

*THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE EMMAUS INCIDENT.*

THE narrative of the manifestation of Christ to two disciples on the way to Emmaus is not only one of the most beautiful and interesting passages in the Gospel according to St. Luke, but it is also one of the most theologically important. It is in fact the Gospel according to Christ Himself. And the lines on which this protevangel is delivered became the model, both in regard to form and matter, of the other deliverances of the Gospel, both oral and written, which have been handed down in the Church. As yet indeed the coping stone of the proof of the Resurrection was needed. All else the two disciples had in their possession. But what was to them a story of disappointed hope, Jesus by His teaching and interpretation of prophecy, and finally by His gracious manifestation of Himself, converted into a gospel of joy and salvation.

In the first place He elicited from the two disciples, who had been "eye-witnesses and ministers of the word," the narrative of facts which had passed into their experience. They told him of Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet mighty in deed and word, of His condemnation and death, of their hope that it was He who should redeem Israel, and lastly of the angels' message brought to them by women, but unconfirmed, and evidently doubted, that Jesus was still alive.

At this point Jesus, still unrecognized by the disciples, begins to teach, first rebuking them for slowness in spiritual insight: "Behoved it not (*οὐχὶ ἔδει*) the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke xxiv. 26-28).

The words of our Lord in verses 44-48 of the same

chapter, although used on a different occasion, are implicitly contained in the passage we are considering, which is of course a summary only of what our Lord said to the disciples. We are justified then in adding to the subjects of discourse on the way to Emmaus, definite teaching as to the resurrection on the third day (*v.* 46); and the preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sins for all the nations (*v.* 47); and the testimony of the Apostles (*v.* 48).

With this complement to the summary of the Gospel, partly elicited, partly taught by Christ Himself, we have in this passage all the elements of a primitive gospel, and of the literary form of a gospel, as afterwards preached in the three Synoptic Gospels; and in the Apostolical addresses on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 22-36), and at the house of Cornelius (Acts x. 34-43) by St. Peter; and at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 23-41), and other places, by St. Paul.

It is not difficult to illustrate this correspondence. Both the scene and the fact of the Gospel narrative of the Incarnation and infancy in the Synoptics are involved in "Jesus of Nazareth" (*v.* 19). "A Prophet mighty in deed and word before God, and all the people" (*v.* 19), summarizes the life-work and the miracles, the parables and discourses of Jesus, as expanded in the detailed account of the Gospels. The large space which the record of the Passion, the atoning Death and the Resurrection of Jesus occupies both in the Synoptics and in St. John's Gospel, is anticipated by the proportion here assigned to these momentous subjects (*vv.* 19-24). The correspondence between the life and passion of Jesus Christ and the prophetic Scriptures, indicated by the phrase, "behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" (*v.* 26) is a clear note in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, and in several important passages of St. John (see e.g. i. 45, 51, v. 39, vii. 42, xix. 24, 28).

The same material points come out in the gospel as delivered by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 22-36). 1. Jesus gave proof by miracles that He was the Messiah (*v.* 22). 2. He was put to death upon the cross (*v.* 23). 3. He was raised from the dead—the essential fact of Apostolic testimony. 4. This was foretold by the prophet David (*vv.* 25, 26).

The gospel delivered by St. Paul at Antioch, in Pisidia, is mainly a gospel of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, and of remission of sins as a consequence, all shown to be in accordance with the words of ancient prophecy.

In Acts xvii. 3, there is an instructive, though very short analysis of an oral gospel, almost in Christ's own words: "Opening and alleging, that it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ." Compare with this Romans i. 3-5, and 1 Corinthians xv. 3, 4.

We see here that what may be termed the gospel literature is marked by common characteristics of form and subject. Broadly speaking the same subjects are treated, and they are treated in the same way. No one of the inspired writers departs from the prescribed type. But the type is unique. There is no other literature in the world like the literature of the Gospels. As Dr. Sanday notes,<sup>1</sup> it stands out distinct from all contemporary writings. Succeeding ages have experienced and attested the force and attractiveness of the gospel narrative in its unique and primitive form. And the narrative of St. Luke leads us to infer that this wonderful and divine impress, and the secret of the power of the Gospel both in the mode of its deliverance, and in its subject, are to be ascribed to the immediate guidance and direction of Jesus Christ Himself.

If this be so, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the

<sup>1</sup> Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, *sub voc.* Jesus Christ,

special revelation of the form of the gospel narrative should be imparted to one whose literary power and intelligence would be such as to enable him to grasp, and turn to good account, the Master's teaching. In other words, is there not an *a priori* probability that the companion of Cleopas on the way to Emmaus was St. Luke himself?

This would not indeed be admitted generally by modern theologians. Dean Farrar, for instance, writes, "There is no shadow of probability that it was St. Luke himself." Alford mentions various conjectures, as Nathanael (Epiphanius), Simon (Origen), Luke (Theophylact), but regards these conjectures as worthless. Dr. Plummer agrees with this verdict, and gives reasons for dismissing the hypothesis of St. Luke's presence.

These reasons will be kept in view in the following endeavour to establish the probability that "the other disciple" was St. Luke, and that to him first was committed the precious gift of the Gospel from the lips of Christ Himself.

All that is known for certain is that Cleopas, or Cleopatros, was one of the two disciples to whom the revelation was made. It is, of course, possible that St. Luke derives the account from this disciple whose name is given.

But there are two considerations which weigh against this. First, that the name is given.<sup>1</sup> Anonymity is so marked a feature of the Synoptic records that one would hesitate to assign any gospel, or fragment of a gospel, to any one as author, whose name was mentioned in the writing. Indeed the fact that the "other disciple" is unnamed makes it probable that he was the author of this record.

The other consideration which weighs against the author-

<sup>1</sup> The Gospel according to St. John, which is outside the Synoptic cycle, can hardly be called an exception to this rule. In chap. i. 40, the rule is observed; and in other passages where St. John notifies his presence, not by name, but by description, he does so because his testimony is expressly needed. See chaps. xiii. 23, xix. 26, xx. 2, xxi. 7, 20.

ship of Cleopas, is, that if the narrative came from him, especially if it was a written document, the whole passage would bear marks of style differing from that of St. Luke. For it is well known to every reader of St. Luke's Gospel that "where he used the materials he derived from others, whether oral or written, or both, his style reflects the Hebrew idiom of them; but when he comes to describe scenes of which he was an eye-witness and describes entirely in his own words, these disappear."<sup>1</sup>

Another argument may be added to the same effect. If Cleopas is the informant of St. Luke, is it conceivable that he would have allowed his own name to appear, while that of his friend and companion was passed over in silence? Such a course would have been quite opposed to the evangelical precedents of this age. A precisely opposite course is adopted by St. John (chap. i. 40) where St. Andrew is mentioned by name, while his unnamed companion is understood to be the evangelist.

If then we are to assign the source of this passage to the unnamed and unknown companion of Cleopas, the argument from style would tell against any other authorship except that of St. Luke; for the story is told with a clearness and simplicity of style, and in that pure Greek diction, which are characteristic of St. Luke.

The style of the fragment is indeed so peculiarly Lucan, that in any case the theory of a written document used by St. Luke and embedded in his narrative must be abandoned. If the passage be not the immediate testimony of St. Luke writing as an eye-witness present at the momentous scene, the source must have been oral tradition transmuted into the language of St. Luke.

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Thomson in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. ii. 156. A mention of a name tends to preclude the idea of authorship. This is also the argument of Theophylact, whose words are: "Some say that one of these two disciples was Luke himself, and that therefore the Evangelist conceals his own name."

But by far the most likely supposition is that St. Luke himself received the message of divine teaching and transcribed it in his own special style and diction. Besides the general characteristics of style the vocabulary of the passage points unmistakably to original Lucan authorship. The following words occurring in this short piece are used by St. Luke alone in the New Testament: *ὄμιλεῖν, παραβιάζεσθαι, κέκλικεν, κλάσις, κατακλιθῆναι, πτοεῖσθαι, συναθροίζειν* (or *ἀθροίζειν ἅπαξ λεγ.*), *ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις*. (Such simple colloquial expressions as the last are perhaps more conclusive than single words.) The following are almost, but not quite confined to St. Luke: *διανοίγειν, συζητεῖν, ἔδει, λυτροῦσθαι, ἐξισταναι, ὄπτασία, συμβαίνειν, παροικεῖν, διερμηνεύειν*. The form *Ἱερουσαλήμ*, frequent in Luke and Acts, occurs in two passages only of the other Gospels—Matthew xxiii. 37, and Mark xi. 11; where, however, the other form *Ἱεροσόλυμα* is also read. There are a few *ἅπαξ λεγόμενα*, as *ἄφαντος, ἀντιβάλλειν προσποιεῖσθαι*.

The arguments for the presence of Luke on this occasion would of course fall to the ground if it could be proved that this Evangelist could not have been in Palestine at the time, and that he was not in fact converted until long afterwards, and that by St. Paul. But neither of these propositions can be proved.

Nothing that is recorded of St. Luke makes a temporary residence in Palestine improbable. Even if little credit can be placed in the ancient tradition that he was one of the seventy disciples (Luke x. 1), the existence of the tradition is enough to dispel any inherent improbability in the belief.<sup>1</sup> Professor Ramsay<sup>2</sup> has shown the ease and frequency of travel at this date, and it is almost certain that an earnest

<sup>1</sup> The Gospel in the Anglican liturgy for St. Luke's Day, which dates from the Sarum Missal, is from Luke x. 1-7 (The Mission of the Seventy Disciples). In the Greek Church the Gospel is Luke x. 16-21 (The Return of the Seventy).

<sup>2</sup> EXPOSITOR, December 1908.

proselyte, as St. Luke must have been, would have paid a visit to the Mother City of the nation to whose religion he had become a convert. That the topography of Jerusalem was familiar to him seems clear from incidental allusions in the Acts. It is true that in the Preface to his Gospel St. Luke admits his debt to "the eye-witnesses and ministers of the word," and professes to give the result of accurate and original research (*παρηκολουθηκότι ἀνωθεν πᾶσι ἀκριβῶς*). This does not however exclude the possibility of his presence on some occasions in our Lord's ministry, or of his conversion by Christ Himself.

For there is no evidence that St. Luke was converted by St. Paul. If the reading in Acts xi. 28, supported by D and Augustine, *De Serm. Dom. ii. 17* "when *we* were gathered together," be adopted, St. Luke was already a Christian when St. Paul met him. And it is at least probable that, if the "beloved physician" owed his conversion to St. Paul, it would have been indicated in some way in the Acts or the Epistles, as the conversion of Timothy is described in the Acts (chap. xvi. 1), and as Timothy and Titus are each addressed as "My own son in the faith" or "after the common faith" (1 Tim. i. 2, Titus i. 4).

With these considerations before us we contend that it is at least not an unlikely hypothesis that St. Luke became a proselyte in Antioch or elsewhere, while Jesus was still exercising His ministry in Palestine. If so, as the proselyte from Ethiopia (Acts viii. 27 foll.), and Nicolas, a proselyte from his own city (Acts vi. 5), and possibly a friend and fellow-convert, and many others, as we learn from Acts ii. 10, St. Luke may have travelled to Jerusalem, and there, like the Greeks in the temple courts,<sup>1</sup> have been brought into the presence of Jesus and become a disciple.

Further than this it is not perhaps possible to advance the argument. But it may be interesting to note that

<sup>1</sup> John xii. 20 foll.

Theophylact, who seems to be the earliest known commentator to identify St. Luke with the companion of Cleopas, mainly follows Chrysostom in his writings.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore not impossible that he is repeating a tradition of Antioch, a city closely connected with the earlier life of St. Chrysostom.

Another point of interest arises in the same connexion. The name Cleopas is a shortened form of Cleopatros, as Antipas of Antipatros, and is therefore Greek. Is it not possible that he too was a proselyte, and perhaps a friend and fellow-citizen of St. Luke, and that this link had drawn them together in a companionship destined to be so fruitful in result?

Although it is not pretended that a certain conclusion can be reached on this interesting problem, the foregoing arguments and suggestions make it at least possible to contemplate the Christ preaching His own gospel to Jew and Gentile, if not to two Gentile hearers; and if so, these disciples may be viewed as the first scribes fully "instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," and the firstfruits, one or both, of Christianity from the Gentile world.

<sup>1</sup> Theophylact was a citizen, and probably a native, of Constantinople. His work on St. Luke's Gospel is described in the title as an Epitome of the Commentaries of Chrysostom (*ἐπιτομή τῶν τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου ἐξηγητικῶν*) on the Gospel according to St. Luke. His statement therefore that some identified the companion of Cleopas with St. Luke may have had the authority of St. Chrysostom himself.

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