I.

THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED.[1]

THIS description is found only in the Fourth Gospel, where it occurs with slight variations five times (xiii 23 εἷς ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ . . . ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς: xix 26 τὸν μαθητὴν . . . ὃν ἠγάπα: xx 2 τὸν ἄλλον μαθητὴν ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰ.: xxi 7 ὁ μαθητὴς ἐκεῖνος ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰ.: *ibid.* 20 τὸν μαθητὴν ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰ.). It is usually held that the same person is intended by the ἄλλος μαθητής . . . γνωστὸς τῷ ἀρχιερεῖ who introduced Peter into the courtyard of the High Priest's house (John xviii 15).

The phrase is used only in John xiii–xxi, the chapters which relate the events and discourses connected with the Passion and the Resurrection, appearing for the first time in the account of the Last Supper. The person indicated by it is anonymous. There is nothing to suggest that he bore the name of John beyond the statement in John xxi 24, that he wrote the Gospel which early tradition has assigned to St John. In xxi 2 the sons of Zebedee are mentioned, but the writer adds καὶ ἄλλοι ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ δύο. It is obvious that the disciple whom Jesus loved may have been one of these two who are not named.

We turn to the passages where the Beloved Disciple appears, to see if we can learn from them anything which may lead us to identify him with one of our Lord's known followers. The following facts emerge.

(*a*) He was present at the Last Supper, when he reclined on the Lord's right, in a position which gained for him afterwards the title of ὁ ἐπιστήθιος. Thus he occupied a place at the table inferior to that of Simon Peter, but above that of any other Apostle—a place where we should have expected to find Andrew, the πρωτόκλητος of the Apostolic college. On the supposition that the disciple in question was John the son of Zebedee, it is difficult to account for an order at the Supper which would almost certainly have created friction at a time when friction was especially to be deprecated. The sons of Zebedee had already roused the indignation of the Ten by their request that they might sit on the Lord's right and left. It is inconceivable that He should have risked the re-opening of this struggle for precedence by placing John above Andrew, his senior in the Apostolate. (*b*) If the ἄλλος μαθητής of John xviii 15 ff is the disciple whom Jesus loved, the latter was an acquaintance of the High Priest, and on such terms of

[1] The writer of this note has not read Dr Delff's book on the same subject, nor were Dr Zahn's and Dr Sanday's discussions before him when he wrote it.

intimacy with him that he could enter the αὐλή of the High Priest's official residence himself, and gain admission to it for a friend. But it is scarcely conceivable that a Galilean disciple, drawn from the fishermen of the northern lake, could have stood in this relation to the head of the exclusive aristocracy which virtually ruled the Jewish people. This disciple, whoever he was, must have been a person of some wealth and influence, possibly ἐκ γένους ἀρχιερατικοῦ (Acts iv 6). It was perhaps some confused reminiscence of his early days that gave rise to the tradition that John of Ephesus once served as a Jewish priest.[1] (*c*) The Beloved Disciple is next seen standing by the cross, not with the Apostles, who do not seem to have rallied after their flight from Gethsemane (Mark xiv 50, Matt. xxvi 56), but with the women, and next to Mary the mother of the Lord. The Lord, seeing them there, commits His mother to the care of this disciple, who forthwith takes her to his own home and keeps her there (ἀπ' ἐκείνης τῆς ὥρας ἔλαβεν ὁ μαθητὴς αὐτὴν εἰς τὰ ἴδια). Τὰ ἴδια does not necessarily mean more than 'his own quarters', i. e. his lodging (cf. John xvi 32); but both A.V. and R.V. interpret it here as the disciple's 'own home', and they are doubtless right; for the Mother could not have been taken to any but a private dwelling-house, where she would have found a women's quarter ready for her use. It is reasonable, then, to suppose that this disciple had a home either in Jerusalem or in the neighbourhood. If in Jerusalem, was it the house where the Last Supper was eaten?[2] Was the Beloved Disciple the οἰκοδεσπότης (Mark xiv 14), and therefore the host? and does this explain his place at the Supper? (*d*) The editorial note appended to the Fourth Gospel (xxi 24 f) identifies this disciple with the author of the Gospel (οὗτος ὁ μαθητὴς . . . ὁ γράψας ταῦτα).

Was this enigmatical person one of the Twelve? That he is called a μαθητής must not, of course, be taken to disprove this. The Fourth Gospel does not use ἀπόστολος as a title,[3] and almost constantly describes the Apostles as οἱ μαθηταί. Judas is εἷς τῶν μαθητῶν (John xii 4), and the Beloved Disciple is introduced (xiii 23) in nearly identical terms. Moreover, it is in favour of his apostolical character that we find him on more than one occasion in company with St Peter (John xiii 24, xviii 15, xx 2, xxi 20 ff), and that the Apostles Peter and

[1] ἐγενήθη ἱερεὺς τὸ πέταλον πεφορεκώς (Polycrates *ap.* Eus. *H. E.* iii 31). Bishop Westcott remarks that James of Jerusalem is also said to have worn the πέταλον. But in the latter case the story comes from Epiphanius (*Haer.* lxxviii 14), and not from a second-century Bishop of Ephesus.

[2] The Cenaculum is often identified with the home of Mary the mother of John Mark; see Dr Sanday's *Sacred Sites* p. 83 f.

[3] John xiii 16 is no exception.

John are closely associated in Acts (iii 1, 3 f, iv 13, 19, viii 14).[1] All these facts must be allowed to have weight in determining the position of the disciple whom Jesus loved. But here the evidence for his identification with John the son of Zebedee ends, and into the other scale must be thrown the facts already produced, which seem to shew that the Beloved Disciple was not a Galilean, but a well-to-do inhabitant of Jerusalem or its vicinity, who belonged to a class socially superior to that from which the Galilean disciples of Christ were drawn. The belief that he was a Jerusalemite is to some extent confirmed by the contents of the Fourth Gospel. While it does not altogether neglect events and teaching which belong to the ministry in Galilee (cf. John ii 1–12, iv 43–54, vi, vii 1–9, xxi), the bulk of the Gospel is concerned with a ministry in Judaea and Jerusalem, of which the Synoptists seem hardly conscious. The locality of the events and discourses, doubtless, is not the factor which determines their presence in the book; yet the impression is certainly given that the Evangelist was more interested in the Judaean than in the Galilean work and teaching of Christ. And it is significant that the teaching of the last night, at which the Beloved Disciple was present, is told with more than ordinary fullness.

But if the disciple was not a Galilean, and not one of the Twelve, who was he? Is there any one among the disciples named either by the Synoptists or in the Fourth Gospel for whom our Lord may be said to have shewn a special affection? As we know, He loved all His own to the end (John xiii 1), and especially those whom He had chosen to be His Apostles (John xiii 34 f, xv 12). But was there one among these who was pre-eminently the Beloved Disciple? Or if there was, can we say that it was the Apostle John? John was one of the three whom the Lord took with Him to the scenes of the Transfiguration and the Agony, and one of the four who questioned the Master privately about the sign of His Coming (Mark xiii 3; cf. Matt. xxiv 3). But this is merely to say that he was among the first four members of the Apostolic body. Nor does either of the sayings attributed to John (Mark ix 38, Luke ix 54), or the request which came from the two sons of Zebedee (Mark x 37), indicate any special affinity to the mind of Christ. All the depth of insight and fervour of love which we connect with the name of John belong to the Beloved Disciple and not, so far as we know, to the son of Zebedee.

Of a specializing love for individuals who are named in the Gospels we have only two examples. (*a*) Jesus loved the family of Bethany, and every member of it (John xi 3 ὃν φιλεῖς ἀσθενεῖ· *ib.* 5 ἠγάπα

[1] See also Gal. ii 9.

ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν Μάρθαν καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτῆς καὶ τὸν Λάζαρον). (*b*) He loved the rich young ruler who sought Him out on the way to Jerusalem (Mark x 21 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἐμβλέψας αὐτῷ ἠγάπησεν αὐτόν). Could the Beloved Disciple of the Fourth Gospel have been one of these?

Some of the conditions are satisfied by Lazarus. He lived within two miles of Jerusalem; his family were in good circumstances (so we may gather from John xii 1 ff); it is not impossible that he was acquainted with the High Priest; and his house at Bethany would have formed a suitable home for the Mother of Jesus. But it is difficult to believe that, if the Beloved Disciple had been the subject of our Lord's greatest miracle, the fact would have been passed by without notice either in the Fourth Gospel or in early Christian tradition. Nor is it easy to conceive of any chain of circumstances which would have converted Lazarus of Bethany into the θεολόγος, the leader of Greek Christianity who survived under the name of John to the end of the first century.

The other disciple whom Jesus loved answers better to the requirements of the case. The man was rich, even very rich (ἔχων κτήματα πολλά Mt. Mk.; πλούσιος σφόδρα Lk.); he was an ἄρχων (Lk.), i. e. probably a member of the Sanhedrin (cf. Lk. xxiii 13, xxiv 20, John iii 1, xii 42), and in A. D. 29 was still relatively young (νεανίσκος Mt.), though he had passed his first youth (ἐκ νεότητος Mk.). He ran up to our Lord as Jesus started afresh on His journey to Jerusalem (ἐκπορευομένου αὐτοῦ εἰς ὁδὸν [cf. x 1, 32] προσδραμών Mk.), hastening to seize the opportunity of putting to the Master the most vital of all questions. The Lord's answer disappointed him, at least for the moment; he went away with clouded brow, a sadder man. But who shall say that Christ's love did not avail to bring him back? or that on his return he may not have attached himself to Jesus with a fervour and wholeheartedness which justified the Lord's immediate recognition of his worth?

Was it he who wrote the Fourth Gospel? Was he the John of tradition who was laid to rest at Ephesus in the days of Trajan? It is one of the many questions arising out of the history of early Christianity which are more easily raised than answered: τὸ μὲν ἀληθὲς θεὸς οἶδεν.

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