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## Two Notes on the Fourth Gospel.

BY PROFESSOR J. VERNON BARTLET, M.A., MANSFIELD COLLEGE, OXFORD.

### I.

JOHN II. 13-25.

THE occurrence of a cleansing of the Temple by Jesus on the threshold of His ministry, whereas the synoptic narrative has a similar episode at the very end of it, and there only, is a standing *crux* of the Johannine Gospel. Mr. Garvie has recently (*Expositor* for July) argued, in a way which deserves serious attention, for a fulness of Messianic claim (in act, if not in word) at the very opening of Jesus' public life, as against the view that such a claim belongs only to the closing days of His ministry. This contention led me to study, more closely than before, the latter part of Jn 2, with results that may have some interest for readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES. I give my exegesis of vv. 17-25, and then indicate the wider bearings of its salient features.

v. 17 gives what purports to be the actual impression produced at the time on the minds of Jesus' disciples by the expulsion of all traffic from

His 'Father's house.' It reminded them of the zeal for God's house of the typical Israelite who speaks in Ps 69<sup>9</sup>. This was not apparently a Messianic psalm in the strict sense; and it is not suggested that these disciples took the act to be more than one befitting a prophet. Nor does the challenge of the Jews necessarily mean more, when they ask for Jesus' credentials for acting with so high a hand. But what does Jesus mean by the 'sign' He offers in response to their request? Surely it was not an enigma, such as could not then and there be read even by spiritually sensitive questioners, the only ones whose competence to cross-examine His claims He himself acknowledged. The analogy of another request for a 'sign,' in the synoptic narrative (Mt 12<sup>28ff.</sup> 16<sup>4</sup>, Lk 11<sup>29ff.</sup>), is suggestive of the kind of thought that was in Jesus' mind. There He appealed to the very quality of His ministry, vouched for by the prophetic note of authority which struck the common people as so unlike the accent of their wonted teachers

(Mt 7<sup>29</sup>), as being His 'sign,' the sign of a genuine messenger of God. Thus had Jonah been a sign to the Ninevites, and thus was the Son of Man himself a sign to 'this generation.' That sign was originally a purely spiritual fact; but ere the tradition came to be written in our first Gospel, attention had been diverted from this inherent resemblance to a formal and arbitrary one, appealing more to the imagination, the fact that it was during 'three days' that both Jesus and His prototype underwent their unique experiences. The idea of the Resurrection so possessed the Christian mind, that it was most natural for it to read back into Jesus' words, wherever possible, adumbrations of this cardinal 'sign,' as it had become to them. But so unnatural is it that Jesus should appeal to this as yet unforeseeable event, *to convince objectors*, that this reading of His words must with reason be reckoned by those who accept it in Jn 2<sup>20</sup>, as a water-mark of a date late in the ministry.

But is such a reading correct? Apart from the *à priori* objection already urged against it, we have in the synoptic narrative itself the hint towards another reading, one, too, for which there is an Old Testament basis—a thing we should expect from the nature of the challenge which elicited these words. In Mk 14<sup>58</sup> 'false witnesses' allege that they had heard Jesus say, 'I will dissolve this Temple *that is made with hands*, and in the space of three days (*διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν*) I will build another not made with hands.' The idea of this saying, whether it goes back to the episode in Jn 2 or to another occasion, is that of the substitution of a new and true Israel, Messiah's Ecclesia (cf. Mt 16<sup>18</sup> 'I will build My Church'), for the material shrine to which Judaism then tended to confine God's special presence. It is the idea found later in Paul, in 2 Co 6<sup>16</sup>, 'For we are the shrine of God, a living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them'; and in 1 P 2<sup>5</sup>, 'Ye yourselves, as living stones, are being built as a spiritual house.'

When we approach Jn 2<sup>19</sup> with this thought in mind, we see how appropriate it is to the whole context of the situation, and to Jesus' own words, 'Dissolve (by abuse) this shrine, and in three days I will raise it up' in a new and nobler form. But why should His hearers have been able to recognize in this claim the fulfilment of prophecy, and so a 'sign' that the divine

authority was behind the speaker? Was it not because they, as Jesus Himself, were familiar with a prophetic passage in which it is promised that Jehovah shall 'in three days' 'raise up' His people anew? In Hos 6<sup>1f.</sup> we read: 'Come and let us return unto the Lord . . . after two days will He revive us; in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight.' Thus Jesus claims to have with Him the power of God for restoring Israel as God's habitation; and the 'sign' of Jn 2<sup>18f.</sup> accords with that in Lk 11<sup>29f.</sup>; cf. Mt 12<sup>38f. 41</sup> 16<sup>4</sup>.

With the prosaic misunderstanding of this sign on the part of the Jews, in v. 20, we are here less concerned. But one may observe in passing that there is much to be said in favour of Dr. E. A. Abbott's view,<sup>1</sup> that the forty-six years of building refer to Ezra's temple and the traditional time expended on it—Herod's work being rather of the nature of restoration than of the rearing of a fresh temple. It is, however, the possible misunderstanding of the primary import of Jesus' words by the evangelist himself that now concerns us, since it affects the historicity of the whole passage as it stands. The comment runs as follows: 'But He was referring to (*ἔλεγεν περὶ*) the shrine of His body. When, then, He was raised from the dead, His disciples called to mind that this was His meaning (*ἔλεγεν τοῦτο*), and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus spake on that occasion (*εἶπεν*).' Here we have the genesis of the meaning with the evangelist, and Jesus' disciples as a body, after the Resurrection and in its light, came to see the 'sign' to which He had pointed His critics in earlier days. The evangelist, indeed, sees in Jesus' specification of 'three days' an allusion to Hos 6<sup>2</sup>; for this appears to be 'the scripture' to which he himself refers.<sup>2</sup> But, as was most natural, he gives the words a more specific reference than Jesus can have intended at the time. Passing by the conventional use of 'three days' for quite a short period, he treats it as a literal reference to the 'third day' of the Resurrection.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Classical Review*, viii. 89 ff.

<sup>2</sup> The alternative possibility, that he refers back to the words from Ps 69<sup>9</sup>, cited in v. 17, is much less natural and appropriate to the argument; for they have little or no bearing on the disciples' intelligent belief in the purport of Jesus' saying in v. 20.

<sup>3</sup> In the light of the foregoing, may, not Hos 6<sup>2</sup> be the special passage which Paul has in mind, when he refers to

Hence the result of our exegesis, so far, has been to remove a difficulty from the way of believing that Jesus did cleanse the Temple, as recorded in Jn 2; since the narrative, truly read, contains nothing psychologically out of keeping with quite an early stage in His ministry.

In v.<sup>23</sup> we are told that many who were in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover, impressed by His signs, 'believed on His name.' This must refer to His Messiahship; 'His name' can hardly denote anything less definite. 'But,' says the evangelist, 'Jesus, for His part, maintained an attitude of reserve towards them (*οὐκ ἐπίστευεν αὐτὸν αὐτοῖς*), on account of His faculty of reading all men (*διὰ τὸ αὐτὸν γινώσκειν πάντας*), and because He had no need for any to testify touching any individual;<sup>1</sup> for Himself was wont to read (*ἐγίνωσκεν*) what was in the man.' This rendering aims at bringing out the exact force of the passage in two points in particular: (1) that the knowledge in question was not inherent or absolute, but acquired by experience,<sup>2</sup> though by way of immediate intuition; (2) that it did not relate to human nature in general, but rather to the actual thoughts and feelings of individuals with whom Jesus met and had to deal. Thus the whole passage explains that Jesus read the superficial nature of the belief here in question, as it came under His eye in those professing it, and therefore would not commit Himself to them for their co-operation in the working out of His Messianic vocation. The story of Nicodemus is then given as an instance of the rudimentary and external nature of such faith, based as it was on 'signs,' without a radical change of conception as to the essential nature of the Kingdom Jesus came to inaugurate.

If this interpretation of the kind of knowledge

the common apostolic testimony that Jesus 'bath been raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures' (1 Co 15<sup>4</sup>, cf. Lk 24<sup>46</sup>)? It is worth observing that, if this be so, the appearance on the third day must be primary, and the O.T. warrant secondary, and not *vice versa*. For Hos 6<sup>2</sup> does not suggest the experience of Messiah Himself; yet the idea of solidarity between Messiah and the Messianic people would naturally suggest such a use of the passage in the light of known fact as to Jesus' Resurrection.

<sup>1</sup> 'The original (*τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*) may mean also [besides *man* generically] "the man with whom from time to time he had to deal," as it appears to do in the second case. Compare 7<sup>51</sup>, Mt 12<sup>48</sup> 15<sup>11</sup>.' Westcott, *ad loc.*

<sup>2</sup> On the distinction between *γινώσκειν* and *εἰδέναι*, and on its application to this passage, see Westcott, *ad loc.*

here attributed to Jesus be correct, the passage teaches, not that He had an *à priori* knowledge of the conditions and course of His ministry, as determined beforehand by the unfitness of human nature to accept His Messiahship in the form in which He would fain have offered it to Israel from the first; but rather that He learned step by step (though with perfection of insight) the limitations which the actual unreceptiveness of His people imposed on His 'manifestation to Israel.' Here, too, at the very heart of His life, in His Messianic vocation, 'though a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered.' That is, His first approaches to His countrymen were more open and unreserved than they later became, as a result of growing experience of 'the hardness of their hearts,' which the Gospels constantly represent as furnishing Him with fresh surprises and disappointments. Accordingly this passage, which at first sight seems to contradict the view recently set forth by Mr. Garvie,—namely, that Jesus began with a more open Messianic claim than marks the synoptic account of the Galilean ministry,—is found rather to support it, or, at least, to be harmonious with it.

## II.

### JOHN IV. 43-45.

The difficulty and uncertainty of interpretation in Jn 4<sup>48f.</sup> are notorious. The plain sense, on the face of it, seems to be that Jesus passed from Samaria into Galilee, rather than Judæa (the centre of Jewish religion, and so the natural sphere of Messiah's ministry), because He had found it true to His experience that a prophet has not honour in his own country. All would admit that, to our evangelist, Judæa was the proper and natural country, in a religious sense, of the Messiah of 'the Jews'; that he, unlike the Synoptists, says nothing of Jesus' 'native land' in any other sense (in contrast, *e.g.*, to Lk 4<sup>23</sup>, where *πατρίς* has a narrow local sense, in which Nazareth is contrasted with Capernaum); and that, accordingly, if we restrict our thought to the categories of the Fourth Gospel itself (as is most natural in dealing with such a work), there is no inherent reason why the foregoing reading of the passage should not be accepted as final. There are, however, one or two contextual matters which help to obscure this central issue. One is, that in 4<sup>2</sup>

Jesus' intention of leaving Judæa for Galilee has already been stated. Why then return to the subject to justify the step by giving a reason, as if it were paradoxical and stood in need of defence? The answer seems to be that our evangelist wishes to emphasize, by reiterated and more explicit reference, the strange and mournful fact that those who were, as regards religious privilege, specially Messiah's 'own' folk (cf. 1<sup>11</sup>), were just those from whom He met with least honour. And it is the contrast of the Galileans in this respect that the next verse goes on to describe, helping, as it does, to justify the wisdom and justice of Jesus in turning His steps to despised Galilee (cf. 7<sup>52</sup> 'Search and see, that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet'). For, as a matter of fact, it had been the

Galileans in particular who had, on seeing Jesus' signs at Jerusalem during the Paschal Feast, yielded such belief as has already been referred to in 2<sup>28</sup>. There it is not said that many of 'the Jews' believed, but simply that many present in the city at the time of Passover believed. Probably few typical Judæans, men like Nicodemus (and he secretly), believed; the bulk of those who believed, after their own fashion, represented the less conventional type of Israel's faith, such as the Galilean. Thus all works out harmoniously, down to the very plaint in v. 48, that even such belief as there was in Galilee, comparatively receptive as it might be, was of the inferior order which needs to be stimulated by 'signs and wonders.'

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

#### ACTS VI. 15.

'And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel' (R.V.).

#### EXPOSITION.

All that sat in the council.—The unwonted sight arrested the eyes of all who were sitting in the council, not only of the judges but also of the officers and disciples. Among them was one on whose memory the sight imprinted itself so as never to be forgotten. Years afterwards he learnt that it was indeed the reflexion of the divine glory which made Stephen's face to shine as the face of an angel (see 7<sup>55</sup> and 2 Co 3<sup>18</sup>). He was that Saul the Pharisee, who was then a prime mover in the charge, and to whom we probably owe this report of the scene.—RACKHAM.

Fastening their eyes on him.—The verb translated 'fastening their eyes' (*ἀρεστήσαντες*, A.V. 'looking steadfastly'), denotes a fixed, steadfast, protracted gaze, as in 1<sup>10</sup> 'and while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as He went'—KNOWLING.

THE Greek word is almost peculiar to St. Luke, and occurs chiefly in Acts. Elsewhere in the New Testament it is used only by Paul in 2 Co 3<sup>7-18</sup>, and it has often seemed to me as if there were more of Lukan feeling and character in 2 Corinthians than in any other of Paul's letters. The word twice occurs in the Third Gospel, once in a passage peculiar to Luke, and once when the servant maid stared at Peter and recognized him, where her fixed gaze is not mentioned by Matthew or Mark. In Lk 4<sup>20</sup> the stare of the congregation in Nazareth at Jesus, when He first spoke in the synagogue after His baptism, suggests

that a new glory and a new consciousness of power in Him were perceived by them. The power which looks from the eyes of an inspired person attracts and compels a corresponding fixed gaze on the part of them that are brought under his influence.—RAMSAY.

Saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.—Whether the shining was a supernatural brightness, a special and divine radiance, or a natural effect of his own divinely inspired peace and joy, is not an important question. In either case it was the direct result of the indwelling of God with him, the fulfilment of the promise of Christ (Jn 14<sup>23-27</sup>).—ABBOTT.

A SUPERHUMAN, angel-like glory became externally visible to them on Stephen's countenance. St. Luke has conceived and represented it with simple definiteness. So the serene calm which astonished even the Sanhedrists, and the holy joyfulness which was reflected from the heart of the martyr in his countenance, have been glorified by the symbolism of Christian legend.—MEYER.

#### THE SERMON.

#### The Angel in Man.

By the Rev. John Thomas, M.A., Liverpool.

There is an interesting thought suggested by the description, 'as it had been the face of an angel,' namely, the question of the affinity between man and the angels. But without entering upon that, let us conceive of the angel as a great, free, powerful, glorious spirit, delighting in