of episodes in our Lord's history than a complete life of Christ. In this case St. Luke seems to have known of the Judæan ministry ('O Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together . . . and ye would not'), but to have omitted it because he was following the outline of St. Mark. If, however, the Synoptists omitted a whole section of our Lord's work, we can scarcely lay any stress on their omission of particular details. If they left out the whole of the Judæan ministry, they might well omit any incident in it.

One such incident is the Raising of Lazarus. Professor Burkitt¹ takes it as a test case: 'The discrepancy between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic narrative, *i.e.* St. Mark's Gospel, comes to a head in the story of the Raising of Lazarus. . . . Is it possible that any one who reads the continuous and detailed story of Mark from the Transfiguration to the entry into Jerusalem can interpolate into it the tale of Lazarus and the notable sensation which we are assured that it produced? . . . For all its dramatic setting it is, I am persuaded, impossible to regard the story of the Raising of Lazarus as a narrative of historical events,' and the Professor asks that we shall keep 'this negative conclusion in our minds' when we 'go on to compare other portions of the Fourth Gospel with Mark.' Without pausing to point out that the story of Mark from the Transfiguration to the Triumphal Entry is very far from being continuous, we may freely grant that if St. Mark had been aware of the influence which the Raising of Lazarus exercised on the final decision of the high priests, he would have inserted it in his work. The author of the Second Gospel, however, may well have been ignorant of the secret deliberations which were known to the writer of the Fourth. The latter claims to have been an intimate acquaintance of the high priest and to have had the right of entry into his palace, while an early tradition asserts that he himself belonged to the priestly

¹ *Gospel History and its Transmission*, p. 221.

circle. Consequently he would have special information which the general public would not possess. At the present day those who are dependent on the accounts in the newspapers for their knowledge of the deliberations of the Upper House of Convocation are perfectly aware that when there is an important and difficult question, the real debate often takes place before the press is admitted.

If, however, we leave out of consideration the effect the miracle produced on the minds of the authorities, there is no reason why St. Mark should narrate this incident more than any other. Regarded merely as a miracle, the circumstances attending the Raising of Jairus's daughter were much more dramatic. It is quite possible, indeed, that St. Luke (10⁹⁸⁻¹⁰²) was acquainted with the history of Lazarus, but that the narrative of the Widow of Nain made a greater appeal to his sympathy.

Leaving this on one side, let us consider the probability of the two narratives—one containing the narrative of the Raising of Lazarus: the other without any reference to it. In St. John the episode explains everything. It accounts for the enthusiasm of the crowds on Palm Sunday, the anxiety of the Jewish authorities lest the excitement of the Galilean pilgrims should lead to a rising which would bring on them the intervention of the Romans, and their difficulty in finding a way of seizing our Lord without provoking an uproar of the people.

St. Mark's account, which omits all reference to Lazarus, would leave us absolutely bewildered if from long familiarity with both Gospels we did not unconsciously supplement it from St. John. Quite at the beginning of his Gospel (3⁶), St. Mark tells us that the Pharisees took counsel with the Herodians how they might destroy our Lord. There is nothing in the context to account for such extreme measures, and nothing resulted from them. The verse should evidently come at the end of the Gospel rather than at the beginning, and its present position serves to remind us of the justice of the warning of Papias that St. Mark's Gospel, being based on the occasional discourses of St. Peter, is not in order.² The next statement

² Professor Burkitt (*op. cit.* p. 90) is forced to explain away this plot to destroy our Lord: 'They had, in fact, done little more than complain to the police.' What would have been the Professor's comment on St. John, if the latter Evangelist had been guilty of such an anachronism?

in the Second Gospel is in 12¹³, where we read that the authorities thought to lay hold on our Lord, because they knew that He had spoken a parable against them, but nothing in the context suggests that it was with any deadly intent. Our Lord's offence was scarcely sufficient, and the word itself, translated 'lay hold of,' denotes restraint rather than destruction.¹ Then suddenly (14¹) we are told that the chief priests sought how they might take our Lord by craft and put Him to death. St. John's narrative fully accounts for their changed attitude, but in St. Mark there is absolutely nothing to account for it. The Evangelist goes on to say (14²) that the authorities dared not make the arrest on the feast day, lest there should be an uproar of the people, but again gives no hint why such a popular rising was considered probable. We think it will be granted that, so far from St. Mark's being a complete and connected account, something must be inserted into his narrative to enable us to understand the course of events. Another apparent contradiction between St. Mark and St. John is the date of the Cleansing of the Temple. In the Fourth Gospel it occurs early in our Lord's ministry: in the Synoptists in the last week of our Lord's life. There is, of course, the supposition that it occurred twice; for all the details that could vary do vary. If, however, we are compelled to assume that it occurred only once, the date given in St. John appears much the more probable. St. Mark's account obliges us to suppose that our Lord went up to Jerusalem for feast after feast, and yet only at the very last noticed the disgraceful state of the temple court. St. John's account is that our Lord noticed it early in His ministry and that His zeal for God's House led Him at once to put it right. Few would venture to deny that such a representation of the case is, to say the least, extremely plausible. Indeed, it might even be said that the earlier the incident is placed, the more probable it becomes. On the other hand, it would be easy to account for the position the narrative occupies in the Gospel of St. Mark. The only visit of our Lord to Jerusalem related by that Evangelist is the one for the last Passover, and so the Cleansing of the Temple would necessarily in his account be connected with it.

¹ It is used previously in this very Gospel (3²¹) of the loving restraint attempted to be exercised, for His own sake, by our Lord's relatives.

It has been objected to St. John that he entirely passes over the institution of the Eucharist and our Lord's command to baptize His followers. Both were fully established Church ordinances at the time the Fourth Gospel was written, and if the reason for the omission was doctrinal, and not merely that the account was to be found in the Synoptic Gospels,² the object of the author could only have been to disparage those Sacraments. Unfortunately for the objection, it is to the Fourth Gospel that the advocates of what is known as High Sacramental teaching usually turn.

A comparison of the two accounts of our Lord's trial before Pilate is scarcely less convincing. In St. John we learn that our Lord's foes first of all attempted to get Him condemned without formulating any charge, but Pilate absolutely refused. They then brought the accusation that our Lord was striving to make Himself king. This was a serious charge, and Pilate carefully examined it, but found from our Lord's replies to his questions that it was baseless. The Jews were consequently compelled to adduce their real reason that our Lord called Himself Son of God, but this only tended to excite Pilate's fears. They then dropped specific charges and appealed to the governor's personal fears. Pilate realized that his position at that time was not too secure and gave way. The whole account of the proceedings is quite reasonable and probable.

Here again St. Mark's account is fragmentary and can be understood only if it is supplemented from other sources. He tells us that the chief priests accused our Lord of many things, but does not mention what the charges were. Our Lord made no reply to Pilate's questions, so that the governor marvelled. Nevertheless he discovered that the charges were baseless, although we are not told how the discovery was made. He then endeavoured to get Christ released as an act of consideration to national feeling, but the chief priests stirred up the crowds to demand a popular favourite instead. Pilate then asked them what they wished done with the person they called the King of the Jews. (This indirectly confirms St. John's assertion that one of the accusations brought against our Lord was that He was trying to make Himself a king.) The people demanded that our Lord should be

² The supplemental character of the Fourth Gospel is mentioned by Clement of Alexandria (*Fragmenta*, Book iv. p. 89, ed. Klotz) as already an ancient Church tradition.

crucified, and Pilate, willing to content them, delivered up an innocent man to their will. St. Mark, however, gives no explanation of the inducement which caused the procurator to take a course so unusual with a Roman judge.

The conclusion of St. Mark's Gospel has been lost, and so his account of the Resurrection cannot be compared with that of St. John. If, indeed, we could assume that St. Matthew reproduces, with some additions, the narrative of St. Mark, a comparison between the Second and Fourth Gospels would be as instructive here as elsewhere. At any rate the concluding words of our present Gospel, 'neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid,' seem to suggest that St. Mark's narrative would, as usual, have been fragmentary and disconnected.

St. John's account must, therefore, be considered by itself. He tells us that Mary Magdalene went early to the sepulchre and saw that the stone had been removed. She at once ran to tell Peter and John, who hastened to the tomb, found that the body of our Lord was not there, and returned to their own home. Mary, however, remained at the sepulchre, and seeing a man whom she supposed to be the gardener, asked him if he had placed the body elsewhere. On our Lord uttering her name, she recognized Him by His voice. That same evening ten of the apostles were in a room with the door securely fastened—for they were still in great fear—when Christ appeared to them. This appearance is confirmed by St. Luke, and evidently formed part of the common tradition of the Early Church. The following Sunday the disciples met together once more, and our Lord appeared again

to satisfy the doubts of Thomas. In the interval of waiting for the Ascension—an interval which is confirmed by the Acts—the disciples returned to Galilee and resumed their ordinary occupations. The main characteristic of the narrative is its naturalness and simplicity. It is confirmed on all the points that really matter by the writings of St. Luke, but a comparison with them seems to show the difference between personal knowledge and second-hand information.

The result of this investigation seems to be to disprove the view that the author of the Fourth Gospel merely intended to write a theological treatise and invented his facts to suit his theories. It is equally unfavourable to the view that the author was only a follower of the apostles, and got his information second-hand; or the conjecture that, though he was actually present at the events he described, he was too young at the time to obtain an accurate impression of what really occurred.

It has been no part of the intention of the writer of this article to dispute the accuracy of St. Mark. St. Peter was one of our Lord's intimate friends, and a work based on his occasional discourses might well be extremely accurate, but it would be likely to be fragmentary and not in strict chronological order. It is only when the Second Gospel is regarded as a complete and connected account of our Lord's life and work, into which the narratives of St. John—such as the Judæan ministry or the Raising of Lazarus—must either be exactly fitted or declared an historical romance, that any careful investigation shows that any such claim can by no possibility be maintained.

In the Study.

Abimelech.

'Be sure thy sin will find thee out.'—Nu 32²³.

'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'—Gal 6⁷.

NOTHING shows the extent and significance of Gideon's influence so much as the anarchy that followed his death. In Old Testament history he appears as one of the most successful Hebrew judges in maintaining order. While he was there

in Ophrah religion and government had a centre 'and the country was in quietness forty years.' His burial in the family sepulchre in Ophrah is specially recorded as if it had been a great national tribute to his heroic power and skilful administration. But, the funeral over, discords began.

The trouble is to be traced to his household. Among his wives, who were so many that he is said to have had seventy sons, he had a distinguished Canaanite woman of Shechem. In this