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978-1-107-41846-2 - The Fourfold Gospel: Section IV: The Law of the New Kingdom

Edwin A. Abbott

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Diatessarica
PART X, SECTION IV

THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL
THE LAW
OF THE NEW KINGDOM

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For a list of previous parts of Diatessarica, see pp. 574—5] of
this volume.

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THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL
SECTION IV
THE LAW
OF THE NEW KINGDOM

BY

EDWIN A. ABBOTT

Honorary Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge

Fellow of the British Academy

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

The Epistle to the Galatians, vi. 2.

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PREFACE

THE subject with which this volume begins is Christ's teaching in parables and His object in thus teaching. The subject with which it concludes (or draws towards its conclusion) is Christ's precept to His typical follower: "Let him deny himself and take up his cross." There are few Synoptic traditions that are more obscure as to their meaning and origin than these two. An attempt will be made in the following pages to shew that the Fourth Evangelist, who nowhere mentions the word "parable," and who nowhere represents Jesus as mentioning the word "cross," constantly refers to Christian thoughts about both these terms, and helps us not only to understand why he, the writer, left the terms unmentioned, but also to draw nearer to what we may believe to have been thought about them by our Lord Himself.

Mark's Gospel is taken as the starting point for investigation, for three reasons, first, because it has been proved to contain Synoptic tradition in its earliest form, secondly, because Matthew and Luke have largely borrowed from it, and thirdly, for a reason that cannot be quite so briefly expressed.

It is, that Mark appears to have been, to a surprising extent, let alone by early editors and scribes. Victor of Antioch, writing not earlier than the fifth century, complains that Mark's is the only Gospel on which he has not been able to find a single continuous commentary. The result is that Mark often retains, in a brief, rough, and obscure shape, some tradition, altered or omitted in Matthew, and

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still more frequently in Luke, which takes us back, closer than we are taken by their later and smoother traditions, to the original thought.

In these cases, where the thought is of importance, John often intervenes in such a way that he explains Mark's tradition. The instances of intervention are so frequent that it has been found expedient to regard such Johannine intervention as a rule, and to undertake the task of discussing all important exceptions.

This has added greatly to the bulk of the work, and must add not a little to the labour of the reader. But it seemed the only fair course. To select some twenty or thirty instances where John obviously intervenes in behalf of Mark would have been easy, brief, and momentarily effective. But it would have left the thoughtful reader unsatisfied and inquiring—after he had had time to reflect—“But what about those instances of peculiar Marcan tradition where John has not intervened?”

By the inclusive method adopted in these pages that question is anticipated and answered. The answer is “The instances of peculiar Marcan tradition are all given. Sometimes it is admitted—as, for example, in traditions relating to the Baptist—that John has not intervened. Sometimes you may think that non-intervention ought to have been admitted more freely as to other matters. Sometimes the evidence for intervention may appear to you thin, tedious, and unsatisfactory. But in any case you cannot complain that anything is kept back. The phenomena unfavourable to the theory of Johannine Intervention are to be found in the continuous text of Mark which you can compare with the texts of Matthew and Luke in parallel columns. You can judge for yourself. The facts are placed fully before you.”

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Take, as an instance, the following tradition about parables, where Matthew omits part, and Luke the whole, of a tradition in Mark:—

Mk iv. 33—4	Mt. xiii. 34	Lk. om.
And with many such parables spake he <i>the word unto them, as they were able to hear it</i> :	All these things spake Jesus in parables unto the multitudes; and without a parable spake he nothing unto them.	
And without a parable spake he not unto them: <i>but privately to his own disciples he expounded all things.</i>		

John substitutes the word “proverb” for “parable” when he says about the allegorical parable of the Good Shepherd “This *proverb* [i.e. *parable*] spake he unto them.” He also represents Jesus as saying, on the night before the Crucifixion, “These things have I spoken unto you in *proverbs* [i.e. *parables*]; the hour cometh when I shall no longer speak unto you in *proverbs* [i.e. *parables*] but shall tell you plainly of the Father.” But the substitution of a different *word* does not affect the inference that John is here intervening as to Synoptic *thought*. We shall endeavour to shew that his object was to modify, explain, and place in its right order, the Marcan tradition omitted partially by Matthew and wholly by Luke.

It will be maintained that in the Fourth Gospel *all Christ's teaching is regarded as having been of the nature of parables, proverbs, or dark sayings, to His disciples, until the Holy Spirit was given to them after His death and resurrection.* According to this view, Mark's tradition

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needed to be placed later. It was a mistake to suppose that Jesus used parables at any time to make His teaching obscure. The obscurity was a necessity. In that case, we may suppose John's interpretation of the motives of Jesus, and of the historical fact at the bottom of Mark's tradition, to have been something of the following kind: "All the words of the Lord Jesus before His death, not only those to the multitudes but also those to His disciples, were of the nature of parables or proverbs, which He spoke unto them *'as they were able to hear,'* in order to lead those who were willing to be led, step by step, to the truth. But after His resurrection, after He had been manifested to those of His household, the disciples, and after He had bestowed on them the Holy Spirit, from that time forward He spoke no longer in parables but told them plainly of the Father. Mark's tradition is based on fact. But he has placed it before its time. The fact became fact after the Lord had risen from the dead."

Whether this Johannine intervention is correct is a point to be discussed later on. The point for us at present is that John does appear to intervene, and that we ought not to allow his intervention as to Synoptic thought about "parables" to be concealed from us by the fact that he avoids (as he almost always does) the technical Synoptic word. It may also be added that, whether John is right or wrong, we gain something by studying the difficult Synoptic statements about Christ's parables in the light of his intervention.

Let us now consider what, if anything, John has to teach us about the second of the two subjects mentioned at the beginning of this Preface, the command that bids every Christian "take up his cross." At first sight it seems that there is nothing Johannine that even remotely

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corresponds to this. But it has been urged in a previous part of *Diatessarica* that when Jesus said “Take my yoke upon you,” that is to say, “Take my service upon you,” He implied a precept that might be expressed in some circumstances (where the “service” was hard and dangerous) by the phrase “take my cross upon you.” The original may not have enjoined, and probably did not enjoin, mere readiness to face death. It enjoined service to the Son of Man, including service to all the sons of man whom He came to serve and to save.

Turning to the Fourth Gospel for some command or precept of this kind—some precept enjoining service such as the Son of Man enjoined—many of my readers may be surprised to find how few commands or precepts that Gospel contains—not more than three or four—as compared with the numerous commands recorded by the Synoptists. Among these three or four by far the most prominent is that one which Jesus Himself literally fulfilled for His disciples and then bade them fulfil for one another: “If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought”—literally, “ye owe it as a debt”—“to wash one another’s feet.”

Even this precept is not expressed by an imperative. The Fourth Evangelist dislikes imperatives. Yet how much more than an ordinary imperative is implied by this “owe-it-as-a-debt” may be seen from the Johannine Epistle, which tells every Christian that “he *owes-it-as-a-debt* to walk even as he [*i.e.* Jesus] walked,” and that “we *owe-it-as-a-debt* to love one another,” and “Hereby know we love because he [*i.e.* Jesus] laid down his life for us, and we also *owe-it-as-a-debt* to lay down our lives for the brethren.” To the same effect the Epistle to the Romans says “*Owe not a debt* to anyone except to love one another,”

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and “We that are strong *owe-it-as-a-debt* to bear the weaknesses of those that are not strong.”

It may be fairly and reasonably argued that, when John describes Jesus as thus ministering to His own disciples, who recline at the table while He waits on them like a servant, he has in view the tradition of Mark and Matthew, omitted by Luke, “Verily the Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” But, apart from this, we ought to learn much from these Johannine traditions about “*owing-as-a-debt*.” They connect the “debt” of a Christian with Christ’s “washing the feet” of the disciples; and with “walking” even as He walked (that is to say “following” Him); and with “loving one another”; and with “laying down life for the brethren.” Is not this last phrase equivalent to “taking up the cross for the brethren”? And are we not thus brought round by these stages of tradition from the Johannine precept “wash one another’s feet” to the Synoptic precept “take up the cross” —with this new light on the latter, that we perceive its meaning to be, not, “Face martyrdom, and practise asceticism that you may save your own souls,” but “Follow the Son of Man whose love of men constrained Him to make Himself the Servant of those whom He loved”?

It may seem somewhat venturesome to say that Jesus was “constrained” to do anything. But in reality it is more reverent, as well as more true, than to say that He “was not constrained to do anything,” or that He “could do as He pleased.” The expressed doctrine of the Fourth Gospel is that Jesus “was not able to do” anything except that which He saw the Father doing. And its implied doctrine is, that the Son, being the incarnate Love of God, was constrained by His own love to take up the yoke, or

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the cross, and to lay down His life for His brethren, to whom, when He departed from them, He bequeathed Himself, that is to say, the Spirit of His own “constraining” love.

The great need of Christendom, at the present time, is the sense, or rather the indwelling fervour, of this constraining love. The Fourth Evangelist and the Apostle of the Gentiles both speak of it as a “debt.” And “debt” may seem a cold word to connect with love. So also may “constraint.” But there is no coldness in the Pauline words “The love of Christ *constraineth* us: because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that those who live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again.” John takes this fervid doctrine a little further by saying, in effect, that men “should no longer live unto themselves but unto the brethren for whose sake Christ died.”

Thinking of this debt, as expressed by these two great exponents of Christian thought, we perceive at once that it is not of a commercial character. It may be instructively (though not completely) regarded in a military aspect, as the debt owed by the soldiers of the army of righteousness, in the first place to their Leader the Prince of righteousness—who both died for them as their comrade; and led them to victory as their Lord—and in the second place to their fellow-soldiers, whom their Leader identified with Himself. Even men of the world would admit that Christians, if they believed in the existence of such a debt, ought to regard it as “a debt of honour.” Yet how very far are those who are striving to become “sons of the light” below those who frankly admit that they are “sons of this world,” in feeling a whole-hearted and passionate

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determination that, whatever else may remain unpaid, their “debt of honour” shall be discharged!

To inspire Christians with a passionate determination of this kind, passionate yet not military—merging duty in love, and “I must” in “I will”—is (doubtless) the object of all the Evangelists. But the Fourth, more than the Three, seems to reveal Jesus as the natural source of such an inspiration. The Three teach us about the Law of the Seed and about the Law of the Cross, but separately, and without much suggestion of their naturalness, or of any connection between the two. The Fourth combines the doctrines, shewing (in one and the same lesson) that the seed must fall in order to rise, and that the death implied by the Cross means self-sacrifice for others, not asceticism for oneself. The seed is drawn up by the sun from the darkness of its decaying integument into light, life, and fruitfulness; so is the crucified and buried Saviour drawn up to the Father, with power to draw up into Himself and into His eternal life the souls of those who have shared His death.

Hence it is that from the Fourth Gospel imperatives are almost banished, and commands in it are almost superseded by silent drawing. The “almost” is required by a notable exception—the last of the few Johannine imperatives, “Follow thou me.” As this command was addressed to Philip at the opening of the Gospel, so it is to the penitent Peter at its close.

The exception is indeed noteworthy. But we should also note, in the same passage, an instance of silent “drawing.” For there we find, besides Peter, another disciple following Jesus; and he follows uncommanded. What made him follow? We are not told. But we are led, with Johannine indirectness, to surmise the cause. “Peter,

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turning about, seeth *the disciple whom Jesus loved following.*" We must be dull indeed if we cannot infer that the cause of that "following" was Christ's "constraining love."

With the following of this unnamed disciple the following of Peter appears to be both compared and contrasted. Peter is to have the privilege of "glorifying God" by the "manner" of his "death." This probably means that he is to follow literally on the path of the Cross, and to be a crucified martyr. In any case it means that he is to be a *martyr*—that is to say, a *martus*, or "witness."

The other disciple is to have no such privilege of special following. Perhaps he is not to follow at all in any such sense but merely to wait ("If I will that he tarry?"). Tertullian said, "The blood of Christians is seed." If that were the only seed, the unnamed disciple would be no sower. But may not the life and work of Christians also be "seed"? May not this also "witness" for Christ? The Gospel implies that it may. The unnamed disciple, it says, "witnesses" in a way of his own:—"This is the disciple that *witnesseth* concerning these things, and we know that his *witness* is true."

And surely, whatever may be its historical defects, "his *witness* is true"—spiritually, most true. No other disciple of Christ, not even Paul, has so powerfully helped us to discern, in the words and deeds and posthumous influence of Jesus, the Law of the Seed and the Law of the Cross, and to recognise, beneath both, the Law of eternal Life and Growth revealed as triumphant through the transitory appearances of death.

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I gratefully acknowledge the help of my friends Mr W. S. Aldis, Mr H. Candler, and Rev. J. Hunter Smith in revising the proofs of this volume, as also those of preceding volumes of *Diatessarica*. Their criticism has enabled me to see and to correct many obscurities, and some errors, that would otherwise have escaped my notice.

EDWIN A. ABBOTT.

*Wellside, Well Walk
Hampstead, N.W.*

20 Dec. 1915.

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- (i) *a.* References to the first nine Parts of Diatessarica (as to which see pp. 574—5) are by paragraphs in black Arabic numbers:—
- 1— 272 = *Clue*.
 273— 552 = *Corrections of Mark*.
 553—1149 = *From Letter to Spirit*.
 1150—1435 = *Paradosis*.
 1436—1885 = *Johannine Vocabulary*.
 1886—2799 = *Johannine Grammar*.
 2800—2999 = *Notes on New Testament Criticism*.
 3000—3635 = *The Son of Man*.
 3636—3999 = *Light on the Gospel from an ancient Poet*.
- (i) *b.* References to the Sections of the Tenth Part of Diatessarica, entitled *The Fourfold Gospel*, are by pages. The four Sections now completed are:—
- (Section 1) *Introduction*.
 (Section 2) *The Beginning*.
 (Section 3) *The Proclamation of the New Kingdom*.
 (Section 4) *The Law of the New Kingdom*.
- (ii) The Books of Scripture are referred to by the ordinary abbreviations, except where specified below. But when it is said that Samuel, Isaiah, Matthew, or any other writer, wrote this or that, it is to be understood as meaning *the writer, whoever he may be, of the words in question*, and not as meaning that the actual writer was Samuel, Isaiah, or Matthew.
- (iii) The principal Greek mss are denoted by \aleph , A, B, etc.; the Latin versions by *a*, *b*, etc., as usual. The Syriac version discovered by Mrs Lewis on Mount Sinai is referred to as SS, *i.e.* "Sinaitic Syrian." It is always quoted from Prof. Burkitt's translation. I regret that in the first three vols. of Diatessarica Mrs Lewis's name was omitted in connection with this version.
- (iv) The text of the Greek Old Testament adopted is that of B, edited by Prof. Swete; of the New, that of Westcott and Hort.
- (v) Modern works are referred to by the name of the work, or author, vol., and page, *e.g.* Levy iii. 343 *a*, *i.e.* vol. iii. p. 343, col. i.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- Aq. = Aquila's version of O.T.
- Brederek = Brederek's *Konkordanz zum Targum Onkelos*, Giessen, 1906.
- Burk. = Prof. F. C. Burkitt's *Evangelion Da-mepharreshe*, Cambridge University Press, 1904.
- Chr. = *Chronicles*.
- Clem. Alex. 42 = Clement of Alexandria in Potter's page 42.
- Dalman, *Words* = *Words of Jesus*, Eng. Transl. 1902; *Aram.*
- G. = *Grammatik des Jüdisch-Palästinischen Aramäisch*, 1894.
- En. = Enoch ed. Charles, Clarendon Press, 1893.
- Ency. = *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, A. & C. Black, 1899.
- Ephrem = Ephraemus Syrus, ed. Moesinger.
- Etheridge = Etheridge's translations of the Targums on the Pentateuch.
- Euseb. = the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius.
- Field = Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt, Oxford, 1875, also Otium Norvicense, 1881.
- Gesen. = the Oxford edition of Gesenius.
- Goldschm. = *Der Babylonische Talmud*, 1897—1912, ed. Goldschmidt.
- Goodspeed = Goodspeed's *Indices*, (i) *Patristicus*, Leipzig, 1907, (ii) *Apologeticus*, Leipzig, 1912.
- Hastings = Dictionary of the Bible, ed. Hastings (5 vols.).
- Hor. Heb. = *Horae Hebraicae*, by John Lightfoot, 1658—74, ed. Gandell, Oxf. 1859.
- Iren. = the treatise of Irenaeus against Heresies.
- Jer. Targ. or Targ. Jer. (abbrev. for Jerusalem Targum), or Jon. Targ. (*i.e.* Targum of Jonathan, abbrev. for the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan) = the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan on the Pentateuch, of which there are two recensions—both quoted (*Notes on N.T. Criticism*, Pref. p. viii) by ancient authorities under the name "Jerusalem Targum." The two recensions are severally denoted by Jer. I and Jer. II. On other books, the Targum is referred to as simply "Targ."
- Jon. Targ., see Jer. Targ.
- Justin = Justin Martyr (*Apol.* = his First Apology, *Tryph.* = the Dialogue with Trypho).
- K. = *Kings*.
- Krauss = Krauss's *Griechische und Lateinische Lehnwörter* etc., Part II, Berlin, 1899.

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Levy = Levy's *Neuhebräisches und Chaldäisches Wörterbuch*, 4 vols., Leipzig, 1889; *Levy Ch.* = *Chaldäisches Wörterbuch*, 2 vols., 1881.

L.S. = Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon.

Mechilta, see Wü(nsche).

Onk. = the Targum of Onkelos on the Pentateuch.

Origen is referred to variously, e.g. *Hom. Exod.* ii. 25 = lib. ii. ch. 25 of *Hom. Exod.*, but Orig. on Exod. ii. 25 = the commentary *ad loc.*; Lomm. iii. 24 = vol. iii. p. 24 of Lommatzsch's edition.

Oxf. Conc. = *The Oxford Concordance to the Septuagint*.

Pec. = peculiar to the writer mentioned in the context.

Pesikta, see Wü(nsche).

Philo is referred to by Mangey's volume and page, e.g. Philo ii. 234, or, as to Latin treatises, by the Scripture text or Aucher's pages (P. A.).

Pistis = *Pistis Sophia*, ed. Petermann (marginal pages).

Ps. Sol. = *Psalms of Solomon*, ed. Ryle and James, Camb. 1891.

R., after Gen., Exod., Lev. etc. means *Rabboth*, and refers to Wünsche's edition of the Midrash on the Pentateuch, e.g. *Gen. r.* (on Gen. xii. 2, Wü. p. 177).

Rashi, sometimes quoted from Breithaupt's translation, 1714.

S. = *Samuel*; s. = "see."

Schöttg. = Schöttgen's *Horae Hebraicae*, Dresden and Leipzig, 1733.

Sir. = the work of Ben Sira, *i.e.* the son of Sira. It is commonly called Ecclesiasticus (see *Clue 20 a*). The original Hebrew used in this work is that which has been edited, in part, by Cowley and Neubauer, Oxf. 1897; in part, by Schechter and Taylor, Camb. 1899; in part, by G. Margoliouth, *Jewish Quart. Rev.*, Oct. 1899 (also printed in *About Hebrew Manuscripts* (Frowde, 1905) by Mr E. N. Adler, who discovered the missing chapters).

SS, see (iii) above.

Steph. Thes. = Stephani *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae* (Didot).

Sym. = Symmachus's version of O.T.

Targ. (by itself) is used where only one Targum is extant on the passage quoted.

Targ. Jer., Targ. Jon., and Targ. Onk., see Jer. Targ., Jon. Targ., and Onk., above.

Tehillim = Midrash on Psalms, ed. Wünsche (2 vols.).

Test. XII Patr. = Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs ed. Charles, 1908 (Gk, Clarendon Press, Eng., A. & C. Black).

Theod. = Theodotion's version of O.T.

Thes. Syr. = Payne Smith's *Thesaurus Syriacus*, Oxf. 1901.

Tromm. = Trommius' *Concordance to the Septuagint*.

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Tryph. = the Dialogue between Justin Martyr and Trypho the Jew.

Walton = *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta*, 1657.

Wetst. = Wetstein's *Comm. on the New Testament*, Amsterdam, 1751.

W.H. = Westcott and Hort's New Testament.

Wü. = Wünsche's translation of *Rabboth* etc., 1880—1909 (including *Mechilta*, *Pesikta Rab Kahana*, *Tehillim* etc.).

(a) A bracketed Arabic number, following Mk, Mt., etc. indicates the number of instances in which a word occurs in Mark, Matthew, etc., e.g. ἀγάπη Mk (0), Mt. (1), Lk. (1), Jn (7).

(b) Where verses in Hebrew, Greek, and Revised Version, are numbered differently, the number of R.V. is given alone.

(c) In transliterating a Hebrew, Aramaic, or Syriac word, preference has often, but not invariably, been given to that form which best reveals the connection between the word in question and forms of it familiar to English readers. Where a word is not transliterated, it is often indicated (for the sake of experts) by a reference to Gesen., *Thes. Syr.*, Levy, or Levy *Ch.*