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NOTES ON THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

III. THE CALL OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES (i. 35-51).

IN this narrative two questions present themselves for answer. (1) It is usually assumed that John, the son of Zebedee, was one of the two disciples of the Baptist who left him for Jesus, and that as Andrew found first (*πρῶτον*) his own brother Simon, so John next found his brother James, and thus the two pairs of brothers were the earliest disciples of Jesus. It is true that John, the son of Zebedee, is closely associated with Peter in the records of the ministry; but it does not necessarily follow that he was one of the two who first came to Jesus; and it is also mere conjecture that James as well was brought to discipleship at this time. If the unnamed disciple was the son of Zebedee, the fact would be one reason for assigning to him the authorship of the Gospel. If this identification is challenged, however, the question remains, Was the evangelist the unnamed disciple? The grounds on which I am inclined to answer the question affirmatively are: (*a*) the tokens of an eyewitness which the narrative offers in its minute and vivid detail; and (*b*) the probability that the evangelist (except in a few passages to be afterwards noted) confined his narrative to first-hand reports of what he had himself passed through.

(2) While the narrative bears the tokens of an eyewitness, it must be admitted that the reminiscences are coloured by reflexions in two respects. (*a*) First of all the evangelist assigns to these first disciples a much more definite confession of Jesus' Messiahship (verses 41, 45, 49) than in view of the Synoptic representation is at all probable. If Jesus welcomed Peter's confession of His Messiahship at Cæsarea Philippi as a revelation, not of flesh and blood, but of the

Father (Matt. xvi. 17) is it at all likely that such a confession would be made by any of the disciples at the very beginning of their contact with Jesus? Even if in His intercourse James was less reserved than He found it needful to be afterwards, it is not at all likely that so definite a conception was given to the first disciples. In recollecting the past, it is impossible to exclude the influence of later experiences, or of our reflexions upon them; and we must admit that the evangelist here represents Jesus as already being to His disciples what only at a much later stage of their life and thought He became to them. We may raise the question also whether the words to Peter in verse 42 are not antedated, and must be assigned to a time when Jesus had gained a more intimate knowledge of the character of His disciples.

(b) This verse and verse 48 also illustrate the tendency of the evangelist to exaggerate the supernatural character of Jesus' knowledge. That Jesus had an exceptional foresight, based on insight regarding those with whom He came into contact, the Synoptists also testify; but it is evident that the evangelist in verse 48 is thinking of something altogether miraculous. That Jesus may actually have seen Nathanael with the bodily eye as he was engaged in his devotions under the fig-tree need not be questioned. How did He in that moment gain the knowledge of Nathanael's inner life, the commendation of him implies? One cannot exclude the possibility of a supernatural intuition given to Jesus in the case of Peter as well as Nathanael, and to this explanation I was inclined in my *Studies in the Inner Life of Jesus* (pp. 151-2); but we must also admit the probability that the evangelist's history has here been influenced by his theology. Some indications of insight of an exceptional kind must have been given, and would have excited wonder and stimulated faith; for that seems implied in the saying

of verse 51. The use of the term Son of Man and the reference to Jacob's dream at Bethel in that utterance make it highly probable that we have here a genuine logion of Jesus ; and its contents need not raise any doubt. Jesus based His insight into man, as all His other gifts, on His relation as Son to Father ; and what He here promised the disciples was that in His companionship they should witness a constant and intimate communion of God and man.

IV. THE MARRIAGE AT CANA OF GALILEE (ii. 1-12).

In this story three matters call for notice. (1) As we find that in the rest of the Gospel the evangelist confines himself almost entirely to Jesus' work in Judæa and Jerusalem ; and the simplest explanation of that fact is that he was a Judæan disciple, who did not at least usually accompany Jesus in Galilee, we may raise the question, whether he was himself present at the marriage feast ? If he were not here an eye-witness, we might conjecture that he had got an inaccurate report of the actual occurrence, and that would relieve the difficulty about the nature of the miracle, to which we must return ; it might be conjectured to be a natural provision misunderstood. As the mother of Jesus was entrusted to the care of the beloved disciple (xix. 26, 27), she might be supposed to be his informant, especially as the incident had a poignant personal interest for her (verse 4). It is more probable, however, that the evangelist did on this journey accompany Jesus, as he would not be inclined so soon after the first interview to depart from Him.

(2) We must accordingly face the difficulty of the nature of the miracle. I am a firm believer in the supernatural endowment in knowledge and power of Jesus, and His miraculous activity ; but I must admit that this miracle, as well as that of the feeding of the five thousand (of which the story of the feeding of the four thousand is probably only a

variant tradition) presents a greater difficulty than the healing works or even the stilling of the storm and the walking on the sea ; one cannot conceive the process by which loaves and fish were multiplied, or water was transformed into wine. The explanation of accelerated natural process, poetically expressed in the hymn,

'Twas springtide when He blest the bread,
And harvest when He brake,

does not afford adequate relief to the mind. Probably we must be content to say that the Inconceivable to us need not be impossible. As we are here concerned primarily with the Fourth Gospel, it may be added, however, that the difficulty here is of the same kind, not more, and perhaps even less than in the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, which all the Synoptists record ; so that in this respect the Fourth Gospel does not appear less trustworthy than the others.

(3) As the miracle is sometimes treated as symbolic of the transformation of human life by the influence of Christ, and its reality is even denied on the ground that it is a misunderstood allegory, it may be noted that in the narrative itself there is no hint that the evangelist himself so regarded it. If he had, would he not, as he has not hesitated to do in other cases, have added reflexions to reminiscences to fulfil this intention ? Surely we need not go beyond verse 11 for his interest in the event. We need not turn aside from our main purpose to defend the character of Jesus against the charge suggested by the jest of the ruler of the feast (verse 10).

V. THE VISIT TO JERUSALEM (ii. 13-25).

(1) This narrative at once confronts us with one of the most formidable objections to the historicity of the Gospel. It records a number of visits to Jerusalem at the time of the

feasts, whereas the Synoptists record only the last visit, and confine the ministry to Galilee and the surrounding regions. Does this difference justify our dismissing the Fourth Gospel as unhistorical? Some reasons in arrest of any such hasty judgment may, however, be given.

(a) The completeness of the Synoptic record is an assumption which the results of modern scholarship are more and more disproving. According to the Two-Document hypothesis, the main sources of the Synoptists are two. Mark's reports of Peter's reminiscences, and the collection of sayings of Jesus. In his recent book on *Gospel Origins*, Professor Holdsworth gives this hypothesis a form which at least challenges close scrutiny and respectful consideration. He maintains that Mark himself prepared three editions of his own work, so accounting for some of the differences of Matthew and Luke from Mark, and from one another; and that it was Matthew who first arranged a mere collection of detached sayings of Jesus in a series of discourses, which he fitted into a Markan framework. This statement of the hypothesis is mentioned to throw into bolder relief the fact that the Synoptists cannot be regarded as giving an exhaustive account of the ministry of Jesus. While Luke had access to another source dealing with a ministry in Perea on the way to Jerusalem for the last visit, and may have gleaned a few additional facts on his visit with Paul to Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 15), yet for the record of events Peter is the only eyewitness. His interest as a Galilean was in the ministry in Galilee. His silence about his first meeting with Jesus, as recorded in John i. 41, 42, is certainly difficult to explain. One would have thought that the story would often be upon his lips; but is not a possible explanation this, that after a short period of intercourse Peter and Andrew returned to their homes and their callings, until Jesus transferred His ministry for reasons to be immedi-

ately noted from Judæa to Galilee ; and that he regarded his discipleship as beginning with the call to constant companionship in the Galilean ministry, and so made no mention of the previous less intimate and constant relation ? It is extraordinary that there is no mention of Peter's presence with Jesus in Jerusalem at any of the feasts except the last, although in the sixth chapter, when the scene of the ministry is shifted to Galilee, he is mentioned. We have no evidence that all the twelve went with Jesus on all these visits to Jerusalem. The organisation was probably less formal and fixed than later ecclesiastical associations lead us to regard it as being. And it may have existed primarily for the work in Galilee, as all the twelve except Judas were Galileans. Peter may, therefore, have said nothing about the visits to Jerusalem as he had nothing to report as an eyewitness. For it is certain that in his discourses nothing was further from his mind than to furnish a complete biography of Jesus. I may throw out a suggestion which has occurred to me, but which would require further testing before it could be urged with any confidence. May not Mark have first heard Peter give an account of the Galilean ministry for the instruction of the primitive community in Jerusalem, for whom any report of visits in Jerusalem would be unnecessary, even if he had been able to speak with special knowledge ? This local circumstance may have given its form to the Petrine tradition of the life and work of Jesus. The account of the last visit would be added when Peter went on his missionary travels ; and the present form of the Gospel according to Mark would be determined by the needs of the readers to whom it was addressed. Is it not highly probable that Peter's teaching in Jerusalem would include the account of the Galilean ministry ? We must always remind ourselves that our ignorance is much greater than our knowledge of the life and work of Jesus ; and there is room for conjec-

ture which accords and does not conflict with the evidence we have.

(b) If the Synoptic records are incomplete, we may welcome an additional source of information, if its authenticity can be maintained on historical grounds. Is it not only probable, but even certain that Jesus as the Messiah of the Jewish nation could not be content to offer Himself for its acceptance or rejection in the comparatively insignificant province of Galilee, but must have felt constrained to press His claims upon it at the very centre of its national religious life at the seasons when Jews from all parts of the world had come together to worship? More than London is to the British Empire was Jerusalem to the Jewish nation; it had a sanctity such as Rome has perhaps for the Roman Catholic, if not even greater. Could the full responsibility of refusing His claims be cast on the nation, if the full opportunity for considering these claims had not been given?

But the Synoptic record of the last visit to Jerusalem presupposes a previous ministry there. The mere reports of His sayings and doings in Galilee would not have affected the priests and scribes and the populace in Jerusalem, as the story witnesses. Surely the lament over Jerusalem (Matt. xxiii. 37-39) would become unreal rhetoric if Jesus had not made a more persistent and passionate endeavour to overcome unbelief and hate than the Synoptists record. How could He have said, "How often would I have gathered thy children, and ye would not!" if He only at the end of His ministry made such an attempt?

Other evidence may be mentioned. Luke records the visit of Jesus to the home of Martha and Mary (Luke x. 38-42), and there is no good ground for suspecting John's statement that it was in Bethany. Had this been a first visit to former strangers, would such a conversation be credible? Jesus had adherents near Jerusalem before the last visit.

The same fact is proved by the arrangements Jesus made both for the use of the ass for His entry and of the upper room for the supper (Matt. xxi. 2, 3 ; Mark xiv. 13, 14). In neither case need we suppose supernatural knowledge on the part of Jesus, but a preconcerted sign with devoted disciples, ready to put their possessions at the Master's disposal. There was a Judæan as well as a Galilean circle of disciples, and these, and not the twelve, may be referred to in some passages in the Fourth Gospel.

(c) This fact also suggests the answer to a question which may be raised regarding the beloved disciple, or the evangelist. It is usually taken for granted that he must be sought for among the twelve ; and with this assumption Westcott starts in seeking to prove that the son of Zebedee must be, and could alone be, the author of the Gospel. If one so appreciative of and devoted to Jesus as Mary of Bethany was not one of the women following Him and ministering to Him, but remained in her home in Bethany ; if one or more disciples in Jerusalem not only were ready to offer ass or room for the Master's use, but seem even to have been unknown to the Galilean disciples who were sent on the errand, is it impossible that the " beloved disciple," who could receive and retain the deeper teaching of the Master, after a short period of following Jesus, even in Galilee, returned to his home in Jerusalem, but was afterwards with Him only when He renewed His " forlorn hope " to win the city to Himself from its doom ? We have evidence in the Synoptists that Jesus after the confession at Cæsarea Philippi failed to find in His constant companions the responsive sympathy with His teaching about His death that He sought. These quarrels about precedence in the kingdom show how far their minds were from His. It was John, the son of Zebedee, who joined in the request for the nearest places to the throne in the kingdom (Matt. xx. 20-28). It was He

too who wanted to call down fire on the Samaritan village (Luke ix. 54). It will not do to say that it was the grace of God which changed the son of Boanerges into the apostle of love ; for the capacity to receive and retain His deeper teaching must seem credible in this disciple as he was at the time of the ministry, not as he might afterwards become. We may conclude then that the beloved disciple was with Jesus in Jerusalem, but did not usually follow Him in Galilee. In Galilee a public movement was possible which would have been at once suppressed in Jerusalem ; and so probably the Judæan disciples were doing secretly a work for the Master, which showed their devotion, and tested their courage not less, but even more than the open following of Jesus in his Galilean ministry. The reason why Jesus went up only at the feasts was probably that the presence of the Galilean pilgrims in the city and its environs did offer Him a measure of protection which at other times would have been denied Him (see Mark xiv. 2, " Not during the feast, lest haply there shall be a tumult of the people ").

(2) The record of the cleansing of the temple in the Fourth Gospel at the beginning of the ministry also raises a difficulty, as a similar action is recorded in the Synoptists at the end. But the difficulty is not insuperable. The quotation in verse 17 suggests that it was in the mood of prophetic inspiration, in " holy enthusiasm," under the influence of the Spirit manifested at His baptism, which in Mark's vivid phrase, " driveth Him into the wilderness " (i. 12), and sustained Him there through His long fast, that He performed this act. It was not an open claim of Messiahship, but such a challenge to the corrupt priesthood as any zealous reformer might have offered. The second cleansing, following on the entry into Jerusalem, was an assertion of His Messianic authority, not less but more significant because of the repetition. The claims He had made with growing frankness

and boldness on successive visits He confirmed by this act : the first cleansing was an appeal for reform ; the second was a condemnation of resistance to that appeal. Notice the greater severity of the rebuke on the second than on the first occasion. " Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise " (verse 16) becomes " Ye have made it a den of robbers " (Mark xi. 17). What makes this difference the more significant is that the tone of the Fourth Gospel towards the Jews is usually more severe than that of the Synoptists. Imprudent the act was not, as it was necessary for Jesus to test the feelings of the Jewish rulers towards a reform movement, so that He might adapt the method of His ministry to the actual situation. There was zeal, but it was also according to knowledge.

(3) A third question arises in connexion with the interpretation of the sign by the evangelist (verses 19-22). Is it likely that Jesus at this stage in His ministry would already be anticipating His death and resurrection ? And even if He did, would He refer to that in replying to the Jewish rulers ? Significant as the resurrection was for the evangelist in later days, and inclined as he was both to antedate events and utterances, and to ascribe to Jesus a knowledge more supernatural than the historical evidence requires us to assume, it is natural that he should give the saying this meaning ; but valuable as his reminiscences may be historically only a superseded view of inspiration can require us to regard his reflexions as infallible theologically. We may attempt an interpretation congruous to the situation. Jesus, confident of His vocation and endowment, challenges the priesthood to destroy the religion concentrated in the temple, and declares His ability to compensate for that loss by restoring the worship of God. We must add that it is just possible that Jesus, conceiving His vocation in terms of the prophecy of the suffering Servant, was Himself aware

that the conflict so begun with the Jewish rulers would have a tragic close, and yet was sure that the Father would secure to Him the final triumph. But it is not likely that this was the meaning He intended His utterance to convey.

(4) The twenty-fifth verse in the English translation appears another instance of the evangelist's tendency to ascribe to Jesus supernatural knowledge in an extreme form. It suggests, as we read it, that He was independent of information given to Him, and possessed all knowledge as a personal endowment; but it is to be noted that the verb used here is *γινώσκειν*, and not *εἰδέναι*. Unless the papyri give proof that the distinction of the words had been obliterated in the *Koine*, of which the articles of Drs. Moulton and Milligan in the *EXPOSITOR* give no indication, we may acquit the evangelist even of this suspicion. He represents the knowledge, not as intuitive, but as experimental; not as innate, but as acquired. It was by testing men, as He had in this act tested the rulers, that He came to know what was in man.

(5) A question does arise in connexion with the twenty-third verse. What were "the signs which Jesus did"? The Gospel has not recorded any miracles in Jerusalem at this point. Had they occurred, and did the evangelist omit the record because he could not attach any symbolic significance to them, nor find any other personal interest in them? Or is it unlikely that at so early a stage in the ministry Jesus would freely work miracles? And is it not possible that either verses 23 and 24 may be displaced, or, in view of the reference to signs in iii. 2, we must allow a considerable interval of time for a continuous ministry in Jerusalem between the cleansing of the temple and the widespread movement of untrustworthy belief to which these verses refer? It is not improbable that in the first inspiration which followed His baptism Jesus did use His super-

natural power more freely than He did afterwards, when the evident peril of His being treated as merely a wonder-worker inspired a restraint, which only urgent need and confident faith could overcome. Had the evangelist been possessed by the desire for miracle-mongering, he would assuredly not have been content with noting only the failure of the signs to produce the kind of faith which Jesus desired, and to which He could trust His person and His cause.

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THE ETERNAL LOVE AND CHRISTIAN UNITY.

THERE is an utterance in our Lord's great High-priestly Prayer as given in the 17th Chapter of St. John's Gospel which has not received in general the attention it deserves. Indeed, it is only since the publication of the R.V. that the words referred to have been open to the ordinary Bible reader. But they are very important in themselves and in their bearing on the vital matter of Christian Unity. They occur in the 23rd verse, where Jesus, praying for the unity of believers, says: "that the world may know that thou didst send me, *and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me.*" The words specially referred to are those in italics, which are rendered in the A.V., "and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me," which might be taken as denoting a love arising in time merely, and has been generally so taken. But *ἠγάπησας* is the Aorist, rightly rendered in R.V. as "lovedst," referring to action in past time. The difference from the A.V. might be still more plainly seen were we to render *ἠγάπησας* "didst love (them)" as *ἀπέστειλας* immediately preceding is rendered by R.V. "didst send (me)." The prayer also concludes with the words: "that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may