THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

In the valuable series of articles on the Johannean Question which Professor Sanday has been contributing to the Expositor, for which many of us will feel grateful to him, there is one point which appears to require fuller consideration than he has given to it. Following in the steps of the late Bishop Lightfoot, Bishop Westcott, Dr. Salmon, and other English scholars, he appears to have gone on the assumption that the Gospel must have been entirely due to direct personal recollection, or else that it was a pure romance composed in the second century. It is not until the end of his last paper that he mentions another possible opinion, which he then mentions only to reject it, that the Gospel may be to some extent founded on traditions related to the synoptic traditions but not identical with them. This opinion has been held by eminent scholars, and would certainly explain some of the phenomena of the Gospel, especially of its relation to the synoptics. I would like to plead therefore for a fuller consideration of it. It appears to me too that some of the reasons for rejecting it which are given on pp. 385 foll. are not conclusive :—

"The striking thing about the Gospel is that its characteristics are not those of a second-hand work. The kind of details which it contains are not such as would survive in a tradition" (Expositor for May, 1892, p. 385).

"Two alternatives only are possible. Either these scenes derive their vividness and particularity from the fact that the author is reporting what he had himself heard and seen, or in which he had stood in connexion so close that it is as if he had heard and seen them, or they are the product of pure imagination" (p. 386).

"We can understand how tradition might hand down the five barley loaves and two small fishes, the two hundred denarii worth of bread, etc. . . . These are all details of the same type as those in the synoptics. But why should it be noted that it was the tenth hour when the disciples left John to follow Jesus, or the sixth hour when He sat down by the well? Why should we be told that John baptized

in Ænon because of its plentiful springs? Why that such and such a speech was made in Solomon's porch at the feast of dedication in the winter? Why that Jesus retired to the place where John at first baptized, or that He went to Ephraim while the Jews were going up to purify themselves before the Passover? Why that the Sanhedrists would not enter Pilate's house for fear of defilement, or that the purpose with which Judas was supposed to have made his exit was to buy necessaries for the feast?" (pp. 386, 7).

There is no doubt, as Professor Sanday says, a difference between the Fourth Gospel and the others in the use of details. It is the habit of the writer of the Fourth Gospel to give the date both in time and place of each incident which he records. It is the exception when he does not do so. In the synoptics, on the contrary, the rule is not to give time or place, the exception is to give them. This frequency of the notes of time and other details in the Fourth Gospel is perhaps a difficulty in the way of supposing that these details were all due to tradition. But would not the completeness of the narrative in this respect be also a difficulty in the way of supposing that its details were due to the personal recollection of things that had occurred half a century before? I do not see that the particulars to which Professor Sanday appeals are in themselves different in character from some which have been preserved in the synoptic tradition. Why might not tradition preserve the names of the places mentioned in the Fourth Gospel—of Cana in Galilee, of Sychar and Jacob's well, of Bethany beyond Jordan, of Ainon near to Salim, of Ephraim in the country near the wilderness, or of the Treasury or Solomon's Porch as the places where discourses were delivered or other things happened, when it has preserved the names of Nain, of Emmaus with its distance from Jerusalem, of Capernaum and its position by the seashore, of the country of the Gadarenes "which is over against Galilee," of Bethsaida, Nazareth, or many more, or when it tells us that one of the synoptic discourses was delivered in the house at Caper-

naum, or another on the mountain, or by the seaside, or in the boat as they were crossing the lake?

There seems an obvious reason also for each of the hours of the day that are mentioned which might fix them in a tradition. The Wayfarer sat by the well tired and thirsty because it was about noon.[1] The disciples naturally remained with Jesus for the remainder of the day, since it was within two hours of nightfall, "about the tenth hour," when they reached his abode. It is not St. John, but the synoptic tradition which tells that "the day was far spent" and "it was evening" when Jesus refused to allow the hungry multitude to depart to their own homes until He had supplied their wants, and that it was "toward evening" and "the day was far spent" when the two travellers to Emmaus pressed their unknown companion to abide with them (Matt. xiv. 15, Mark vi. 35, Luke ix. 12, and xxiv. 29).

It also seems natural that Judas should have been supposed to have gone to provide what was needed for the feast, if it was "before the feast of the passover" (John xiii. 1). And why should it be thought strange that tradition should remember the scruples of the Jews about entering Pilate's judgment hall? Tradition did not forget how, when another Jesus was slain in the temple by the high priest who was his own brother John, and the Persian general came to avenge his death, the Jews objected to his entering the temple, and how the Persian asked them if his presence would be a worse defilement than the corpse of the murdered man (Jos., *Antt.* xi., viii. 7).

One of the passages just referred to reminds us of a difficulty in the way of the eye-witness argument which does

[1] "A description of one day's journey may answer for all the rest. . . . You ride on until the noonday heat and glare compel you to seek a little rest beneath some friendly shade, if there is any to be had. . . . After lunch the march is resumed," etc. (E. H. Palmer, *The Desert of the Exodus*, pp. 32, 33.)

not seem to have attracted the attention of its advocates. In the synoptic account of the feeding of the five thousand Jesus had been teaching the multitude and healing their sick, and when the day was declining the disciples came to Him and asked that they should be sent away as they had nothing to eat and many of them had come from far, and then Jesus said, "Give ye them to eat." In the Fourth Gospel all these interesting details are omitted. We are only told that Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing a great company come (ἔρχεται) unto Him, said unto Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?"

There is another place in which we find the same kind of difference distinguishing the synoptic narrative from that of the Fourth Gospel. In the synoptic account of the triumphal entry Jesus is journeying to Jerusalem attended by a great multitude of people. Having passed through Jericho with His following, He goes up towards the city. When He approaches Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, He sends two of His disciples into the village over against them, and they return with the ass's colt. They cast their garments upon the colt, and set Jesus thereon, and as He rides in lowly state into Jerusalem others throw down their garments in the way, or strew the road with branches which they cut from the trees or the fields, and the whole multitude join in singing the praise of the King that cometh in the name of the Lord. In the Fourth Gospel we read only that a great multitude of people who had come to the feast, hearing that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet Him, and cried, "Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord," and Jesus, when He had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt."

In a third instance, the description of the occurrences

in the garden of Gethsemane, the Fourth Gospel passes by much that is related with some fulness of detail by the synoptics. We are told nothing of the agony in the garden, of the sleeping disciples, of the traitor's kiss, but only that Jesus went forth to the garden with His disciples, and that Judas who knew the place came with his company, and that Jesus, "knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth and said unto them, Whom seek ye?" When they answered, Jesus of Nazareth, "Jesus saith unto them, I am He."

In each of these three cases the advocates of the eye-witness argument have to face the perplexing fact that it is the synoptic tradition, not the eye-witness reporter, that has preserved the detailed and life-like narrative. They cannot escape the difficulty by supposing that the fourth evangelist merely summarized the synoptic accounts. Even in his short summary he varies from them too widely. In one case, at least, the variation amounts to a clear contradiction. The fourth evangelist places the triumphal entry after the anointing at Bethany, while the First and Second Gospels place it some days before. And St. Luke, though he does not mention the anointing at Bethany, agrees with the other two in representing the triumphal entry as taking place on the arrival of Jesus from Jericho.

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