ST JOHN'S PORTRAIT OF CHRIST

GEORGE MATHESON, D.D.



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BY

GEORGE MATHESON

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I

In the great modern controversy regarding the authenticity of St. John's narrative, there is one avenue of inquiry which, in my opinion, has not been sufficiently trodden; I mean the spiritual side. We have had any amount of testimony from the fathers. We have had a mass of evidence drawn from correspondence or seeming want of correspondence between the Fourth Gospel and the other three. We have had copious

discussions as to the accuracy of geographical details and the conformity with the existing customs. These are all arguments derived from matters of fact. But there is a great question left behind — the argument from matters of photograph. It may be a very interesting point to determine whether the day assigned to the Crucifixion by Matthew, Mark, and Luke is the same day as is given by the Fourth Evangelist. But all such questions sink into insignificance before a great spiritual problem which is independent of times and days—Is the portrait of Christ in Matthew, Mark, and Luke consistent with the portrait in the Fourth Evangelist? It is a purely inward study. It

demands no scholarship, it asks no extraneous reading, it does not involve even a collection of Bible facts; it makes its appeal exclusively to the spirit. Yet, uncritical as it seems, it comes near to the root of the matter and closer to the point of solution than has yet been reached by any linguistic knowledge or has yet been rendered possible by any patristic research.

I have asked if the portrait in the first three Gospels is consistent with the portrait in the Fourth. I have not asked if they are identical; consistency is compatible with difference. I have not asked if they are finished pictures when viewed separately; consistency often lies in the imparting of a fresh touch

to things that are *un*finished. It may be that the very congruity of the two paintings is centred in the fact that there is a colour in each of them which is not found in the other, and that in each case the supply of this colour is the thing which makes the picture consistent with itself. If any man should arrive at the conclusion he will have to reverse his vocabulary. He will no longer speak of 'The Christ of St. John and the Christ of the earlier Gospels.' He will recognise the fact that the one painting could not exist without the other. He will see that the Christ of St. John is mutilated without the colours presupposed in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and that the Christ of Matthew,

Mark, and Luke does not reach its own proportion till it has been invested with the tints that glow on the canvas of John.

Perhaps the latter of these transferences will seem to the reader the more paradoxical. I do not think any one would doubt that the Fourth Gospel presupposes the Christ of the other three; but it will startle him to be told that the other three presuppose the Christ of the Fourth. Yet it is this point which has specially impressed me. It has mainly impressed me at the very beginning of the three Synoptic narratives. When I study the opening chapter of Mark and the first four chapters of Matthew and Luke, there is one thing which peculiarly strikes

me—the sense of a gap in the human development of Jesus. In Mark He seems to burst from the sky without father or mother or descent; in Matthew and Luke we behold His descent, but He comes in the frailty of infancy and grows in the subjection of childhood. In all the three, He breaks upon the world at a bound. There is no dawn between night and noonday. He leaps from humiliation into immediate glory. We see Him take His place among the sinners on the banks of Jordan. Then we see Him in the wilderness enduring hunger, privation, weariness — enduring, in the temptation of Satan, a deeper abasement still—receiving suggestions of the doubts of His own

Messiahship and requiring the support of creatures inferior to Himself. The darkest hour of the Son of Man was, according to these Gospels, immediately before the day.

And according to these Gospels, that day came suddenly. It was like the glory that burst by night upon the plains of Bethlehem; it had no morning; it mounted at once into noon. One moment we see Jesus in the wilderness — obscure, unknown, depressed, not yet decided as to His plan of action. The next He is at the summit of authority —proclaiming the near advent of the Messianic Kingdom, and exhorting men to shape their lives for it. His influence seems not only instantaneous but

magical. He sees Peter and Andrew apparently for the first time; He commands them to follow Him and He is immediately obeyed. He meets James and John apparently for the first time; He bids them join His cause and they linger not. He gathers within the briefest period a band of twelve leading, and seventy subordinate workers. He stands upon a hill and addresses them in the accents of Mount Sinai—accents of imperative authority that give a new law to the world. The Christ of the First Gospels rises at a bound into glory from the baptismal subservience on the banks of Jordan, and the solitary humiliation in the hands of the tempter.

Now is this natural? We feel that it is not. It is not that we object to any of the facts. What we miss is a link between the facts. We feel that there is a gap in the narrative. We are in the position of the evolutionist; we want to connect a higher with a lower order of life. But we have not found the bridge that joins them. We are accustomed to speak of the abruptness of Christ's entrance in St. Mark's Gospel; but in truth there is a transition equally abrupt in the narrative of Matthew and Luke. From the manger of Bethlehem to the subjection at Nazareth, from the subjection at Nazareth to the baptism in Jordan, from the baptism in Jordan to the tempta-

tion in the wilderness, there is one continuous course of a dependent stream; immediately afterwards there is the waving of a wide ocean. Where is the arm of the sea that connects the one with the other, that breaks the magical character of the transition between them? In the first three Gospels it is not to be found; can we find it anywhere?

Yes, in the Gospel according to John. Here is supplied the gap in the narrative of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is St. John's narrative that indicates and makes consistent that of his predecessors. With him there is no abruptness in the passage from the baptism to the glory. The chasm is filled by a state-

ment that does not occur elsewhere—that after being with the Baptist in the attitude of a disciple Christ was with him in the position of a Coadjutor. The narrative of the Fourth Gospel presupposes that Christ was in the air before the outburst in Galilee. We meet Him in the wilderness, no longer as a mark for the tempter, but as a saviour of the tempted. He is already recognised as a teacher, a rabbi, a master in Israel. He has begun by what He considers small wonders—recognitions of character by clairvoyance; but He declares these to be only preliminary to the vision of an open heaven, and of a communion between heaven and earth. He has already converted five men of

future prominence—perhaps fifty of no future prominence. Among the former are Peter, Andrew, Philip, and to all appearance John. His subsequent call of these men to His ministry was only the result of His deep knowledge of them; He made them apostles because He had previously made them converts.

The ministry of Jesus according to His Gospel was in evidence previous to Galilee. When Nathanael expressed doubt, the answer was not 'Consider the testimony of the Baptist,' but, 'Come, and see.' He is referred to the results of a *Judean* ministry, a ministry which had already made Jesus His own evidence. The reign in Galilee had not yet begun. It was, no doubt, in

Galilee that Jesus met Nathanael; but He had come there only on a flying visit. He had been invited to a marriage feast in Cana. He was invited to that feast not on account of Galilean but of Judean successes. He was invited not as a private individual but as a public man—as the head of a school, as a teacher of theology. He was not bidden for His own enjoyment but for the consecration of the ceremony—for the bestowal of a blessing on the wedded pair. His invitation came, not from memory of the home at Nazareth, but from observation of the work in Judea. And when the feast was over it was to Judea He again repaired—no longer to its wilderness but to its metropolis. The

ministry begun with the Baptist in the desert is continued by Jesus, alone, in Jerusalem. So says the Fourth Gospel. The other three never speak of such a ministry. Yet it seems to me that the events recorded of it by St. John wonderfully supply certain gaps which I feel in the earlier narrative. I think that without the incidents of this initial Jerusalem ministry, there are interesting passages in the Galilean narrative to which we should lose the key. Let me illustrate what I mean.

It is frequently said that the sayings of Jesus in the earlier Gospels are plain, direct statements bearing on the practical life, and exactly suited to a community of Galilean peasants.

I was taught this in my days of pupilage. Personal study has forced me to reverse the judgment. That they bear on the practical life is indisputable ; that they are easy to understand is contrary to the fact. In order to understand them, a Galilean peasant, or any other peasant, would require a previous training. Take, for example, that which is set forth as the nucleus of Christ's Galilean teaching—the Sermon on the Mount. It is intended to describe the substance of His inaugural address to His disciples. Knowing this, the reader persuades himself that it is very elementary ; he runs through the opening verses and says, 'That is teaching which any one will understand.' The truth is, if

uttered for the first time, it would be teaching quite above the heads of the audience. That the poor in spirit are best qualified for the heavenly kingdom, that the mourning have a special promise, that the meek are on the road to an inheritance, that those who feel they are in want of righteousness are happy —these are not precepts which commend themselves to the natural mind of any nation, least of all to the natural mind of Israel. The kingdom which Israel sought was one which could not be found by poorness of spirit, by mourning, by meekness, by the sense of insufficiency. It required exactly the opposite qualities—pride, exultation, violence, self-confidence. It is to

the Christian consciousness, the evangelical consciousness, that these precepts appeal; and at the time when they were uttered, if you admit no other guide than the Galilean narrative, the evangelical consciousness did not exist. There is a gap in the record, a hiatus, a want of congruity. We are told that we are in the presence of the primitive Christ; yet this primitive Christ teaches what is far from primitive —teaches what presupposes another revelation, an earlier revelation, a revelation which went nearer to the root of the matter and expounded from the outset the principles of the evangelic faith.

Now we find this revelation in the first of the Jerusalem ministries recorded in the Fourth

Gospel. It is highly probable that the future apostles were there present as disciples; it is certain that if they were, they received a training which prepared them for the Sermon on the Mount. For, what is the burden of the Jerusalem ministry and of that Samaritan ministry which immediately followed it? From beginning to end it has one note—the impotence of man and his need of help from a Divine hand. It begins with the cleansing of the temple. We see the Son of Man revealed from the very outset as wounded by the sins of the world, and consumed by the desire to root them out. Then we have the announcement to Nicodemus that man must be born anew, born from above—

that no patching of the old material will suffice for one whose garments are so thoroughly moth-eaten and whose robes are so utterly faded. Then comes the painting of the brazen serpent. Men are told that they are in the condition of the wounded Israelites in the desert and that they must look *up* to be healed. Next we have the rich proclamation at Samaria's well. We see the Son of Man pointing to a fountain of living water which He alone can unlock, and inviting to drink of it one who had been deeper dyed in sin than most of her sisters. We hear the denouncing of the pride both of Jerusalem and of Samaria, and the call to exchange national arrogance for individual solemnity.

The note through all these earlier chapters of the Fourth Gospel is one and the same—that the natural faculties of man are insufficient to supply him with his needed sustenance, and that his life can only be made eternal by his accepting as a charity a new gift from God.

This, I submit, is the real introduction to the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. Without that introduction the initial chord of Christ's Galilean teaching is a grammar without an alphabet. It addresses men from a height which they themselves have not reached. It leaves a gap in the development against which the logical student cries out. The Fourth Gospel makes the Christ of the earlier

Gospels intelligible both to His own disciples and to modern times. It furnishes a bridge across an otherwise impassable river, and shows us how simple peasants could be trained to understand paradoxes.

Take another saying of Christ which occurs in the Galilean narrative. It is the attempt He makes to prepare His disciples for coming adversity. He tells them solemnly that they are going up to Jerusalem—a place where the Son of Man must inevitably meet death. The critics exclaim: 'This shows that the Fourth Gospel is wrong in saying that Jesus had been already in Jerusalem; does not the solemn dread with which the journey is contemplated prove

conclusively that Christ was going there for the first time?' To me the opposite conclusion seems the truth. On the supposition that this was the first visit, why should Jerusalem have been viewed as a source of special danger? We know that it was very dear to the heart of Jesus. True, He recognised its sins, as He did those of Capernaum and the other cities of Galilee where His mightiest works were done. But He felt a tenderness for Jerusalem that He never felt for Capernaum; it was one of the two objects that woke His tears. Did Jesus suppose that Jerusalem would put Him to death for claiming to be the Messiah? He knew far better than that. He knew

that to one of His nation the claim to Messiahship involved no blasphemy—that the crucial question was not, Are you the Christ? but, What do you consider the Christ to be? There was no blasphemy in calling Himself the Son of Man; there was, in calling Himself the Son of God. The truth is, the Galilean narrative by itself does not account for the shrinking from the metropolis. In that narrative, Christ up to this time had uniformly styled Himself the Son of Man, and even where His followers penetrated deeper He had always enjoined secrecy. If this represents His entire teaching, why should He have feared to go to Jerusalem?

But Jesus knew that He had

conducted a previous ministry—a ministry *in* Jerusalem, where He had taught something much more pronounced. He knew that He had already incensed Jerusalem, not by proclaiming, as in Galilee, the Messiah to be the Son of Man, but by asserting that the Messiah was the Son of God. (JOHN III. 16.) He knew that in the vicinity of the capital had been announced that doctrine repugnant to every Jew—that the Christ was the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father and the only presence that could reveal the image of the invisible God. (JOHN I. 18.) He knew why such a doctrine had incensed the Jewish mind.[1] It was

[1] The words in MATTHEW III. 16 are only a private revelation to Jesus Himself.

tantamount to saying that the Messiah could claim another channel of descent besides the stock of Abraham. Had not He Himself within the walls of Jerusalem disparaged the holy house where His ancestors were wont to worship, and cried within its precincts, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it again'? If Jesus was apprehensive of Jerusalem, it was not a forecast, but a memory. He dreaded it because He had been there, because He had said there what He had not said in Galilee, and had in consequence experienced a bitterness there which He had never found in Galilee. The record of the Fourth Gospel has here, in my opinion, again supplied a gap in

the early narrative, and rendered clear and luminous what, if it stood alone, would be dark and inexplicable.

I will mention what I regard as one other instance in which the earlier photograph of Christ is made consistent by the later—I mean His attitude toward His own death. In a very ancient document, which by general admission expresses the faith of the first Christian century, it is written of Christ that 'in the days of His flesh He poured forth His soul with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in the thing He feared.' The reference is of course to the Garden of Gethsemane. But the striking feature of the

passage is the declaration that the Gethsemane prayer was an answered prayer, 'He was heard in the thing He feared.' Judging from the first three Gospels alone, we should be apt to conclude that the prayer was *un*-answered. We see there the sufferer at the approach of death pouring forth his soul, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,' and ending with the sublime resignation, 'If this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, Thy will be done.' It is not said there was a refusal; but the spirit of resignation seems the sequel to a refusal. What appears to seal the refusal is the fact that Christ is *not* saved from His hour; He returns from His prayer to die.

But now turn to the Fourth Gospel. It does not record the scene in 'The Garden'; but it tells the trouble in Christ's heart when He was about to enter it. And what was that trouble? The words of Jesus as recorded by St. John are before us. We are all familiar with them—so familiar that perhaps we are apt to lose sight of their full meaning. Let me try to express their import rather by paraphrase than by direct quotation, rather in order of thought than in sequence of verses. 'Father, the hour is come; and now is my soul troubled. What shall I pray in this trouble? Shall I say, "Father, save me from this hour of dying"? How can I say that? Was it not for

the purpose of dying that I came into the world? Not by escaping the hour of dying do I ask the removal of the cup. I do not refuse to drink it; but let it be removed after I have partaken of it! It is not dying, but death, that I want to be saved from. Let Thy name be glorified in my *rising*! Do not let me rest in the tomb! Assert my holiness by a resurrection, that I may assert Thine by proclaiming to all flesh the power of eternal life!'

Every word of this is implied in the sayings of Jesus which St. John attributes to Him under the shadow of death. If so, the link is supplied that in the earlier narrative is missing. We begin to understand what it was from which

Jesus recoiled. We begin to see that it was not dying, but death. We begin to feel that His agony was compatible with undeviating adherence to His mission. We begin to realise that this agony was a struggle for that which was really a *part* of His mission —resurrection. Above all, we begin to appreciate the truth of what the writer to the Hebrews says—that He was heard in the thing He feared, that the prayer in Gethsemane is an answered prayer. With this last conviction the Fourth Gospel rises in value. It becomes a reconciler of history, and thereby claims its right to be itself historical. It supplies a missing link. It illuminates spots that were in shadow. Instead of lowering the earlier Gospels

by its successful rivalry, it invests them with a higher honour. It makes their own photograph of Jesus a consistent and possible picture, and enables us for the first time to understand the full beauty, and for the first time to comprehend the finished proportions, that mould the form and features of the Man of Nazareth.

II

Although St. John is the latest of the Gospels in publication, it by no means follows that it is the latest in conception. The last book written may contain the earliest information. Imagine that we had four biographies of Napoleon—three of them written during his lifetime by leading officers, and the fourth thirty years after by one who in youth had been his secretary. In this case we should have no difficulty in concluding that the last of the unsealed fountains probably yielded the original spring. We should deem that the

secretary, however belated his narrative might be, was more likely to know the private life of the man than those who had not been inmates of his dwelling. If St. John's authorship be conceded, we are undoubtedly at the source of the stream and receive from the latest Gospel our earliest information. Neither Mark nor Luke are fountainheads; and even Matthew is subordinate among the twelve. If John be the author of this narrative, he was with Christ from the beginning—with Him in sunshine and in shade, with Him in Jerusalem and in Galilee, with Him through the whole course of His journey —from His morning in the wilderness of Judea to His evening under the shadows of the Cross.

No lateness of the narrative, no literary peculiarity of the narrative can impair the value of that fact. A man in the course of fifty years may alter his whole style of language, but that will not affect his memory. We shall not be frightened by the presence of philosophic words in the preface, we shall not even be frightened if the preface be traced to another hand. What we seek is the consistency of the information itself. The Fourth Gospel professes to give us a portrait of Christ taken in his life. Is that portrait compatible with contemporaneousness; is it less compatible with contemporaneousness than that of Matthew, Mark, and Luke? That, and not the form of the narrative, is the question

that presses on the Biblical student.

Now it is at present a popular doctrine that the figure of Christ delineated by Matthew, Mark, and Luke reveals the original portrait, and that the painting in the Fourth Gospel bears the trace of a later age. What is the ground of the assertion? It is based on the fact that the former is the depicting of an outer, and the latter of an inner life. The First Gospels, it is said, are pictures of the external. They reveal incidents, situations, actions, practical precepts for daily use, homely advices for the conduct of the passing hour. The Fourth is the record of a spiritual experience. Incidents are few and are only introduced for illus-

tration. Situations are rare and are replaced by meditations. Individual precepts are suppressed. Men are taught to look to the general state of their souls—to consider sin rather than sins, holiness rather than special virtues. The practical yields to the mystical. We are not so much told to serve God as to be united to God, to be one with Him in Christ, to abide in Him as the branches abide in the vine, to be nourished by His life and immortalised by His Spirit. We are invited to join a stream of living water in whose abundance our need shall be supplied and in whose contact our years shall be prolonged.

Now I admit that this is a just description of the difference

between the two portraits; but I ask, Why should the outer conception be the earlier one? Is there anything which would lead us to think that the Christian life was originally revealed as a stepping up rather than a stepping down? You may tell me that the *individual* life is so revealed. I am not sure that it is. I rather think the passage from childhood to manhood is a passage from the ideal to the prosaic. Childhood, as I take it, does not begin with the vision of things but with the vision of life. To the incipient eye everything is alive, spontaneous, self-acting, endowed with its own motion; herein to the child lies the charm of the steamboat and the railway train. But even were it other-

wise the analogy would not hold. For Christianity is not really in its commencement the beginning of a new life. It is the final fruit of a long-existing tree. Christianity is the flower of Judaism. It slept latently for ages in the bud of the Old Testament, and when it came forth it was no child. Why should we expect its first record to be a primitive record? It came from a human ancestry of wondrous wisdom—an ancestry that wrote the psalms and comprehended the Prophets in its retinue. Christianity by its own statement began in 'the fulness of the time.' It was born on a hill. It drew its first breath from mountain air. It was, from the earthly side, the result of long culture, and had received by

inheritance the treasures of a rich intellectual past. Why should it enter the world with the step of a child?

But I leave possibilities and probabilities. Let us seek the evidence of direct fact. What is the kind of fact that bears upon this question? Clearly it is an appeal to the contemporary literature of the first Christian age. Let us imagine that, in addition to the two portraits of Christ which we now possess—that attributed to John, and that delineated by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, there were to be suddenly discovered a third portrait of Jesus which was universally admitted to be earlier than either of the other two, and was almost universally assigned

to the hand of one within the first Christian circle. There would be an immediate rush towards this portrait. It would be hailed as the missing link which the critics were waiting for. Men would feel that at last there had been found a relic of antiquity which would solve the problem between John and the Synoptic Gospels. 'Here,' they would say, 'is an unmistakable product of the earliest Christian age; let us make it the ground of our comparison. Let us judge by this the claims of the two paintings already in our possession. Let us bring into the presence of this picture the portraits drawn by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and the portrait attributed to John. We shall then see

which represents the earlier conception entertained of Jesus. If we find that this final discovery corresponds to the workmanship of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we shall conclude that the Christ first perceived was the Christ of Galilee. If, on the other hand, we find that the lineaments of the latest discovery are the lineaments existing in the portrait claimed for John, we shall arrive at the conclusion that the claim made for John is well founded, and that the Christ of the earliest age was a Christ standing on the mountain.'

Now let us never forget that, though expressed in symbolic language, this is exactly the discovery which in point of fact has been made. In addition to the

two Gospel pictures in our hands, there has come into our possession another picture of Christ which beyond all question is earlier than either—a picture attributed to a Christian apostle, universally admitted to have belonged to the first generation of believers. I allude to the letters written in the name of St. Paul to the Churches of Galatia, Corinth, and Rome. The genuineness of these four epistles has never been doubted except by a very small school in Holland. But for our present purpose their authorship is a matter of little consequence. The main point is that they present a picture of the Master which was familiar to the first generation of Christians, and which is un-

doubtedly earlier than the present form of our First Gospels. Surely it becomes a matter of interest to compare the portrait in these letters with that of John on the one hand, and that of the Synoptists on the other, and to judge by the comparison whether John must be referred to a later day.

Now, as a result of this comparison, we must arrive at the conclusion that the photograph of Christ in the four letters is far nearer to the portrait given in John than to the portrait given by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. After reading these letters, we can say with confidence that the first Christ known to us is a Christ according to the pattern of Him seen by St. John.

I do not allude to Paul's vision of the Christ glorified. That would prove nothing; all the Gospels equally hold that Jesus at the end passed into glory. But the peculiarity of St. John is that he places Christ's glory at the *beginning* as well as at the end. And the peculiarity of Paul is that he anticipates him. His is a Christ whose coming is a stepping down. He is 'the man from heaven.' He appears, from the outset, full-grown—as 'the second Adam.' His incarnation is not a gradually ascending process, but a fall; 'He who was rich yet for our sake became poor, that we by His poverty might be made rich.' Here is John's picture of the bread of life which came down from

heaven. Nor are John's other figures of the Master absent from Paul. Here also He is from the outset the light of the world, 'God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.' Here also He is the life of men; 'I am crucified together with Christ; nevertheless I live—yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' Here also He is the revealer of a kingdom which a man must be born from above to see—a kingdom to enter whose portals we require the breath of a Spirit that bloweth where it listeth. 'Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things

which God hath prepared for them that love Him; but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' It is the identical teaching of the sermon to Nicodemus.

But perhaps the most remarkable parallel between the Christ of John and the Christ of Paul is His relation to the conduct of life. In these four letters, early as they are in date, the point insisted on is not so much the keeping of Christ's precepts as the union with Christ Himself. Paul's view, like John's view, is that to avoid walking in darkness we must be incorporated in Christ's own spirit. No amount of precept will enable us to avert

moral evil; to follow Christ we must be one with Christ—wedded to His life by an act of faith. This is what Paul means when he says that by the works of the law can no man be justified; this is what John means when he says that the branch has no life except it abide in the vine. If there had been no Paul and nothing corresponding to Paul, I should have thought such a statement incompatible with an early stage of Christianity. But in point of fact it is almost the earliest Christian statement on record. It precedes Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is previous to our parables, anterior to our narration of miracles, before the advent of any existing Gospel in its present form. Why should

the doctrine of the Fourth Evangelist be deemed too modern for the apostolic age?

It may be said, indeed, that Paul's letters are discourses and that therefore it is natural they should be more internal than a historical narrative. That is true. But the question is, Why should Paul's letters be discourses? It is not a common thing for letters to be discourses. They are generally productions emanating from the surface of life and referring to outward things. The first Christian letters would naturally be expected in a special sense to bear this character. They were written for the most part to the poorest class of the community, to those without secular education or social culture.

Even the Gospels were addressed to a wider class. Luke dedicates his 'life' of Christ to the 'most excellent Theophilus.' The Gospels were partly written for the learned—to indicate the claims of Christianity. We should expect, therefore, that a Gospel would contain more deep matter than a letter; the former might meet the eye of the great, the latter was intended only for the obscure and humble. Yet, in spite of this expectation, the reverse is the case. The four letters of Paul, though earlier in time than the Gospels and designed for an inferior set of readers, are full of matter of a higher caste than is reached by any of the Gospels except the latest. Why is this?

I answer, Because the latest Gospel is the earliest Christian atmosphere. Paul sermonises to the humble Christians because sermonising was their native air. The Christ who had appealed to them was a mystical Christ. The abstruse matters contained in these letters were not over their heads. Plato would have been over their heads, Aristotle would have been over their heads, the Stoics would have been over their heads; but Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics had not been their masters. Christ had been their Master, and the deep things of Christ had from the beginning been familiar to them. Had it not been so, they would not have understood Paul. The fact that Paul wrote to them as he did is

conclusive proof that in the reading of his letters they were breathing the original Christian atmosphere — an atmosphere to which long habit had acclimatised them and which they were able to receive with freedom because it had been the first outpouring of the Son of Man.

The truth is, without the Christ of John I cannot account for Paul himself any more than for his readers. It has been often said that Paul is the founder of Christian theology. But I do not think Paul would have dared to found Christian theology. If he had before him the Christ whom John saw and afterwards painted, he cannot be called a founder. But if he had not that Christ before him, his boldness

passes my comprehension. I do not see where from the Christ of the first three Gospels he had any warrant for proclaiming his Gentilism. We who believe in the Gospel of John and in that Christ of John who existed before his Gospel can have no doubt that Paul had such a warrant. But if you deny the truth of John's portrait and the existence of its original, it seems to me that Paul is the founder not simply of a new theology but a new revelation. Had he the right, in the absence of any command from Christ, to found a new revelation? A Jewish prophet, as we know, might be the medium of special revelations. But was not Christ supposed to be the ultimate authority? Were not

His last words to man, 'Go and disciple all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you'? Was not this a reference to the past, not to the future? Did it not tell them to keep within the limits of the revelation already given, to treasure up the commands already received, to ask in time of doubt, 'What did Jesus say'? By what right could Paul go beyond the circle of these instructions issued in the past and institute a Gospel on the basis of a special revelation?

I hear the answer already coming. You say, 'Christ promised by and by to extend these limits; He said He was about to send His own invisible Spirit not only to guide men into

past truth but to show them the things to come; and this was the very Spirit which Paul professed to have received.' All this is true. It is true that Paul professed to have received the Spirit of Christ and to have derived his revelations from it. But the question I put is this, 'Where did he get his promise of Christ's revealing Spirit?' I know where you and I get the promise; it is from the Christ who figures in the Fourth Gospel, and whose words are supposed to have been current previous to the existence of that Gospel. But if the words of such a Christ were not then current, where could Paul get his promise? There is not, so far as I know, one indication in Matthew, Mark, or Luke that a

time is coming when men shall receive independent revelations from an unwonted source. If Paul had only the Christ delineated by these, he had no warrant from the lips of the Master leading him to look for higher light. And if he had no warrant, to claim such a light was audacious. The Christians of his day, instead of offering him the right hand of fellowship, would have shrunk back in horror from the spectacle of a frail mortal claiming independent communion with Christ. It would have seemed to them the height of presumption, the acme of folly, perhaps even the approach to blasphemy. Why did they not so recoil? It was because they felt in their hearts that Paul's case, however exceptional, was

on the lines of Christian promise. It was because they knew of a wider Christ than the mere man of Galilee—of a Christ who not only claimed a higher descent than that from David, but had promised to His followers an access to the source from which He came. It was because they held in their hands that portrait of the Master which they had received from John and which in the fulness of the time was to be placed as an abiding monument in the great gallery of Christian art.

Now look at the singular literary phenomenon which lies before us! We see from beginning to end the opening period of Christian writings. Two prominent figures meet our eye—the

one at the outset, the other at the close of the epoch; the one is Paul of Tarsus, the other is John the Evangelist. Between them are many intermediate forms—Matthew, Mark, Luke, Peter, James, Jude. But on these intermediate forms our eye lingers not; it fastens exclusively on the figures at each end. And why so? Not because they are at each end, but for a far more important reason. It is because, widely separated as these two figures are, they hold in their hand the same portrait of the Master. The Christ of John and the Christ of Paul are identical. The four undoubted letters of Paul are further removed in time from John's Gospel than are the writings of either

Matthew, Mark, Luke, Peter, James, or Jude. But the *portrait of Christ* in the Gospel of John is more like the portrait of Christ in the letters of Paul than are the portraits held by Matthew, Mark, Luke, Peter, James, or Jude. The literary resemblance is all the more remarkable because both in style and character the writers are so totally different. John is calm; Paul is vehement. John is direct; Paul is involved. John is purely impersonal; Paul never forgets to bring in the circumstances of his own life. There is not a point of contact between the literary form of John and the literary form of Paul; yet the matter is the same. And why so? Because the subject is the same. That subject is

Christ; and the Christ of the first Christian literature is identical with the Christ who figures at the end of the century.

There is a document which beyond all question even of negative criticism belongs to the first century of the Christian era; it is called the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is not written by Paul, but it is certainly a product of the Pauline school. It is, therefore, a letter written from the broadest to the narrowest section of the Christian Church, and as such we should expect that it would contain matter admitted by both. Now in this document we have this remarkable verse, 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever.' I have heard many

sermons on it; but it suggests to me something more than a sermon. Here is a Broad-Churchman writing to Narrow-Churchmen, and making the striking announcement that in spite of the difference between them, there has always been unity of sentiment regarding the person of Christ. You will observe the words '*Jesus* Christ.' It is not merely the official Messiah that is spoken of; it is the personal Son of Man in His earthly relations. The advanced writer appeals to the narrow Hebrews for corroboration of the statement that his portrait of Christ has always been *their* portrait of Christ—that, whatever changes and transformations have been brought by the intervening years,

there has been no alteration in the Christian estimate of Him who has been the pole-star of every Christian eye. And when we remember that to the writer of this Epistle Jesus was not only the man who 'poured forth His soul in strong crying and tears,' but that Christ of the Fourth Gospel by whom God made the worlds, we shall be constrained to arrive at the conclusion that there is evidence in the Pauline age of the worship of a Messiah, who in addition to the traces of the Man of Galilee, bears St. John's credentials of the Son of God.

III

Is there a plan in St. John's Gospel? At first sight it looks like a series of disjointed discourses grouped round certain incidents specially chosen to illustrate them. This would indicate a purpose without a plan. A plan demands unity. It implies the existence of a thread of sequence running through the narrative from beginning to end, and giving the end a connection with the beginning. Can we find such a thread? If it exists it must impart to the Gospel the character of a progressive development. Where within its pages

do we discover traces of such a development? We can discover them in two of the *other* Gospels. In Matthew we see from the very beginning the tendency to regard the life of Jesus as an epitome of the history of united Israel, so, at least, I interpret it. The leading incidents are referred to as if they had been prophesied in the Old Testament—meaning that, in the view of the writer, the life of ancient Israel was repeated in the history of her Messiah—that like her He was persecuted by the stranger, that like her He was exiled in Egypt, that like her He was in due time called to return, that like her He was solemnly ordained to a mission, that like her He had a period of trial in the wilderness,

that like her He had His twelve representatives, and so on throughout the course of His day. All this indicates a plan. Luke, too, has by his own admission an order of development. He tells us that he wishes to trace the history of the Church from the very outset. He divides its history into two successive periods—the acts of the Founder and the acts of the Apostles. His Gospel comprehends the former; and his Christ is traced from infancy as He advances in wisdom and knowledge and human popularity. This, too, indicates a plan. But does the Christ of John admit of such a treatment? We have no infancy here, no growth here, no beginning of life here. We are ushered

into the presence, not of a fountain, but of an ocean. We gaze on no cradle, we see no swaddling bands, we behold no human ancestry. We stand from the outset before the Ancient of Days and listen to the murmur of an everlasting sea, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'

All this is true. Nevertheless I am convinced that the Fourth Gospel is a designed development, that it is analogous to Matthew and Luke in seeking for a sequence. The only Gospel which I think has designedly no plan is that of Mark. I believe it was written purely as a collection of memoranda for the use of Christian teachers. If Peter, as

is supposed, was the original source of the memoranda, he probably thought the Second Advent too near to render it worth while making a Christian philosophy. But in John's latter years there was no longer an expectation of Christ's speedy return. Men had settled down to regard the present system of things as their home; and the conviction gave it a new interest. It was the very time for the construction of a Christian philosophy; and the writer of the Fourth Gospel had a philosophic mind. The hour had come, and the man; and I believe that in this Gospel we have the fruit of that union. I have sought long in its pages for an order of development. And I have found

one. I do not know whether it was the same that St. John had in his mind; but it is there, and, as long as it is there, we can never say that no plan can be discovered in this Gospel. I shall endeavour as briefly and clearly as I can to set forth what seems to me to be the order of this narrative.

You will observe that the Gospel of John encloses itself within a circle. It is a procession from eternity to eternity. It begins by introducing Christ as the maker and monarch of all things, it ends by seeing Him return to the possession of all things—'Glorify me again with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.' The space to be

accounted for is the intermediate space between the two celestial glories — the period of which Christ said, 'I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.' It is this intermediate region which, in the view of John, is the scene of the development; the very expression 'I have finished the work' implies a progress in Christ's glorification of the Father. What is that progress as delineated by John? That is the question which I have set myself to solve and whose attempted solution I here submit. Christ's glorifying of the Father is described, not as an act, but as a process—a work. If we look deeper we shall find

that it was a work of manifestation; Christ says Himself, 'I have manifested Thy name unto the men that Thou gavedst me out of the world.' What we are in search of, then, is an order of *manifestation*—a progress from less to more. And this is exactly what I find delineated in the Gospel. I think the study of that Gospel leads us to the conclusion that Christ is made to pass through six stages of representative manifestations, in which each class addressed is larger than its predecessor. Let me try to unfold this principle.

The manifestations of Jesus in this Gospel begin with private individuals. His first appeal is to the isolated soul in its ordinary circumstances. At the beginning

of His ministry He converts five men. They are not yet apostles, nor in the record of this Gospel do they ever figure as apostles. They are introduced as private individuals without mark of any kind. John himself seems to be one of them; but, then as ever, he appears before us anonymously. Indeed the whole trend of this Gospel in relation to human souls is to exalt the commonplace. Those who figure are not the great ones of the Christian community. The work is done by obscure persons—by seemingly unlikely persons. Those who fill this gallery are the sons and daughters of faith—guileless Nathanael, earnest Nicodemus, practical Martha, reflective Mary, true-hearted

Lazarus, the conscience-stricken woman at Samaria's well. And we feel glad that it is so—that in this Gospel the choice falls upon man as man. The first manifestations of Jesus were given either to those who had not yet risen or to those who would never rise—to the men and women not in a worldly sense distinguished and whom you will meet in the public thoroughfare every day. He came, not to men walking on the sea, not to men transfigured into glory by mountain meditation, but to men like ourselves—unseen by history, unknown to fame, and unmarked by any special attribute of heroism. I am glad that the first step of Jesus in the greatest of all His

Gospels was planted on such a ladder as this.

I come now to the second manifestation of Christ in the Fourth Gospel. The first stage of every man's life is purely individual. What is the second stage? It is life in the family. There comes a time in your experience and mine in which we cease to think of ourselves as mere units, in which we begin to be conscious that we are members of a household. This sense of family life may dawn in the house of an earthly father or it may rise with the determination to found a new house of our own. But whencesoever it comes the effect is the same. It is the widening of the individual life into a life in which

the individual is no longer a unit, no longer an isolated being, but the member of a collective organism, in whose united interest all personal interest disappears, and in whose common welfare all selfish aims are forgotten.

Now this second stage of human consciousness is sketched by St. John as the second stage of Christ's manifestation to the world. He had begun with the sanctifying of personal lives—the converting of a Peter, an Andrew, a Philip, a Nathanael. He now proceeds to sanctify united lives — the marriage state, the nucleus of the home. The wedding-feast of Cana fittingly forms the second act of the sacred drama. The life of Jesus had begun with His inde-

pendent consciousness in the temple when He lingered behind His parents to obey the impulse of His own individual soul. But after this, His consciousness of independence had given place to a feeling equally true—the sense that He was the member of a family. He had gone down with His parents to Nazareth, and had been subject to them. He had kept his independent convictions buried in His heart till the time should come; He had bound Himself by the ties of home. He had diverted His attention from the things dearest to Him that He might serve the material needs of inferior minds. He had gone into the workshop of Nazareth; He had toiled with His own hands for the family

bread. John had not recorded this Nazareth experience; but was it not all the more fitting that he should honour it by giving the idea of home-life a prominent place in his Gospel? He does so honour it. He puts, almost on the threshold of his teaching, Christ's sanctifying of the marriage bond—the family tie. The miracle of Cana is so unique among the acts of Jesus and so seemingly at variance with the spirit of St. John that I cannot regard as an accident its place in the Gospel. It must stand where it does by design. Its position is a position of honour. It is recorded as one of the manifestations of Jesus, and it is recorded as one of the foremost. Why is this? It is be-

cause, in the order of human experience if the instincts of the heart come first, the instincts of the hearth come second. It is because, if life's initial stage be the cleansing of the individual soul, its stage immediately following must be the cleansing of the family altar and the direction of the personal will to the fact that it cannot live to itself alone.

What, now, is the third of Christ's manifestations in St. John? Before consulting his Gospel let us consult our own experience. We have seen that we begin with a sense of independence and that afterwards we recognise ourselves as members of a family. What comes third in human experience? What is

the step which follows my recognition of myself as member of a family? It is my recognition of myself as a citizen. Strictly speaking, this is only an extension of the family tie—a new mansion added to the house of the father. The citizen as such has a deeper sense of obligation than the father, or son, or brother. He finds that he has entered into relationship with a larger household, that he has incurred responsibilities to a wider constituency, and has become answerable for the wants of a vaster community. The altar of his sympathy is no longer limited to the sharers of his own blood, or rather, to speak more correctly, he is no longer allowed to think that the sharers of his

blood are limited to the inmates of his dwelling. The city is his house; the fellow-citizen is his brother; the wants of the community are the wants of his home.

Now it is to sanctify this third stage of human life that from Cana of Galilee the Christ of John repairs. We have seen Him by His presence glorifying the precincts of home; we are next to see Him purifying the city. When the curtain falls on Cana it rises on Jerusalem, and on that which is the centre of Jerusalem's vitality—the temple. The temple has become a scene of merchandise. Religion to the Jew had always been a source of merchandise. Jacob had cried centuries before, 'If God will be with me, and will keep me in this

way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, then shall the Lord be my God.' It would be difficult to imagine a more complete selfishness, for it was selfishness unconscious of itself. The Jew had always done business in the house of God, even when that house was only a tabernacle. His prayers had been purchases. He had given his devotion that he might be endowed thereby. Every man of his nation would have been as scandalised as Cain if the Lord had not shown respect to his offering by sending rain from heaven and fruitful seasons. No wonder that Christ took the temple as the symbol of the city in its most mercantile form—the form in which it least realised

the ideal of the city of God! Less wonder still that with such a thought in His soul He should have assumed here His first attitude as a reformer and applied the scourge of cords to the thriving corruption! The idea that a father's house was to be extricated from the inmates of a dwelling to the inhabitants of a city, and the brotherhood which recognised itself by the household hearth was to find an additional membership in street and lane. Such a goal demanded that self should be expelled.

But humanity has a wider sphere than that of the city; it has the nation; and this is the next height to which the spirit of Jesus ascends. We see His benign ministry spreading

through the land from its inward core to its outward environment. It begins with Judea—so at least John declares. And I think the fact, though not elsewhere expressed, is elsewhere implied; how could Christ tell His disciples to begin their mission at Jerusalem if He Himself had not done so? The first ministry of Jesus is a Judean ministry. From the day in which he cleansed the temple to the day in which the clouds gathered round the Baptist, He remained in the vicinity of the metropolis. When the cloud came and He felt His power obstructed, He prepared to leave; but even then there was a plan in His leaving. It bears not the nature of a flight. He feels that He has a mission to His country,

and that He must traverse His country in a definite order. He will not go back at once to His kindred in Galilee. There is a province nearer to Him than Galilee—Samaria. He must not pass it over in his eagerness to reach home. 'He must needs go through Samaria'—thus graphically does John express His mental attitude. The missionary impulse towards His nation has seized Him, and He must take His nation in geographical sequence. He has preached in Judea; Samaria is next door to Judea; He must knock at that door before He passes by. And so He stands by the well of Sychar and waters the thirsty land. Then at last He comes to Galilee—the scene of His child-

hood. Though the scene of His childhood, He has *left* it to the last. Why has He so left it? Because He wants His national progress to be geographical — beginning with the heart of the nation and spreading ever toward the Gentiles. Judea, Samaria, Galilee—the land of ancient Judah, the land of ancient Israel, and the land which originally sat in the region of the shadow of death —that is to be the triumphal march of His earthly ministry, that is to be the order in which He is to glorify His Father.

But by and by there comes a yet deeper glorifying of the Father. We have seen Jesus ascend from the individual to the city and from the city to the nation—which latter with the

Jew is equivalent to the Church. He now climbs higher still—to those whom the nation has left behind and those whom calamity has *un*churched. From the fifth to the close of the eleventh chapter of St. John the selections of Jesus have no national significance. The objects of His manifestation are chosen on grounds non-geographical—on the ground of revealing something which is independent of geography; I mean misfortune. We see, first, the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, disregarded by the spectators by reason of his very hopelessness. Then we have the fainting and weary multitude in the desert, whom even the disciples would abandon in despair. Then we have the blind

man by the waters of Siloam, viewed by his countrymen as 'altogether born in sin.' Next —if the narrative really belongs to this Gospel, we have the woman who had been a sinner and had forfeited by the law her right to live. Last comes the most striking symbol of all—Christ's contact with the actually dead. The resurrection of Lazarus symbolises the rising of those who have reached the final stage of national dismemberment and have been in the uttermost degree unchurched. It is a more pronounced painting than either the revival of Jairus' daughter or the revivifying of the widow's son of Nain; these were simply the raising from death; this is the raising from corruption.

Have we now reached the climax of Christ's manifestation? From a Jewish point of view, no. To be corrupt was to be a lapsed son of Israel; but in the eye of a Jew there was a deeper abyss than that. The climax of all Jewish antipathies was to be no son of Israel at all—to be a Gentile. The highest stretch of liberality was to enter into communion with such as these—to offer the hand of fellowship to the sons of the heathen. And this final step in the manifestations of Jesus, this final step in the glorifying of the Father, forms the culmination of the Gospel of St. John. So early as the tenth chapter we have already its foreshadowings where the Good Shepherd, in reckoning those of

the flock who have wandered not and those of the flock who have gone astray, makes this sublime addition to those called by His name, 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring.' And in the twelfth chapter the aspiration has turned into realisation. There comes to Jesus an experience of genuine joy in the advent of a band of Greeks who have travelled from afar to see Him, and He breaks forth into a rare ecstasy of exultation, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified.' It is not the actual presence of the Greeks that rejoices Him; it is what that presence represents. He sees in it what Joshua saw in the grapes of Eshcol—the first fruits of a promised land, nay, of a

promised world; for that company embodied to His eye all the sons of Greece, and Greece embodied to His eye all the Gentile nations.

I have said that in the view of John this brought to Jesus an experience of real joy. Let me add that in his view it was an experience of permanent joy. It lent even to the Cross something which its night could not extinguish. It is John's peculiarity to see in the Cross the door by which Jesus was to enter the Gentile world, and to record that Jesus was a sharer in the sentiment. It is in St. John that Christ cries, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.' The Cross was to be His city on the hill—that which

should prevent Him from being hid, which should attract the eyes of all nations. The coming of the Greeks on the very eve of His sacrifice seemed to clasp together these two ideas—the suffering and the glory, the human pain and the world-empire. It is to this visit of the Greeks that I attribute that strange thrill of exultation which runs like a thread of gold through these chapters that are meant to be sad—the words of Christ's farewell. Plaintive as they are, they are not sad. There is a chord penetrating them which is always hopeful, sometimes rapturous. We almost feel that Jesus is moving to death to the strains of joyous music. 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I

give unto you.' 'These words I have spoken unto you that my joy may remain in you and that your joy may be full.' 'In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.' 'Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' These are strange words to be uttered by one under the shadow of such a death. They are the words of One who is already more than Conqueror, and who has realised that His shadow is a form of light. It was written of old that the Gentiles should come to the brightness of the Messiah's rising. But it was here becoming manifest to the heart of Jesus that the brightness of the Messiah's setting would to the Gentiles be

His highest glory, and that the nations of the world which had been frightened by the prospect of His crown would be bound in a common brotherhood by the vision of His Cross.

IV

I ARRIVED at the conclusion that the writer of the Fourth Gospel selected the events of his narrative on a definite plan. He chose them according as they manifested the life of Christ in ever-ascending circles — the individual, the family, the city, the province, the nation, the world. It will be observed that this is not a complete explanation of the selection here made. The writer might have followed this plan and yet might have chosen a totally different series of events. He himself indicates very clearly that he had no lack

of materials—that his difficulty was not what he could get but what he should take. He says that if every deed of Christ were recorded, he does not suppose that the world would hold the books. The question, then, is, out of such a plethora of riches, on what principle did the writer of this Gospel make choice of the few incidents in the working out of that intellectual plan which lay at the base of his narrative and determined the order of his teaching? Is it possible to arrive at any solution of what it was that directed his eye to one or two gems out of the infinite mass of jewels which the life of the Master had strewn upon the strand?

Now if we assume that the

Fourth Gospel is the work of John, I think such a solution *is* possible. I think that, on the supposition of John's authorship, we can find a clue to the selection of most of the incidents in his Gospel. That clue is autobiography—the unconscious reminiscence of events and states of mind which he is elsewhere said to have experienced. The theory may seem strange. If there is one thing more constantly asserted than another, it is the statement that the John of the Synoptics is utterly unlike the John of the Fourth Gospel. It is said, that, not only is there no parallel between them, but they stand to one another in the relation of contrast. One of the main arguments against the

Fourth Gospel is just the alleged fact that the writer shows no trace of the life ascribed to him in the other narratives—that his experience seems to move on a different plane from that assigned to the son of Zebedee. Now this is not my opinion. I do not say that there are parallels on the surface. If there were, it would throw great suspicion upon the narrative; it would indicate the desire of the writer to personate John. The author of the Fourth Gospel, whoever he was, is admitted to have known the other three; and it would have been very easy for him to have identified himself with the acts there recorded of the son of Zebedee. The Second Epistle of Peter is almost universally rejected,

even by conservative scholars; and why? Mainly from the writer's eagerness to recall his share in Gospel incidents—the voice on the Transfiguration Mount, the prophecy of his own death, and the hand of fellowship he had given to his 'beloved brother Paul.' Such a professed parallel, I say, does not exist in the Fourth Gospel. None the less I think it has an *un*professed parallel—a parallel which was not designed and which the writer himself did not see. I think he has unconsciously put in the front of his narrative the events most congruous with his own experience—most consonant with that picture of himself which we derive from the earliest sources. Let me try to follow the

course of the stream—to show that in each case the selection suits the man. Any one instance may, separately, seem weak; but in their combination they are strong; while the very fact that they are not obvious on the surface furnishes convincing proof that the coincidence they suggest is not the result of design.

The active drama of the Fourth Gospel opens with a family gathering which is nowhere else alluded to—the wedding-feast of Cana. Assuming that John were the writer, would there be any congruity between his selection of this incident and the character of the man as we elsewhere know him? I think there would. Of all the immediate disciples of Jesus, the John of the First

Gospels is the nearest approach to a family man. More than all the others he suggests the type of the domestic life. From beginning to end he is associated with the home. At the dawn of Christ's ministry he is found helping his father and brother to mend their nets in a boat which was a family possession, and surrounded by the private servants of his own house. At the close of that ministry he is again found in the domestic attitude—but the mother has in this case taken the place of the father; she brings her two sons as special suppliants before the throne of the Master. As we pass beyond Christ's personal ministry and meet John in that Book of Acts which is really the

continuation of the Third Gospel, the scene is changed, but the impression is the same. He is still the domestic man—the man who is interested in the interior of the household; only, the sphere of his interest has been transferred from the household of Zebedee to the household of faith, from the children of Salome to the children of the heavenly Father. He is one of the *home* apostles. The majority are sent to travel, to carry the good tidings into foreign lands; but John is kept within the house to sweep the rooms from moth and rust, and to preserve the order of the inner circle. Throughout the entire narrative he maintains faithfully the character of the domestic man.

Now, what I say is that, if John recorded the family gathering at Cana, the fact that he alone recorded it receives explanation from his actual character. He is already known to us as the family man — the man with household tendencies. We all select according to our mental bias. Place a catalogue of books before a company of readers, having determined the character of each member of that company, you will tell with tolerable accuracy where the choice of each will light. Place a catalogue of events before the eye of twelve apostles, having determined the character of each of the twelve, you will arrive with considerable success at the particular circle of events which each apostle will

make his own. If John has a domestic instinct, he will fasten on the annals of domesticity. He will choose the recording of a marriage-feast, or a household entertainment, or a family bereavement, or a funeral service, or the provision made for a mother's last years, in preference to the story of persecutions, or the narrative of crimes. All this the writer of the Fourth Gospel has done, and if that writer be the son of Zebedee, his selection would be consistent with his nature.

I come to the second scene of the drama. It is a fiery scene—Christ's cleansing of the temple. The impetuosity of Divine justice has burst into flame, and Jesus has risen with indignation to

expel from the holy precincts the dishonourers of His Father. It is the only instance I know in which the person of Jesus is associated with physical force. It does not alone occur in the Fourth Gospel; but it occurs there as the earliest act in the public ministry of Jesus. This is a distinct selection, and as such it demands explanation. Is there anything which would account for the writer of this Gospel placing such a scene in the foreground of his narrative? There is, if the writer were the son of Zebedee. For, as painted elsewhere, the son of Zebedee was a man of fire. He is called by Christ a son of thunder, and the epithet is given not in blame but in praise. It implies that

he was dominated by a burning zeal which would be arrested by no barrier, which would use the most drastic means for the accomplishing of its object. Imagine that in the fulness of time such a man were to sit down to write the life of his Lord with a vast series of events to choose from. Which would he be most likely to put in the foreground? Would it not be that incident which most corresponded with the previous bias of his mind? And could there be an incident more harmonious with his original fire than the cleansing of the temple with the scourge of Divine chastisement? Would not the eye of the fiery son of Zebedee fasten with admiration on the burning zeal

which overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and overturned the seats of the dove-sellers, and drove out the oxen from the sanctuary, and apostrophised the men with the words of severe invective? If John witnessed that scene, it must have appealed to him more than to all his companions, for it was the mirror of his earliest self. It spoke to the first impulse of his nature. It was the meeting of fire with fire. It was an incident suited to his mental bias, a scene which called up the primitive instinct of his heart. Is it wonderful that it should have clung to his memory through all the years of his long life? Is it wonderful that in the *records* of his memory it should

have taken the earliest place? The order of remembrance is not the order of time but of intensity, and the intensity of an impression depends on the affinity of an event to our nature. This event had an affinity to John's nature. In the order of time it came late in the series, and the original narratives place it so. But John saw it by the order of intensity, and he placed it first in the public ministry of Jesus. It was graven deeply upon his remembrance because it had appealed deeply to his native spirit; and, when the trumpet-blast of memory called up the annals of the dead past, within the mind of the evangelist the scene in the temple had the earliest resurrection.

The next scene in the Fourth Gospel is the meeting with Nicodemus. The discussion recorded in that meeting centres round one point—the nature of Christ's Kingdom. Nicodemus had a wrong view of the kingdom. He thought it lay in the exhibition of outward power—miracles. Jesus told him it lay in an inward influence—a dominion over the spirit, and that a man could only yield to that dominion by the preparation for a new spiritual birth: 'Except that a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.'

Can we account for the Fourth Gospel placing this very high teaching on its threshold? Yes, if written by the John of the Galilean narrative — the son of

Zebedee. For we find in the Galilean narrative that the error of Nicodemus is anticipated in the person of John himself. We find that the son of Zebedee had originally the same crude and external view of the kingdom which is attributed to the man who came to Jesus by night. He thought it was something outward, something whose posts and places could be conferred by an arbitrary command. Our Lord tells him that he is mistaken —that a seat in the Divine Kingdom requires preparation: 'It shall be given unto those for whom it is prepared of my Father.' This is one of the experiences in the foreground of John's life, and which all through his life must have been vividly

stereotyped on his brain. It was a transition moment, and transition moments never leave the memory. No vicissitudes could have blunted it, no fires of Patmos could have extinguished it. It was to him a new birth, a turning-point between death and life. Is it surprising that he should have given it peculiar emphasis in his Gospel? Is it strange that he should have seen in the experience the initial note of the Christian ministry, the opening chord of that Divine music which was to swell through all ages and to dominate all hearts? Many would not have placed at the threshold of their Gospel a record so abstract as the discussion with Nicodemus. But to John it was a discussion

that had already occurred within his own soul. To him it was not abstract but very concrete, very personal indeed. He had heard it all in the depths of his own consciousness, in the soundings of his own spirit. An experience which would have seemed abstract to others was a commonplace to him; he had known it, felt it, lived it. Therefore, the episode of Nicodemus was to him the most natural of all narratives. It appealed to his past; it said to him, 'Thou art the man.' He recorded it as a bit of autobiography. He had the impression that in telling the story he was speaking of himself, recalling his own vanished years and reproducing the experience of his inmost soul. If any one of

the immediate disciples of Jesus could be selected as likely to record the narrative of Nicodemus it would be John the son of Zebedee.

Let us pass to the next event in the foreground of the Gospel. It is the mission of our Lord to Samaria. It is not mentioned in any of the other sacred writings —neither by Matthew nor Mark nor Luke. Is there any reason it should have been mentioned by John? Yes; he was in special debt to Samaria. He had acted unkindly by her. When one of her villages refused to receive Jesus he had proposed to call down fire from heaven. In the reflection of later years he might well feel that he had been one-sided. In the heat of passion he had forgotten that

Samaria had not been uniformly unfriendly to Jesus. He had forgotten that in the person of one of her daughters she had ministered to His want in exile. He had forgotten that through this same woman there had been gathered to the Messiah's standard many Samaritan converts—almost the first-fruits of the Kingdom of God. If he should write a Gospel, was it not incumbent on him to repair the wrong? Was it not incumbent on him to show that even in this Sardis there were some that had kept their garments pure—some whose recognition of Jesus had atoned for the gates which had been shut against Him on His journey to Jerusalem? If you assume John's

authorship, it is not surprising that this narrative should have found a prominent place in the Gospel. Good taste alone would have dictated its selection. A soul whose love has been deepened not only wishes to lead a new life; it desires to repair the old life. It would not only shape its conduct for the future; as far as possible it would redeem the past. The man who lies upon the breast of love will never be content merely to cry, 'Excelsior.' He will be eager, not simply to go forward, but to go back—to retrace his steps and undo his misdeeds. If the son of Zebedee wrote the Fourth Gospel he was the man of all others to introduce at an early stage the scene at Samaria's well.

I am not sure that even the event of the following chapter of St. John may not have its selection explained by a memory of his own life. That event is the healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda. Can we forget that the only individual miracle attributed to the son of Zebedee is *also* the healing of a lame man? It occurs in the Acts, which is simply the second section of St. Luke's Gospel. There is also, I think, a strong analogy between the two narratives. In both cases the impotent man is a neglected quantity. In both he is lying prone and prostrate in front of a place deemed sacred, and is unnoticed by any outside the Christian circle. In both he desires something different from

what he gets—the man at the temple gate seeks alms, the man at the pool seeks bathing. If the son of Zebedee wrote the Fourth Gospel, he would have a motive for recording this incident which the other evangelist had not—the reproduction of an experience analogous to his own. I shall not, however, press the point, because it is rather physical than moral. I wish rather to direct attention to two matters of purely spiritual interest in which the writer is thought to be at the poles from the son of Zebedee, but which in my opinion are each to be accounted for by an act of personal reminiscence. They belong not so much to the sphere of Christ's action as to the sphere of His teaching. They

are supposed to constitute a radical difference between the fourth and the first three Gospels. So perhaps they do; but I think they are explained by the life of John himself.

The first point is that the subject of teaching in the Fourth Gospel is not the words of Christ nor the deeds of Christ, but the person of Christ. In the Galilean Gospels it is averred that it is very different. There, men are brought to Jesus to gather His commands or to receive His healing touch. But here the one object is to meet Jesus Himself. His personality is everything—more than His healing, more than His commands. The Galilean Gospels, I am told, cry, 'Come into His presence, and be

cured'; the Fourth says, 'His presence itself is fulness of joy.' The former emphasise His benefits; the latter extols His beauty. The former speaks of what He will give us; the latter tells of what He will be to us. The former invite men by the riches He promises; the latter tempts them by the radiance of His smile. And it is asked, How can the Fourth Gospel be of the same root as that from which sprung the Gospels of Galilee; where among the original disciples of Jesus was to be found a man who could prefer the Teacher to His teaching, and deem a meeting with the Healer a greater boon than the health which He bestowed?

I answer, there was one source

even in Galilee from which this preference could have come. There was one man who even in the early Gospels, and according to these Gospels themselves, rose to the height of preferring the person of Christ to anything which He did. That man was John. It is recorded in the Synoptics that he once saw an exorcist casting out devils in the name of Jesus and, notwithstanding his success, forbade him on the ground that while using Christ's power he did not follow His person. Is not this exactly the future man of the Fourth Gospel? Have we not reached in the days of the primitive teaching to the very height of the latest evangelist—the recognising of Christ Himself as above all

His crowns? True, it is only proclaimed by one man; but that is the very man to whom the after-centuries have attributed the Fourth Gospel. The act of prohibition is commonly pointed out as a mark of his intolerance. It is a mark of intolerance, but it is intolerance by reason of a real height—a height which for the time made him giddy and caused him to forget the feebleness of his fellows. This peasant of Galilee, this man of the most primitive age, has already attained to a conception which is destined to constitute one of the main features of a Gospel which in all the eras of the Church has been called by his name.

The second point to which I

would direct attention is that the Fourth Gospel has virtually only one precept—the exhortation to 'abide' with Christ. In the other Gospels we have a series of exhortations chiefly of a practical nature. The Sermon on the Mount is concerned rather with the kingdom than with the king. The parables relate more to conduct than to Divine fellowship. The aphorisms are directions issued to a servant rather than overtures of communion from a kindred heart. But in the Fourth Gospel communion is the one note. There are endless variations, but the song is the same. Whether it is the branch adhering to the vine, or the partaking of the sacred bread, or the exhortation to be one with

Christ as He is one with the Father, the thought is always identical—the invitation to the human soul never to go out from the presence of the Master. Could the man who wrote this have been one of the primitive band?

Yes, for there is one of the primitive band who, according to the Galilean record, desired above all things this abiding with Jesus: it was John the son of Zebedee. He made it the subject of a special request that he should sit at Christ's right hand. With all the presumption of the prayer, the desire was grand. It was the wish to be near Him, close to Him, always by His side. He asked something for which he was un-

qualified; yet the cry was prompted by love. He believed the kingdom to be a physical one and the right hand of Jesus to be mainly a seat of power. Yet it was not the sight of the power that dictated his prayer; it was the instinct of a heart of love—a heart that had metaphorically leaned upon the breast of the Master and desired to linger there for ever. He felt that, so far as love went, he was able to drink of his Lord's cup and to be baptized with his Lord's baptism; and neither the cup nor the baptism would for a moment have deterred him from standing by the Master's right hand. Was such a man not worthy in the fulness of the time to transmit to the world a Gospel whose leading

note was the union of the human with the Divine, whose prominent chord was the abiding of the soul with Jesus, and whose culminating ideal of glory was that the disciple should be allowed to cling to Him when he had ascended to His Father.

V

In the previous chapter I considered the ground of John's selection of events. But the question remains, Why, even on this ground, did he not select more? There are striking elements in the original narrative which suit his character but find no place in his Gospel. John had an attraction towards events which hinged on his personal life. Yet he tells us himself that he was spectator of many events which he has not recorded; and some of these have been recorded by others. The world of Matthew, Mark, and Luke is

almost absent from John. He passes their streets by; he avoids their thoroughfares; he enters not into their dwellings; he communes little with their personages; he keeps aloof from their whole environment. Why? It has been sometimes said that he meant to write mainly the events which occurred at Jerusalem as distinguished from those which happened in Galilee. I do not think so. I am quite convinced that the omissions of John are not to be accounted for on geographical grounds; to him of all men geographical environment was of little consequence. But in truth there is no need to discuss this point. I often think we fail to find things because we look for them too far away. John

has himself given us the principle on which he omitted certain incidents from his narrative. He says, 'Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.' I ask attention to this interesting passage. It seems to me to throw an unsuspected light on a question which has been wrapped in mystery, and on which all other theories have been vain. Let us look at the lamp above the door illuminating the very threshold. If we can reach John's inmost mind according to his own testimony, specu-

lation will become useless, research will become useless, the opinion of the Fathers will become useless; we shall by our own efforts obtain an abundant entrance into the secret of his pavilion.

What, then, according to John, was the object of his own book? It was to teach that Jesus as Messiah was not merely the Son of Man but the Son of God. In the earlier Gospels the Messiah is the Son of Man. It is commonly said that in the first Gospels the recognition of Christ's Messiahship was a development, while in John it was recognised from the beginning. That, I hold, is not the case. I think that in all the Gospels Jesus appears from the beginning as

the Messiah; but I think the word 'Messiah' has not in all the Gospels the same meaning. In the first three it means originally the Son of Man; in the fourth it signifies from the outset the Son of God. Where John differs on this point from Matthew, Mark, and Luke is that in John the idea of the Messiah is from the first identified with the Divine. John says that in making selection of his events he has chosen only those which were designed to manifest the Messiah as Son of God. I take this to be the reason that he omits all the incidents of the Galilean Gospels up to the feeding of the multitude in the desert. Why does he give *that* miracle a place in his narrative?

I take the answer to be that on this occasion the distinction was first sharply made between the Messiah who was the King of the Jews and the Messiah who was the Son of God. It was on account of the miracle in the desert that the multitude desired to make Jesus a king. It was on account of the miracle in the desert that Jesus had to assert His sovereignty over a different kind of kingdom. It was on account of the miracle in the desert that He had to interrupt His habitual Galilean work and retire into the solitudes of the mountain. It was on account of the miracle in the desert that His life thereafter became the lonely walk upon a stormy sea—a record of personal struggle in

which He faced the winds and the waves alone. Was not this the fitting place for John to meet with the Galilean narrative. All previous parts of that narrative had recognised only a Son of Man—a Messiah whose province it should be to succour the mere physical wants of the creature. Here is a boundary-line. The physical presence is withdrawn, the physical help is suspended, and man is bidden to see in Jesus the power of a mightier mission, and the source of a nobler rest.

I said that up to the feeding of the multitude the Messiah of the First Gospels is simply the Son of Man. You may remark one apparent exception—the scene of our Lord's temptation. The tempter asks Him to prove that

He is 'the Son of God,' and proposes three tests of it. But I say this is merely an apparent exception. The tests proposed are all physical; Jesus will not accept one of them. Neither will John. He omits the narrative from his Gospel, not because he does not believe it, but because he does not see its bearing upon the object of his book. The object of his book is to exhibit the sign that the Messiah was the Son of God. John could not reckon among these signs the criteria proposed by the tempter—criteria which Christ Himself rejected as inappropriate to His Divine mission. Christ to John would have been less, and not more Divine if He had accepted the tests of the tempter. They

were all tests of a physical, not of a spiritual Messiah. To transform the stones into outward bread, to leap with daring courage from a pinnacle of the temple, to lay hold of the kingdoms of the world by an act of arbitrary force—these were not the deeds for a Son of God, though they might be for a Son of Man. Accordingly, John rejected the recital of them. They were unsuitable to his purpose; they would break the harmony of his design. The Messiah he wanted to portray was not a Christ of outward portents, but a Christ of inward power—not one who could make bread out of stones, but one who was Himself the bread of life—not one who could cast his body

from a pinnacle, but one who could bend His spirit into the depths—not one who could win a kingdom by shedding the blood of others, but one who could establish a universal empire by the shedding of His own.

Let me look at John's object a little more in detail. In the portrayal of his Christ, he wishes to effect a three-fold transition in the minds of men—a transition from the flesh to the spirit, a transition from the local to the universal, and a transition from a contemplation of the future to a sense of the present. I wish to look at each of these, because I think we shall find in each of them an explanation of John's silence on some of the most important incidents of the Synoptic Gospels.

First, then, John wishes in the portrayal of his Christ to withdraw the minds of men from the physical to the spiritual. He tells us so himself. He says in his preface that the transforming miracle he wants to portray is a birth not through the flesh, not through blood, not through human influence, but exclusively through the power of God. He employs the same antithesis in the account of Nicodemus. Nicodemus is thinking of a physical birth, 'How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Christ tells him that the second birth of a man is not of the flesh but of the spirit. This, then, is a fundamental thought of the

Fourth Gospel—that the translation of a soul from a lower into a higher life is an act which takes place independently of physical agency—independently of natural birth, independently of blood, independently of an ancestral line, independently even of that great bodily change which men call death. It is something irrespective of outward conditions, unaffected by outward incidents, and explicable on no principle of outward analysis. It is a movement from within.

Now with such a view in his mind, is it surprising that John should have omitted the opening accounts of Matthew and Luke—those which record the royal lineage and supernatural birth of

Jesus? I do not for a moment imagine that he disbelieved these things. He doubtless took for granted that they were true. If you take him to be the author of the Apocalypse, you find him speaking there of 'the sure mercies of David and the bright and morning star'; and it is difficult to resist the impression that he had in his mind the episodes of the shepherds and the Magi. The omission, I think, was prompted not by disbelief but by a desire to select the fittest. These events were all physical. The descent from David was a stream of natural heredity. The supernatural birth was *physically* supernatural. It was heralded by an outward star; it was hailed by an outward

song; it was accomplished through an outward medium. It was an organic process, a process of the flesh. As such, it had no meaning for John's present message. That was not the way in which *Nicodemus* could be born, that was not the way in which the Samaritan woman could be born, that was not the way in which future generations could be born. John wanted men to fix their minds on purely spiritual conditions—not on stars, not on angelic songs, not on transmuted organs, but on the invisible act of faith. It was all very well for disciples at the beginning to tell how Jesus got down to earth; the question now was how earth was to get up to Jesus. And to solve that ques-

tion, man must be withdrawn from the physical—withdrawn from the thought of that flesh and blood which are incompatible with the Kingdom of God. Therefore it was that John passed by the opening narratives of Matthew and Luke, dismissed them in a single sentence, 'The Word was made flesh.' To him the supernatural thing about Jesus was not the glory but the limitation, not the presence of the Divine power but the obstruction by the physical frailty. It was no wonder to him that a Divine side should be manifested in the birth of Jesus; the wonder lay in the miserable fleshly environment which had encompassed the Divine. Therefore he passed by what men counted the

supernatural in Jesus. To him it was the one natural thing about the Messiah, so natural as to make common the superfluous and render unnecessary the statement of the historian.

The second transition which John wished to effect by his portrait of Christ was the passage from the local to the universal. He wanted his Christ to be recognised, not as a being who once performed a certain act at a special place and time, but as one who was performing the same act in all places and at all times. We see this in the emphasis he gives to the saying of Jesus that a time was coming when men would neither associate Divine worship with Jerusalem nor with Gerizim, but with a permanent

attitude of the soul. Now if we keep this in view, we shall understand another very remarkable omission on the part of the Fourth Gospel; I mean its silence as to the institution of the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood. The common explanation is that John omitted it because it was already well known. It was in truth, to the outsider, the least known fact in the Christian annals. It was wrapped in the deepest obscurity; it was associated with Greek mysteries; it was exposed even to the voice of calumny. It is not, I think, on the ground of notoriety that we can account for the omission of this incident. Is it, then, on the ground of triviality? Still less so. It is the pillar of the

Christian Church—so important that in an epistle intended purely for the direction of the inward life Paul diverges to give prominence to the historical episode. How, then, are we to explain the silence of John?

I answer, on the principle that this sacrament is in his view too important to be localised. He looks upon the institution of the communion service as the direction to a universal fact—not the mere inauguration of a periodical ceremony. The breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup is to him not simply an act to be repeated every six months or every three months or every week, or twice in the week, or even every day. It is an act inseparable from breathing, a con-

dition indispensable to spiritual life, and without which the spiritual life must die. The communion feast is to John the metaphor of an inward feast—a feast of which the soul must partake, not periodically but permanently, which is as essential to its being as breath and air, which it could no more live without than the body could live without nerves and sinews. He would have looked upon even food as a bad simile. The food of the body is taken intermittently, and on the strength of each meal we go for hours. But in John's view the communion with the Lord must be a perpetual meal—never ceasing, never pausing. Any pause would be death, cessation of energy, spiritual extinction. 'Ex-

cept ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.' This is not bread to keep one during the intervals of communion. There are no intervals of communion. The communion is a continuous thing, uninterrupted, unending. He that partakes of this repast has 'eternal life'—that is to say, it is a repast that never closes. He that partakes of the communion draught 'will never thirst again.' There will be no time for a second thirst; the lips will never cease to taste the stream.

We can understand, then, why it is that John omits the words of institution which figure so prominently in the other Gospels. It is not because he valued them

less highly, but because he attached to them a deeper significance. To him the valuable thing to remember was not that at a certain place and time Christ kept the Passover with His disciples. It was that in all places and at all times the spirit of the Christian must keep the same Passover with his Lord. The incident was lost in the principle as the planet is lost in the blaze of sunshine. It was not so much a thing to be remembered as a thing to be seen. It was not there or then; it was here—as life is here, as intelligence is here. It was a part of the Christian consciousness, and it lay too near that consciousness to be a subject for the mere reader of history. It was something which an out-

sider could only learn by entering within the vale.

I come now to the third transition which John desired to effect by his portrait of Jesus — the transition from a contemplation of the future to a sense of the present. One cannot read his Gospel without being impressed with another singular omission. In the earlier narratives there are vivid prophecies of a coming age—of an age which was to dawn within the lifetime of that generation—of an age when the Kingdom of God should come and the throne should be set for judgment. That generation had passed away—all, perhaps, but John himself. Yet to the outward eye there was no sign of the fulfilment. Was it not incum-

bent on this last man to speak—to reiterate the prediction which seemed to be falsified, to direct the eyes of the world to a wider future. On the contrary, his hand never points towards to-morrow. There is no repeating of the vaticination of Matthew and Luke, no warnings to prepare for a coming advent, no previsions of the approach of a kingdom of glory. Why? Is it because he is afraid in the face of apparent failure to reproduce the picture? Is it because he doubts the truth of the old narrative? Is it because he would have men forget that delusive words had ever been spoken? None of these things. The true answer is at once more simple and more striking. It is more

striking because it is more unexpected and paradoxical; it is more simple because it is reached by no speculative reasoning but by the direct statement of John himself.

That answer in brief is this: John omits the prophecies by Christ because he believed their fulfilment to have already come. They had not, indeed, become things of the past, but they had become things of the present; they were no longer predictions, but facts. Why does he not record that vision of a coming day of judgment, when men are to be gathered on the right hand and on the left to indicate their acceptance or non-acceptance with God? It is because in his view that judgment-day has

already dawned — had already dawned to the eye of the Master before the close of His earthly life. He narrates how in the view of that Master the day of judgment was to dawn with the morning of His crucifixion. He describes Jesus on seeing the approach of the cross as crying, '*Now* is the judgment of this world; *now* is the prince of this world judged.' He takes Him to mean that sin finally condemned itself when it crucified the Lord of Glory; that it reached its climax of disgrace when it sought to extinguish the incarnation of purity. And when John makes our Lord cry, 'The hour now *is* when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and when they that hear

shall live,' what does he understand Him to mean? Simply this: 'The prophecy of Daniel has begun to be fulfilled to-day. The resurrection into a new life which he predicted is not something which needs to wait the change called death. It is a *deeper* change than that from death to life; but it may take place here and now. The life of the heavenly state may enter a man's soul on earth and separate it from other souls in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.' So did John read the words of the Master. He would have interpreted in a literal sense the saying recorded by Matthew that two might be working in the same field or grinding at the same mill, and that one of them

might be taken and the other left. To be taken did not mean to die. The separation of two souls might come in a flash—by a process quicker than death and previous to death. It might come amid their daily avocations —in the field or at the mill. It might come through a song of the reapers, through the fancied music of the grinding. Eternal life might dawn in the midst of time and be continued in the work of time; heaven might begin below.

Such I understand to be John's own explanation of his reticence on some of those incidents which occupy a prominent place in the Galilean Gospels. They have often been adduced as evidence against the genuineness of his

narrative. I have sought to find an answer from his Gospel itself, and from statements which he himself has made. Like St. Luke he has assigned to his work a definite object; but his object is quite different from that of St. Luke. Luke professes to be a historian; John claims to be a theologian. Luke seeks a statement of fact; John desires a proof of doctrine. Luke collects human testimonies; John appeals to the portrait of Christ itself. Luke studies the element which 'grew in wisdom and in knowledge and in favour with God and man'; John keeps his eye on that which is independent of growth, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Accordingly, John is not eager about space and time,

the where and the when. To him the prominent features are the everywhere and the always. His Christ is exclusively Divine, for humanity with him is itself the image of God. Being Divine, His acts cannot be merely local. He is not a Christ who did, but a Christ who does. His deeds are not like battles fought on a particular field, and whose anniversaries can be kept by the dwellers there. Neither Jerusalem nor Gerizim can claim them; what He reveals in Jerusalem and Gerizim He is doing at the same time in all the world. Did He once stand upon a mountain and display His glory through the tabernacle of His flesh; John says that this is only a specimen of His whole earthly ministry:

'The word was made flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory.' Did He once or twice bring life to the dead; John says that was only an image of His work on each regenerate heart. Did He betimes reveal the spectacle of men and women standing before a judgment-throne; John says it is but the picture of a universal fact—that each man is being judged by his conformity to Christ Jesus. Did He once predict that He would come again and that the sign of His coming would be the sign of the Son of Man—the love of humanity; John says that this prediction is every hour being fulfilled in separate individual souls: 'If a man love me, my Father will love *him*, and we will

come unto him, and make our abode with him.' To the man who is a historian not of the letter but of the spirit there may well be conceded a wide range of omissions.

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