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*THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF THE FOURTH
GOSPEL.*

V. THE CRUCIFIXION.

COMING now to the account which our Evangelist gives of the Crucifixion, we observe that there is nothing in it which conflicts in any way with the picture which the Synoptists portray for us. The Fourth Gospel contains much information not to be found in the Synoptists, and is markedly independent of them. It is in this Gospel only that we are told that the title on the cross was written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek, and it is from it that we learn of the altercation between the Jews and Pilate as to the form of wording of the title. It must be allowed that this has all the appearance of historical truth. The account given of the distribution of the garments of Jesus among the soldiers is more fully told than in the other Gospels, this being easily explained, on the theory of the Johannine authorship, by the presence of the Evangelist at the scene; for it is immediately afterwards that he tells of the women at the cross along with the disciple whom Jesus loved. It is, however, open to objectors to say that the story of the partition of the garments among the soldiers is an embellishment of that given in the other Gospels in order to make the event square with the prophecy which the Evangelist quotes :

They parted my garments among them,
And upon my vesture did they cast lots.

The incident of the women and the beloved disciple at the cross is also open to the criticism of objectors on the ground that our Evangelist brings them near to the cross, whereas Mark and Matthew speak of certain women looking on, but only from far off. It is, however, not impossible that these faithful women did approach the cross as our Evange-

list represents. But it is hardly likely that they would be there the whole time. They may well have retired when the beloved disciple took Mary, the mother of Jesus, to his house as he seems to have done immediately (xix. 27). The other women may have returned to view the scene from afar and have afterwards taken part in the burial as St. Luke reports. It is certainly a point worthy of notice that the women mentioned in Mark and Matthew as watching from far off can be satisfactorily identified with those (other than the Lord's mother) standing by the cross in the Fourth Gospel.

Mark and Matthew give the names of Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome. In the Fourth Gospel we have, besides Mary the mother of Jesus, his mother's sister, not named, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. There is a way of interpreting the Evangelist's words so that Mary the wife of Clopas would be identical with the sister of the mother of Jesus. This does not commend itself to me, for the interpretation would require two sisters to bear the same name. I adopt Westcott's understanding of the passage and take it that the Evangelist mentions four women: (1) the mother of Jesus, (2) His mother's sister, (3) Mary the wife of Clopas, (4) Mary Magdalene.

Now Mary the wife of Clopas is satisfactorily identified with Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, for James was the son of Alphaeus (Mark iii. 18), and it seems likely that Clopas and Alphaeus are Greek equivalents of a common Aramaic.

Thus the four women mentioned by our Evangelist will be the mother of Jesus and the same three women named by Mark and Matthew, provided that Salome be identical with the sister of the mother of Jesus. And such I take her to have been. Our Evangelist, whom we identify with St.

John, does not name his own mother Salome, but describes her as the sister of Jesus' mother. Such an indirect description agrees with his usual manner, which, as we have seen, forbids him to name himself.

Westcott has pointed out that the identification of Salome with the sister of Jesus' mother helps us to understand better why Jesus should have intrusted His mother to the care of St. John, this being explained by the relationship between them.

A careful examination, then, of this particular section of our Gospel reveals an agreement with the Synoptists too subtle to explain except on the hypothesis that we have here the record of an actual occurrence. If this be not history, but only an ideal presentation of the devotion of the writer who impersonates the beloved disciple, then it must be admitted that the picture he gives is one of consummate art. From a comparison of this passage with the Synoptists we are confirmed in our belief that our Evangelist is indeed John the son of Zebedee. But if not, he has wished to make it appear that he was. Would he, we may ask, if he had had such a purpose have carried it out disguisedly? The dignified self-suppression of the narrative is explicable on the theory of the Johannine authorship. It is not easy to explain it on a theory of impersonation.

If it be the case that the beloved disciple retired at once from the cross after the mother of Jesus had been intrusted to his care, we can understand why he passes over much that must have occurred before the point at which he resumes his story as the end was now approaching. He may well have returned to the scene again and have heard the word of Jesus which he next records. A new section begins with the words "after this" (*μετὰ τοῦτο*). This manner of linking together the parts of his story with the words *μετὰ τοῦτο* or *μετὰ ταῦτα* is characteristic of the Evangelist

(ii. 12, v. 1, vi. 1, vii. 1, xxi. 1). It may be, as has been thought, that there is a shade of distinction between *μετὰ τοῦτο* and *μετὰ ταῦτα*, the former implying a closer connexion than the latter with what has gone before. We do not, however, take it that *μετὰ τοῦτο* expresses an immediate sequence in point of time.

“After this,” says the Evangelist, “Jesus knowing that all things were now finished that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst.” Now here again it may be objected that it is in his desire to see prophecy fulfilled that our Evangelist puts into the mouth of Jesus words which He did not really speak. And it may be said that one who writes history can record what has happened but he cannot read the mind of his heroes beyond what they express in words. But here the Evangelist says that Jesus knew that all things were now finished. Is not this going beyond what the actual occurrence and the spoken words warrant ?

It must of course be allowed, and it has already been admitted, that our Evangelist is doing more than writing history. In going beyond the mere recording of events, he may or may not have rightly interpreted the mind and person of Christ. We must make a clear distinction between his statements of fact and his comments upon them, or the conclusions he draws from them. If he records that Jesus said something, he is making a historical statement ; if he says that Jesus thought or knew something, he is drawing a conclusion. In investigating the historical value of the Gospel before us we are concerned primarily with its statements of fact. A book may be true historically, but the conclusions drawn by the author from the facts may be false, or, at any rate, open to question.

In describing the scene in the garden the Evangelist records that Jesus went forward to meet those who had come to arrest Him, and he says that Jesus did this, knowing all

things that were coming upon Him. We can accept this last statement respecting the knowledge of Jesus, because His words reported both by the Synoptists and in the Fourth Gospel respecting His coming sufferings and death are a sufficient justification of it. We may not be able in all cases to verify the Evangelist's statements of what Jesus thought and knew, because we do not know all that He said, but it must be remembered that if the Evangelist was indeed a personal disciple, then he had peculiar opportunities for knowing and entering into the mind of his Master, and it would be simply impossible for him to communicate fully to any other person all the detailed reasons which had led him to certain conclusions. He could do it in some measure but never fully.

Consider, for example, his words in ii. 23-25. He says that when Jesus was in Jerusalem, during the feast, "many believed on his name beholding his signs which he did. But Jesus did not trust himself unto them, for that He knew all men, and because he needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man." Now plainly the Evangelist could not detail all the reasons that had led him to this conclusion respecting the knowledge Jesus had of men. He incidentally gives instances of it in his Gospel—e.g., Nathanael, the woman of Samaria, Judas Iscariot—but we naturally suppose that his own conclusions were drawn from a larger experience than he could possibly record.

With these considerations in mind we will return to the section of our Gospel which is now properly before us (xix. 28-30). Let us look first at the statement of historical fact, supposing it to be fact. It is this: "Jesus said, I thirst. There was set there a vessel full of vinegar: so they put a sponge full of vinegar upon hyssop and brought it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he

said, It is finished : and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

Now there is certainly nothing antecedently improbable in what is here stated. The torments of thirst were a usual experience of those who were crucified, and we learn from the Synoptists that ' vinegar ' was at hand in this particular case. There is nothing impossible then in the statement of our Evangelist that Jesus, tormented by thirst, wished that something should be given Him to drink. Nor can we argue that this incident did not take place because the other Evangelists do not record it, though the question naturally arises whether our Evangelist is not merely giving another version of the story given by the Synoptists, that when Jesus uttered His great and bitter cry, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? " one of the bystanders ran and dipped a sponge in vinegar and offered it to Him to drink. But the rest said : Let be. Let us see whether Elias (whom they thought that Jesus had been summoning) will come to help Him. But I cannot see any adequate reason for such a supposition as this. Why should we suppose that the vinegar, specially set there for the sufferers, was only offered once to Jesus ? That our Evangelist says nothing of the Eli incident may be explained by the fact that it was already recorded in the other Gospels, and his account of the crucifixion seems of set purpose to supply details which they do not give. Or it may be explained if we suppose that he records here just the things of which he had personal experience, and we have seen reason to think that he may have been absent from the scene for some time.

Then there is the further statement of our Evangelist that Jesus spoke the word : It is finished (*τετέλεσται*). And this is perfectly possible, for all the Synoptists record that He cried with a loud voice, though they do not give the word spoken. And St. Luke records that after He had thus cried, he

said : " Father, into thy hands I commend (*παρατίθεμαι*) my spirit " ; while our Evangelist tells us that after He had said, " It is finished," he bowed His head and gave up (*παρέδωκεν*) " his spirit." It is true he records no words with which this surrender of the spirit was made. It does not follow that he did not know that any words were spoken, seeing that he must have known them from St. Luke's Gospel, nor, on the other hand, need we suppose that St. Luke put into the mouth of Jesus these words which He never really spoke.

I can see nothing, then, historically improbable, either on a *priori* grounds or by reason of the Synoptic narratives, in these two words of Jesus which our Evangelist records, namely, " I thirst " and " It is finished."

We have then only to consider the Evangelist's setting, so to speak, of this picture. We must take account of his exact statement : " Jesus knowing that all things were now finished (*τετέλεσται*), that the Scripture might be accomplished (*τελειωθῆ*) saith, I thirst."

It must be observed that the verb used in the sentence ' that all things were now finished ' is the very same word as that afterwards spoken by Jesus when He said, ' It is finished.' If then Jesus did really utter this word, as the Evangelist says He did, we need not dispute the statement made by him that Jesus knew that all things were finished. The question, however, naturally arises : Why did the Evangelist make this statement respecting the knowledge of Jesus when he is going almost immediately afterwards to record the word spoken ? It is perhaps not possible for us to answer this question, but we must give it our consideration.

First, we must mention the uncertainty of connexion of the words ' that the scripture might be accomplished ' in the context. Do they belong to the words preceding them or to those that follow ? Are we to understand that Jesus knew that all things were finished for the accomplishment

of the Scriptures when He said, 'I thirst,' or are we to interpret our clause so that it would give the meaning that Jesus said, I thirst, in order that the scripture might be accomplished ?

In favour of the second of these two interpretations we have the fact that it accords with the manner of our Evangelist, who finds in the several details of the passion the fulfilment of prophecy (xix. 24, 36, 37). But on the other hand there must be set against this the apparent contradiction involved if this interpretation be adopted. For it may be said that Jesus could not be said to know that all things were already finished if, as yet, there remained one prophecy unfulfilled. Westcott, however, does not think this difficulty serious. For he remarks that the thirst was already felt. The Old Testament language is : " When I was thirsty they gave me vinegar to drink." The prophecy then would be fulfilled, so far as Jesus was concerned, by the feeling of thirst. It could only be accomplished entirely when expression was given to this feeling so that the need felt could be met by the offer of drink. Westcott, however, says : " The fulfilment of the scripture was not the object which the Lord had in view in uttering the word, but there was a necessary correspondence between His acts and the divine foreshadowing of them." If we accept this statement of the case, then the words, ' that the scripture might be accomplished ' become parenthetical, and Jesus did not utter the words ' I thirst ' for the finishing of His work, but all things were already finished and He knew them so to be. In this case the statement of the Evangelist that Jesus knew that all things were now finished is equally absolute if the words ' that the scripture might be accomplished ' belong to them or carry the reader on to what follows ; and for the statement the Evangelist has, to justify him, the fact that Jesus Himself afterwards uttered the word *τετέλεσται*.

But then we ask : What is the point of our Evangelist saying that Jesus knew that all things were now finished, if he is going to record just afterwards that Jesus said, " It is finished " ? I should answer his question, without, I hope, any seeming irreverence, by saying that in the mind of the Evangelist the knowledge which Jesus had was the justification for His giving utterance to His own personal physical need. Though the bodily sufferings of the crucifixion were so severe, yet Jesus did not allow His mind to turn to them until all things were finished. When He knew that He had done all that was required of Him, and not until then, He asked for some bodily relief in saying, ' I thirst.' And even in His request, the Evangelist seems to say, Jesus was but fulfilling what had been foretold.

I take it then that when Jesus said, ' I thirst,' He meant just exactly what He said. I can accept no mystical interpretation of the words. He felt the awful torments of thirst and asked for alleviation ; He did not refuse the vinegar when it was offered, though when hung upon the cross He had refused the myrrh intended to stupefy the senses. All that He had passed through had brought with it a feeling of exhaustion which He appeals to the pity of some bystander to remove. In the hour of death, true to the principle of His life, He worked no miracle for His own relief.

We now pass to the account our Evangelist gives of what took place at Golgotha after the death of Jesus. He alone of all the Evangelists records the request of the Jews made to Pilate that the legs of those crucified might be broken. This request they made because it was the preparation, and they would not that the bodies should remain on the cross on the Sabbath day—that Sabbath Day being a high day. The request being granted, the soldiers came and brake the legs of the one and of the other crucified with Jesus, " but when

they came to Jesus Himself and saw that He was dead already they brake not His legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side and straightway there came out blood and water." Then follows the Evangelist's solemn attestation : " And he that hath seen it hath borne witness, and his witness is true (*ἀληθινῆ*) : and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe." And then he adds : " These things came to pass that the scripture might be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced."

It is open to objectors to the historicity of our Gospel to say that the writer here again invents his facts to square with prophecy. But surely there is nothing at all improbable in this account ; and though we have here statements of fact not given by the Synoptists, there is nothing which conflicts with their less full accounts. The only possible point of conflict that I can see would be in regard to the statement made by Mark that, when Joseph of Arimathæa went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus, Pilate marvelled if He were already dead ; and calling unto him the centurion he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he learned it of the centurion, he granted the corpse to Joseph.

Now the request of Joseph must have preceded that made by the Jews that the legs of those crucified might be broken, for Pilate would not have expressed astonishment at the death of Jesus if He had already given permission for His legs to be broken. But it cannot be said that there is anything improbable in the request of the Jews being made after that of Joseph of Arimathæa, for of course there were two other bodies besides that of Jesus. The Jews may or may not have known when they made their request that Jesus was already dead. There is no suggestion that they wished

to offer further insult to the body. They wanted to get all the bodies out of the way before the high-sabbath began, as it did at sunset on the Friday. The soldiers who were to carry out Pilate's order broke the legs of the two robbers, but when they came to Jesus and found that He was already dead they brake not His legs. It was perhaps more by way of precaution than to offer insult to His body that one of the soldiers pierced the side of Jesus. It may perhaps seem strange that none of the Synoptists should mention this incident. None of them does, for the statement of the piercing of the side in Matthew is a later addition. But it must be remembered that the piercing of the side is no part of the death, which had already taken place.

Again, the asseveration of our Evangelist respecting the outflow of blood and water from the pierced side is too solemn to be passed lightly by. Whatever mystical meaning there may be in this occurrence we are not here concerned with. But the reality of the death of Jesus is most certainly affirmed, and the Evangelist in plainest terms claims to have been a witness of this incident.

Now I am far from saying that impersonation in literature is never justifiable, but I do say emphatically that a writer who impersonates another and deliberately says he is not so doing is guilty of an offence for which no epithet would be too opprobrious. In this case the writer says that his witness is true or genuine (*ἀληθινή*). In other words, if he is impersonating a witness, he is guilty of denying the fact of impersonation. It would be indeed strange that the writer of a book such as our Gospel, the sublimity of whose spiritual teaching even opponents of its historicity admit, should descend to such a departure from the truth! This is he who sets forth the Word made flesh as full of grace and truth! This he who represents Jesus as declaring before Pilate that He came to bear witness to the truth!

Our Evangelist concludes his account of the crucifixion by recording, as do the other Evangelists, the burial of Jesus. This was undertaken by Joseph of Arimathæa. Mark and Luke describe him as one who was looking for the kingdom of God. Matthew says that he was a disciple of Jesus. The Fourth Gospel describes him as a disciple, but secretly for fear of the Jews. This is a detail which St. John, supposing our Evangelist to be he, would be likely to know. He also tells us that there came too Nicodemus, he who on the first occasion came to Jesus by night, and that he brought a mixture (or, according to another reading, a roll) of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight. This great weight of spices has been objected to and declared to be unhistorical. But it must be remembered that Nicodemus was probably, like Joseph, a rich man, and it would seem that both men intended to pay great honour to the dead body of Jesus, whom they revered. A more serious objection than the weight of the spices is the difference between our Gospel and St. Luke. The latter represents the *women* as preparing spices and ointments and going with these to the tomb on the first day of the week. Putting the two accounts side by side, I am inclined to think that it was Nicodemus, who, as our Evangelist says, supplied the spices, and that the purpose of the visit of the women on the first day of the week was to apply the spices to embalm the body, there not having been time for this on the Friday evening. Then all had been done, as both St. Luke and St. John imply, in a hurry.

There is in the Fourth Gospel a detail which we do not find in the Synoptists respecting the place of the burial. The tomb where they laid Jesus was, our Evangelist tells us, near at hand, and he implies that it was chosen for this reason. Time was pressing; the day was declining. It was the preparation, the passover was at hand. The tomb then was

chosen because it was near, and it is possible that it was intended to be only a temporary resting-place.

So then in the account of the burial of Jesus we find in our Evangelist details, peculiar to himself, which suggest accurate information, and encourage us in the belief that we have here the record of a personal disciple, who had real personal knowledge of the things which he records.

E. H. ASKWITH.

STUDIES IN THE PAULINE THEOLOGY.

XII. THE HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP.

(1) WHEN we come to study closely what Paul has to say about the influence of the Church on the world, the life the Christian is to live among men, we are likely to meet with surprise and disappointment, for his standpoint is so different from that which is general to-day. To-day we seem to be more concerned about the soil than the seed of the Kingdom, about the meal than about the leaven, about the flesh to be preserved than about the savour of the salt : or, to use the modern fashion of speech, about the environment than about the organism. Human society—how it is to be purified and perfected—that is our concern, and the Christian Church is valued as it serves as a means to that end. It is no misrepresentation of Paul to say that his interest was exactly the reverse. The Church as the body of Christ was his primary concern, and the world appealed to him only as in need, and capable of being brought into the Church. The characteristic note is struck in the words : “ Our citizenship is in heaven ; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ ” (Phil. iii. 20). “ Wherefore we faint not ; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light afflic-