

The New Testament and the Jewish Lectionaries

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Preface

When I first took up Professor Aileen Guilding's book, *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship*, it was with a sense of expectation. In common with all other students of the Fourth Gospel, I had observed that this Evangelist takes a greater interest in the Jewish feasts than does any of the Synoptists. It seemed to me not unreasonable that the clue to this might well be found in a connection of some sort with a lectionary. I was prepared, accordingly, to welcome the hypothesis.

But as I read I must confess to a feeling of dismay. While I was impressed, as any reader must necessarily be, with the great learning displayed in this book, yet there seemed to me then, as there seem to me now, to be gaps in the argument. I could not feel that the case had been made out. This led me to examine other literature bearing on the lectionary, and the more I read the more difficult I found it to accept the view that the synagogue lections give the explanation. Questions continually multiplied and the answers did not appear. I could not see that a satisfactory case had been made out for believing that there was a Jewish lectionary early enough for the hypothesis, and, if such a lectionary did in fact exist, it did not seem as though dependence on it had been adequately proved. I was disappointed to find that inadequate attention is usually given by lectionary experts to other studies in the field. Thus, in recent years, there have been some very significant treatments of the use of the Old Testament by New Testament writers. If any one of these is right, then it seems to me the lectionary hypothesis must be wrong. Yet the lectionary experts did not discuss these works at all.

The purpose of this book, then, is primarily to inquire into the factual basis of lectionary theories. It is an attempt to distinguish between what we know and what we surmise. My interest is primarily in the Fourth Gospel, and therefore there are more references to this than to any other New Testament writing in the following treatment. I would not normally have cared to write a book like this, for I do not claim to be an expert in the lectionary field. But anyone who works on the Gospel according to St John must face the fact that a number of recent writers see the Jewish lectionaries as the key to our understanding of this Gospel. Their

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claim must be taken seriously. This must be my excuse for venturing into such a field. If sometimes I sound rather like the Counsel for the Prosecution this must not be held to signify that I do not appreciate the learning of the lectionary experts. As I said before, I was

predisposed to accept some such view when I began my study, and I would be glad still to find some clue to the Fourth Gospel from such a source. But in the present state of Johannine studies it seems to me that it is best to bring out the difficulties I discern in the way of the hypothesis in strong terms.

Toward the end of the book I have ventured to suggest that the Fourth Gospel should not be understood as though it were interested in all the feasts. Rather the author is concerned to show that the Passover (and to a lesser extent, Tabernacles) is a useful category for bringing out the meaning of Jesus. I suggest that this, rather than the lectionary, gives us the clue to his method. But, whether this suggestion be accepted or not, my difficulty with the lectionary hypothesis still remains.

In addition to the various writers I have quoted, I should like to express my indebtedness to the members of Professor C. F. D. Moule's New Testament Seminar at Cambridge. For a whole term they discussed the kind of question which is dealt with in this book, and I profited greatly from their discussions. I do not think I have omitted to acknowledge any express indebtedness. Should this, however, prove to be the case I should like to apologize. I owe a great deal to the discussions that took place, and I find it difficult to know where I picked up some of the ideas that I have put forward. Certainly I owe more to the Seminar than I can express.

Quotations from the Bible are normally from the Revised Standard Version, and those from the Mishnah from Danby's translation.

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Introduction

For some time now, scholars with a bent for lectionaries have been drawing attention to evidence that the synagogue lectionaries may lie behind some, at any rate, of the New Testament writings. R. G. Finch, for example, in thoroughgoing fashion has suggested that the readings in the synagogue services lie behind most of the New Testament.¹ P. P. Levertoff has argued similarly in the case of the Gospel according to St Matthew.² Probably the most thorough attempt to establish such a case is that of Professor A. Guilding who has argued cogently that the Fourth Gospel should be understood as essentially a book of sermons based on the Jewish Lectionary.³ Though her primary concern is with St. John she lets us see from time to time that she discerns lectionary interests elsewhere also.

More recently there has been a tendency to take this very much for granted. Thus C. H. Cave in an article entitled 'St Matthew's Infancy Narrative' constantly appeals to the lectionary readings as something well known.⁴ Similarly C. W. F. Smith accepts without argument a lectionary background to both Mark and John.⁵

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More can be cited, but it is hardly necessary. It is plain enough that there is a widespread impression that in New Testament days there was a fixed Jewish lectionary, and that some, at least, of the New Testament writers have this lectionary in mind when they write.⁶

One would imagine from all this that the existence of the lectionary in New Testament times is a definitely-known, well-established fact to which appeal can readily be made. It is not said as often as it should be that there is a large element of supposition in most statements about the lectionary. The fact must be faced that there are considerable gaps in our knowledge, both as to the time when the lectionary first came into existence, and also as to the form it then took (*i.e.* whether it was a one-, two-, three-, *etc.* year cycle, and at what point in the year it began). It is not at all clear whether any lectionary in fact existed in New Testament times,

¹ *The Synagogue Lectionary and the New Testament* (London, 1939).

² See his special introduction to this *Gospel in A New Commentary on Holy Scripture*, edited by G. Gore, H. L. Goudge, and A. Guillaume (London, 1928).

³ *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship* (Oxford, 1960). Professor Guilding maintains that the Evangelist has arranged his series of sermons 'against the background of the Jewish liturgical year, keeping to the regular order of the feasts without breaks or dislocations, and driving home the theological point of each discourse by linking with it the record of some carefully selected miracle, which he calls a sign' (*op. cit.*, p. 1). In accordance with this she can say, 'In the Fourth Gospel the main emphasis is on the teaching of Jesus, and the action is strictly subsidiary' (*op. cit.*, p. 45; see also p. 231). This, however, is open to serious doubt. While the teaching of Jesus certainly receives emphasis in this Gospel, it is too much to say 'the action is strictly subsidiary'. One might just as well maintain that the emphasis is on the action and that the sermons are there only to bring out the meaning of the actions. It is significant that C. H. Dodd in his *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1953) entitles John 2-12 'The Book of Signs'. The truth, of course, is that for John both the teaching and the actions are significant. God is in them both. There is not the slightest reason for belittling either.

⁴ *New Testament Studies*, 9, 1962-63, pp. 382-390.

⁵ *New Testament Studies*, 9, 1962-63, pp. 130-146.

⁶ Cf. A. Guilding, 'Thus the first-century synagogue lectionary system would seem to be at least as important a key to the understanding of the Fourth Gospel as the Temple ritual of the time' (*op. cit.*, p. 3). The existence of the lectionary system is assumed.

and if one did we are far from having established what lections were read on particular days. Yet obviously unless we can know with tolerable certainty what passage was read on what day we cannot appeal to the lectionary as an explanation of New Testament phenomena.

The aim of the present inquiry is to look into the whole question with a view to separating fact from supposition. The claims made by those who find a lectionary behind the New Testament are far-reaching, and obviously a good deal depends on whether they are justified. But the facts about the early history of the lectionary are not easy to ascertain. It is worth our while to look into the whole question in the attempt to discover what is proven fact and what is reasonable hypothesis.

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CHAPTER I

The Lectionary Cycle

Our first inquiry must obviously be into the lectionary cycle. This is basic to the theories in question. Unless it can be established that this cycle existed, and that it existed well before New Testament times, we cannot argue that it underlay the New Testament. Moreover, since none of the New Testament writers ever appeals to the cycle explicitly, it must be held to be so basic that readers of the Gospels would recognize the allusion without one syllable of explanation. This means that it must have been well established and widely known. Professor Guilding poses certain questions, ‘Was this Palestinian lectionary system already well established and fixed by the first century, or was it in an early amorphous stage? Can we even be quite sure that it was in existence by the first century? In which month was the three-year cycle of lectionary readings begun?’ Then she says, in my judgment rightly, ‘An answer has to be found to all these questions before we can proceed with any confidence to a study of the Fourth Gospel.’¹ This last statement is important. Unless the questions posed can be answered with reasonable certainty the lectionary hypothesis cannot serve as a basis for understanding the Gospels. We proceed, accordingly, to look at the evidence for the existence of such a lectionary before the writing of the New Testament.

The Date of the Synagogue

Let us begin at the beginning by noting briefly that it is uncertain when the institution of the synagogue first made its appearance. Upholders of lectionary hypotheses seem to take it as axiomatic that by the first century the synagogue had been in existence for long enough for lectionary systems to have made their appearance. And indeed it may well have been. But this ought to be proved and not taken for granted. The time of appearance of the synagogue is at present most uncertain. Some see synagogues in the statement in Psalm 74: 8, ‘they burned all the meeting places of God in the land’, but this is precarious. C. A. and E. G. Briggs, for example, understand the words to refer to ‘the abolition of all the sacred

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feasts prescribed in the laws of Israel from the most ancient times’ and they go on, ‘There is no authority in ancient usage for thinking of the synagogues of Maccabean times.’²

The earliest mention of a synagogue so far attested appears to be in an inscription from Egypt dating from some time after 247 BC. Moreover, there is considerable agreement that synagogues existed in the Dispersion for a considerable period before they appeared in Palestine. Indeed, according to E. L. Sukenik the oldest synagogue remains known in

¹ *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship* (Oxford, 1960), p. 5.

² *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Edinburgh, 1907), *in loc.* E. J. Kissane similarly rejects the reference to synagogues, pointing out among other things that if this were meant it is remarkable that the LXX translator did not take the expression in this sense.

Palestine are ‘not earlier than the first century C.E.’³ How much before this time the synagogue existed in Palestine it is difficult to say. W. O. E. Oesterley and G. H. Box maintain that the synagogue ‘probably did not become a regular institution in Palestine till after the beginning of the Maccabean period’⁴ This is an opinion which must be treated with respect since it emanates from such eminent scholars. But it must be borne in mind that they do not cite evidence. And without that we cannot be sure whether the Palestinian synagogue existed so early.

Sidney B. Hoenig, in an important article in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*,⁵ has subjected to a close scrutiny the idea, held by many scholars both Jewish and Christian, that there was a synagogue in the Temple precincts. Not only does he find this not proven, but he finds evidence which enables him to say, ‘these events in effect definitely show that the beginnings of synagogue ritual and liturgy are to be dated after 70 CE—not before.’⁶ This is an important conclusion for our present investigation. Hoenig’s final words are also important for us: ‘Only much later, after the Destruction in 70 CE, do we witness the full emergence of synagogues, particularly in Galilee. Their origin indeed may be traced to the Maamadot, but their actual existence or functioning is neither pre-Hasmonean, nor even post-Hasmonean; they are to be found flourishing only in the post-destruction era. Archaeological findings too have not uncovered any synagogues in Judea of the period before 70 CE. The liturgic (non-sacrificial) Synagogues (*i.e.* established religious

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edifices or houses for standardized and canonized prayer) did not exist in Judea during the Second Commonwealth and surely not within the Temple precincts.’⁷ This statement is not lightly made. It follows a rigorous examination of the relevant rabbinic material. It is plain that in the light of it we must be more careful than ever in maintaining that the synagogue was established in Palestine in pre-Christian days.

The importance of establishing the date of the synagogue in Palestine itself is that it is known that different cycles of lectionary readings were in use among the Jews, and the Palestinian cycle is the one to which New Testament scholars usually appeal. This was a three-year cycle, whereas among the Babylonian Jews the Law was read through completely in one year. Guilding, Finch, and others base their work on the triennial cycle which is thus the important one. But if we are to demonstrate that the Palestinian triennial lectionary lies behind any part of the New Testament it would seem a necessary pre-condition to show that synagogues had been in existence in that land prior to New Testament days for long enough for such a lectionary to develop.

³ *Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece* (London, 1934), p. 1; see also pp. 69f.

⁴ *The Religion and Worship of the Synagogue* (London, 1911), p. 337.

⁵ *Jewish Quarterly Review*, LIV, October 1963, pp. 115-131.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 130. S. Zeitlin also has an article on the supposed synagogue in the Temple (*Jewish Quarterly Review*, LIII, October 1962, pp. 168f) in which he argues that the whole idea is based on a misunderstanding. The passage in the Tosefta Sukkah which appears to teach it ‘is a later addition, altered and is corrupt’ (*op. cit.*, p. 169). A. Edersheim, of course, long since rejected the idea; see Appendix X, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, II (London, 1890), pp.742f.

That is why we ask for evidence for an early date for Palestinian synagogues. However, very little can be brought forward. As we have seen, the earliest actual remains thus far known are no earlier than the first century AD. If we look for literary references, the earliest account of a synagogue service that we possess still appears to be that in Luke 4: 16-30.⁸ The plain truth is that we know very

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little about when synagogues were first established in Palestine or about what went on in them before New Testament times. We may suppose if we choose that they were old-established, and that what took place in them was the systematic reading of the Law according to the lectionary. But we should be clear that assuming these things and proving them are two very different things.

The Date of the Triennial Cycle

Quite apart from the difficulty of establishing when the synagogue system began in Palestine is the difficulty of knowing when the triennial cycle was worked out. A. Büchler thinks the lectionary originated in disputes with heretics like the Samaritans. Readings were fixed, he thinks, in order to establish the truth on controverted points.⁹ Nowadays we are inclined to think that when a controversy is being resolved the procedure ought to be to work out a formula which preserves the best insights of both sides. But in antiquity this was not so. The two sides tended to engage in strife until one emerged as victor. Then it promptly took what action it could to exclude altogether the possibility of a resurgence of the errors, as it saw them, of the defeated foe. Büchler maintains that in this spirit the first regular, prescribed readings were enjoined to preserve the true teaching on certain points where there had been controversy. Specifically he thinks that the very first lections were those for the four special sabbaths¹⁰ and he dates the event which led to one of these lections in 79 BC.¹¹ J. Rabinowitz supports him

⁸ Eusebius records a description of synagogue practice from Philo's *Hypothetica*: 'He required them to assemble in the same place, and to sit down one with another in reverent and orderly manner, and listen to the laws, in order that none might be ignorant of them. And so in fact they do always meet together and sit down one with another, most of them in silence, except when it is customary to add a word of good omen to what is being read. But some priest who is present, or one of the old men, reads to them the holy laws, and explains each separately till nearly eventide: and after that they are allowed to depart with a knowledge of their holy laws, and with great improvement in piety' (*Praep. Evang.* viii. 7.12f., cited from translation by E. H. Gifford, Oxford, 1903, pp. 389f.). This is tantalizingly brief, and does not give us much idea of what went on. As far as it goes, it does not appear to describe adherence to a lectionary. The descriptions of synagogue worship in *Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit*, 81f., *De Septenario*, c. 6, do not add anything significant to this.

⁹ Büchler wrote two important articles in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, V, 1893, pp. 420-468 and VI, 1894, pp. 1-73 (henceforth cited as V and VI respectively). He makes the point here referred to in V, p. 424.

¹⁰ These are known by the names *Shekalim* (Ex. 30: 12f1.; or Nu. 28: 1-8), *Zakor* (Dt. 25: 17-19), *Parah* (Nu. 19), and *Hahodesh* (Ex. 12: 1-20).

¹¹ V, p. 426. There was dispute as to the correct interpretation of Nu. 28: 4 ('Thou shalt bring each of you a lamb'). The Sadducees asserted that this was meant to indicate a free will offering brought by an individual (putting emphasis on the use of the singular). 'The sages', however, maintained that a sacrifice for the congregation was meant and that a general contribution was necessary in order that this be done. Büchler cites the so-called Chronicle of Fasts (*Megillah Ta'anith*), 'Then the sages, when they gained the upper hand, ordered that shekalim should be collected and placed in the temple, which shekels should be used to defray the expenses of the daily offering. The eight days during which the controversy lasted were to be celebrated in future as half-

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in this contention.¹² J. Mann rejects the contention that the Samaritans were the reason for the first set readings, and with it all views that the origin of the lectionary is to be found in polemic. In addition to the view of Büchler he mentions that of Leszynsky, that the regular readings of the Torah on the sabbath were originally directed against the penetration of Judaism by Hellenism, and that of Venetianer, that the *haphtaroth* were similarly in the first place directed against the Christians.¹³

For our present purposes it is not necessary to take sides with Büchler or Mann or Leszynsky or Venetianer. It is sufficient to notice that the evidence is so confused that different experts can come to mutually exclusive conclusions. Moreover the position of most of them means that the synagogue lectionary was established somewhere near the beginning of our era. If this is so then it does not allow time for the development necessary before the triennial cycle could appear in its definitive form. And it should be borne in mind that nothing less is sufficient. Since none of the New Testament writers mentions the lectionary cycle, if they did employ it it must have been so well established that they could use it as a basis and know that their readers would discern their allusions without the need of explanation. This means a fixed, established and widely, if not universally, accepted system, not one in process of development and with lections differing from one place to another.

Appeal is usually made to the triennial cycle but it is not certain that this was the earliest form of the lectionary. Büchler says that Gratz held that there was a biennial cycle.¹⁴ While few seem to have been convinced, the fact that this could be held illustrates the obscurity of the subject. Mann mentions the view of Finfer and Gaster that the triennial cycle was late and unofficial.¹⁵ He notices the difficulty raised against the triennial cycle by the Baraita in *Megillah* 31b but when he comes to give evidence in favour of this cycle he cites no evidence earlier than a sermon preached by R. Yohanan b. Zakkai which he dates 'several years before 70 C.E.'. ¹⁶ The only relevance of this sermon appears to be that it is on a theme

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connected with two passages which are related as *seder* and *haphtarah*¹⁷ in the developed cycle. This may mean that he found them in the cycle. But it may mean no more than that the link between the two passages commended itself to him as it did to those responsible for

holidays.' It is this which is dated 79 BC, and Büchler thinks that the regular reading of Shekalim was then instituted in order to fasten in people's minds the interpretation of 'the sages'.

¹² *Mishnah Megillah* (Oxford, 1931), p. 96.

¹³ *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue* (Cincinnati, 1940), p. 4.

¹⁴ V, p. 441.

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 5. G. D. Kilpatrick regards Mann's attempt to trace a connection between the Palestinian triennial cycle and the homiletic Midrashim as 'over-bold' even though there is some midrashic material from the early second century (*The Origins of the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, Oxford, 1946, p. 60).

¹⁷ For those unused to this terminology perhaps we should explain that *seder* (plural, *sedarim*) is the name given to a passage read as a lection from the Law, while *haphtarah* (plural, *haphtaroth*) is the lection from the prophetic books. These latter are the Prophets in the Hebrew Bible, and include thus most of what we would call the historical books.

linking the two when the cycle was formed. The evidence cannot be said to be impressive. And in any case it is rather late for our purpose. A cycle which cannot be shown to exist until some years prior to AD 70 cannot be assumed to lie behind the preaching of Jesus, or, for that matter, the writing of the Gospels.

We should also notice that R. Marcus finds ‘a remarkable agreement’ between the lections in the annual lectionary and Philo’s work on Genesis. It is unlikely that the Jews in Alexandria bypassed Palestine and went to Babylon for their lectionary system. Thus, as Marcus suggests, it is possible ‘that the Alexandrian Jews, like the Babylonian Jews, followed an annual system that may have been in use in Palestine also before the Hellenistic or Roman period’.¹⁸ Marcus’s view is not proved any more than those of others that we have noted. But the fact that it can be seriously argued that the annual system came first and the triennial system later casts doubt on whether the triennial system was established in Palestine by New Testament days.¹⁹

Lectionaries do not emerge from heaven finally and perfectly formed. There are normally experiments and variations, different people prefer different passages and the final shape takes time to form. This is inherently likely to have taken place in the synagogue, as elsewhere. And in fact there is evidence that variation in the readings lasted for centuries. For example, when the great scholar Rab visited Palestine he found that the lections there differed from those in Babylon. As his return to Babylon is dated about AD 210 this variation is a difficulty in the way of any theory which postulates a fixed lectionary early in the first century. Büchler has things to say about Rab like this: ‘Rab it was who first introduced prophet portions for the Sabbaths before the 9th of Ab that had no contextual contact with their respective Torah Sedarim. We have already seen that this Rabbi was responsible

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for many of the Sedarim and Haftaras.’²⁰ Now if Rab can introduce novelties in the third century of our era, the lectionary was far from having been fixed in the first century. Büchler finds evidence for the development of the *sedarim* from the well-known fact of the existence of certain short lections. He examines the lections and concludes, ‘Are we not compelled to admit a development from the origin of the Sabbath *Sedarim* to its firm establishment in the ritual which is found in the Massora, and from ancient times, till the period when the Mishna enumerated rules for the same?’²¹ He notices also a view that the course of the *sedarim* came to an end on the second Sabbath of Shebat, and another view that it ended about 7th Adar.²² He sees considerable differences in the various enumerations of the *sedarim* in Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.²³

In the case of the prophetic lections development continued to a much later period. Thus Büchler can say, ‘in the eighth century Haftaras were no longer selected on the basis of an analogous content, but merely on account of a likeness between the first significant

¹⁸ Philo, *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, Loeb edn. (London, 1953), p. xiv.

¹⁹ A further doubt is engendered by the views of R. Judah b. Ila’i and of R. Meir noted below, p. 18, n. 6.

²⁰ VI, p. 62.

²¹ V, p. 461.

²² V, p. 451.

²³ V, p. 460.

expressions'.²⁴ Indeed he speaks of short *haphtaroth* (of two or three verses) as being in vogue even in the Middle Ages,²⁵ so that some changes were very late.

Mann likewise testifies to variants in the *sedarim*. In his discussions of individual passages we not infrequently get statements like, 'we are confronted here by much shifting of Sedarim.'²⁶

That there was development is further indicated by the different numbers of *sedarim* which were in vogue at different times. Those who appeal to the triennial cycle normally take 154 as the number of *sedarim*. This is, of course, the number in the Massoretic division of the Pentateuch. But this is the end, not the beginning of the process. Other divisions give us 155, 161, 167, and 175 *sedarim*²⁷ and there may well have been other divisions of which we have no knowledge. The table given by Professor Guilding has 152 *sedarim*.²⁸ The fact is that our information is derived from sources which are rather late.²⁹ It is, moreover, not quite certain that the standard division into 154 *sedarim* points us to a triennial cycle. F. C. Grant

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thinks of this number as 'providing enough passages for a three or a three-and-a-half-year cycle. This was one-half of a sabbatical period of seven years, and consequently fitted into the liturgical scheme with great precision.'³⁰ This is yet another indication of the obscurity of our subject.

The earliest sources we have do not lend impressive support to the idea of a fixed lectionary whether annual, biennial, or triennial. For example, the Mishnah gives certain rules of procedure for reading the Law in worship. Among other things it provides that the reader of the Torah must not leave out verses.³¹ This would be pointless if he were following a set lectionary which prescribed exactly what verses he should read. It points to a time when the ruler of the synagogue selected the passage, and did so on no fixed principle, or at any rate on principles of his own. G. F. Moore takes up this position, and he also points out that in the middle of the second century R. Judah b. Ila'i laid it down that the proper thing to do is to begin each Sabbath where the reader finished on the preceding Sabbath.³² Moore comments, 'It is clear from this that authorities recognized no division of the Pentateuch into lessons of fixed length, or of a cycle of lessons to be finished within a fixed time.'³³ Moore also directs attention to the fact that the Mishnah and the Tosefta, which regulate so many things about

²⁴ VI, p. 44.

²⁵ VI, p. 14.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 522.

²⁷ See Büchler, V, p. 431. The table given by J. R. Porter in the Hooke Festschrift lists 167 *sedarim* (*Promise and Fulfilment*, ed. F. F. Bruce, Edinburgh, 1963, pp. 171-174).

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 234.

²⁹ For the late date of the sources see Guilding, *op. cit.*, p. 16; Büchler, V, p. 466.

³⁰ *Ancient Judaism and the New Testament* (Edinburgh and London, 1960), p. 44.

³¹ *Meg.* 4: 4.

³² *Tos. Meg.* 4: 10; *Meg.* 31b.

³³ *Judaism*, I (Harvard, 1958), p. 299. He notices that on R. Judah's plan it would take not less than five-and-a-half years to complete the Pentateuch, while if the readings were carried out in the fashion of his contemporary, R. Meir, it would require about two-and-one-third years. Such systems accord neither with the annual nor the triennial cycles.

the reading of the Law with minute exactness, say nothing at all about the lectionary (either triennial or annual) so that this must be a later development, 'not authoritatively established before the third century, though it may have earlier become customary'.³⁴

The time of the year when the triennial cycle began is also uncertain. Indeed the facts are such that the question arises whether there may not have been several triennial cycles. Büchler thought that the triennial cycle began in the month Nisan, and this, basically, is accepted by Professor Guilding and others. Mann, however, held that the cycle began in the month Tishri.³⁵ Professor Guilding

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thinks there is evidence for a Tishri cycle as well as for a Nisan cycle, though how this is to be reconciled with the idea that the lectionary was fixed is not easy to see. She also speaks of a triennial cycle beginning in Shebat.³⁶ Moreover, it is not without its interest that Büchler finds evidence for yet another cycle, one beginning on 1st Elul.³⁷ It is also worth noticing that while Guilding manages to accept both the Tishri and the Nisan cycles Mann rejects Büchler's position with decision.³⁸ Van Goudoever, by contrast, has a strong preference for Büchler's view.³⁹ It is possible that other suggestions could be offered. Thus Guilding notes a Baraita which implies a different way of arranging the lections from any she adopts.⁴⁰ She dismisses it, accordingly, as 'nonsensical'. But ought it not to be taken as another piece of evidence witnessing to the great variety in practice, or to the complexity of the lectionary situation?

In this confusing picture one cannot altogether escape the impression that the fundamental reason for postulating a number of different cycles is that the evidence is not clear enough to establish any one cycle as generally accepted. And if there were several cycles then (*pace* Guilding) it is difficult to see how the writer of, say, the Fourth Gospel could use the lectionary as his background, confidently expecting his readers to discern his allusions. How could he know that they were not in the habit of using another cycle? I find the idea that he wrote with two distinct cycles in mind incredibly difficult. One cannot simultaneously accept two lectionaries.

³⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 299f.

³⁵ Rabbinowitz cites Elbogen as another who argues for a cycle beginning in Tishri (*op. cit.*, p. 99).

³⁶ *Op. cit.*, pp. 36, 100. She thinks it 'perhaps unlikely that two different synagogue systems should coexist before A.D. 70' (*op. cit.*, p. 19), a statement difficult to reconcile with her view that both systems lie behind the Fourth Gospel. It is also hard to see how it fits in with her other idea that both the Tishri and the Nisan cycles helped shape the final form of the Pentateuch (*op. cit.*, p. 43). Elsewhere she can throw doubt on the Tishri cycle: 'If, indeed, a Tishri cycle was in use at any time as well as a Nisan cycle' (*op. cit.*, p. 20). It is all most confusing.

³⁷ VI, pp. 68f. *Inter alia* he says, 'If this conjecture is correct, then there must have been many congregations which started the Pentateuchal lessons on the 1st of Elul.'

³⁸ He says that Büchler 'brilliantly became involved in an untenable theory of TC (=triennial cycle) having started in Nisan, and not in Tishri' (*op. cit.*, p. 6).

³⁹ He says, 'Büchler's hypothesis has much the advantage over Mann's reconstruction. On the basis of the discussion in the first part of this study, the present writer thinks that Büchler's hypothesis is corroborated' (*op. cit.*, p. 146). It is a measure of the difficulty of the subject that on the same page van Goudoever differs from Büchler over the lections for the month Adar.

⁴⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

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Professor Guilding argues that the triennial cycle is of immense antiquity. So old is it, she thinks, that it had its effect in shaping the final redaction of the Pentateuch. She can say positively, 'In short, the school of writers who finally adapted the Pentateuch had chiefly in mind the cycle of the ecclesiastical year and the needs of public worship, perhaps the worship of the early synagogues.... If this is so, then *the triennial cycle is as old as or older than the Pentateuch in its final form*. It follows that by the first century A.D. the Pentateuchal lections of the triennial cycle must have been already old-established and fixed.'⁴¹ As a matter of interest, long ago E. G. King suggested much the same thing. In his book on the Psalms he maintained that the final arrangement of the Pentateuch was influenced by lectionary considerations.⁴² The evidence we have adduced makes it highly unlikely that the triennial lectionary is anything like as old as Professor Guilding suggests. If it were, then one thinks that by New Testament times it should have beaten its rivals off the stage. It would surely have had an aura of sanctity from long-established usage, especially if the final shape of the Pentateuch was specially worked out in order to fit in with it.

It must, moreover, be noticed that other authorities deny just as firmly as Guilding asserts that the Pentateuch had originally anything to do with the lectionary. Thus J. van Goudoever says, 'We cannot expect a totally consistent system, because the Torah was not originally written to be read during a triennial cycle.'⁴³ Similarly H. St. J. Thackeray thinks that the text of the Pentateuch 'had wellnigh reached its final form when the custom of public reading was introduced'.⁴⁴ If the Pentateuch had reached something like its final form at the very beginning of public reading, then it is obviously impossible that a development like the triennial cycle could have brought about its final shape.⁴⁵ J. R. Porter, in his contribution to the Hooke Festschrift, has subjected Guilding's

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contention to a close scrutiny and found it wanting. He shows that her arguments are not sound and concludes, 'the sedarim were devised at a time, whenever that may have been, by which the Torah had already assumed its present form. In short, the triennial cycle was superimposed on the Pentateuch, and the Pentateuch was not adapted to suit the cycle.'⁴⁶

Appeal is often made to the *haphtaroth* by those concerned to find the lectionary behind the New Testament. This means that the prophetic lections as well as those from the Torah must have been fixed by the first century. But all the evidence seems against it. It is sometimes urged that the synagogue service at Nazareth (Lk. 4: 16-30) shows that the *haphtaroth* were fixed, because the scroll was handed to Jesus. He did not select it. But even though the scroll

⁴¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 44 (Guilding's italics).

⁴² *The Psalms*, Part III (Cambridge, 1905), pp. v-ix. He maintained also that there was a triennial cycle of Psalms and that this has affected the final arrangement of the Psalter (*op. cit.*, pp. x-xiv).

⁴³ *Biblical Calendars* (Leiden, 1959), p. 147.

⁴⁴ *The Septuagint and Jewish Worship* (London, 1921), p. 41.

⁴⁵ S. Rosenblatt notes the statement in *Meg.* 29b that the triennial lectionary was established in Palestine and says, 'This must have been a fixed custom already in the 4th or the 5th century C.E. from which the statement dates' (*Journal of Biblical Literature*, LX, 1941, p. 195). But he does not commit himself further as to the date.

⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 171.

was handed to Him, and even if, which is not the same thing, the exact passage was chosen beforehand, this does not mean that the lection was made according to a fixed lectionary. It may have been selected by the presiding official, or the reader of the Torah may have chosen it to fit in with his reading. As a matter of fact the passage He read, beginning at Isaiah 61: 1, does not appear ever to have been a *haphtarah*.⁴⁷ It is of interest that Büchler denies that Jesus was free to choose His own passage but denies also that this is evidence that the *haphtaroth* were fixed at this time. He says, 'it was the duty of the heads of the synagogue or of the teachers to select an appropriate portion. We must not, however, be induced to think that already in the time of Jesus the Sabbath *Haftaras* were fixed.'⁴⁸

A reason for doubting whether we are to regard the passage read as a *haphtarah* at all arises from the fact that it contains not one, but two quotations and the second is from an earlier place in the prophet (Is. 61: 1 is followed by Is. 58: 6). Now while skipping was allowed in the *haphtaroth* it was not permitted to

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go backwards.⁴⁹ This makes it doubtful whether we are dealing here with a *haphtarah* at all.

There are many uncertainties about the *haphtaroth*. Let us take as an example one discussion by Professor Guilding in which she cites *haphtaroth* from the Bodleian MS 2727³, Büchler, Mann, and the Massorettes.⁵⁰ She notes differences of opinion between Büchler who assigns 2 Samuel 11: 2 and Mann who assigns Hosea 12: 1-14: 9 to Genesis 38: 1; between Büchler and the Massorettes over the *haphtarah* to Deuteronomy 8 (Büchler, Is. 4: 6; the Massorettes, Je. 9: 22-24); and between Mann and the Massorettes over that to Deuteronomy 10 (Mann, 1 Ki. 8: 9; the Massorettes, 2 Ki. 13: 23). She herself disagrees with Büchler when he assigns Zechariah 14 to Genesis 34 (preferring to link it with Deuteronomy 11), Isaiah 4: 6 to Deuteronomy 8-9 (she prefers Genesis 33: 17), and 1 Kings 8 to Leviticus 9 (she suggests Deuteronomy 10). A very disquieting feature of Guilding's arrangement is that by connecting Zechariah 14 with Deuteronomy 11 she is providing for it to be read on the second Sabbath in Cheshvan if the table at the back of her book be followed. But Zechariah 14 is a Tabernacles lection if ever there was one. A similar objection must be urged to her taking 1 Kings 8 with Deuteronomy 10, which according to her table is read in Cheshvan, for 1 Kings 8 is given in the Talmud as a lection for Tabernacles.⁵¹

Examples of variant opinion could be multiplied. Mann, for example, when he discusses the first *seder* of the Pentateuch lists four different *haphtaroth* in use at various times. He declines to say which is the oldest but he points out that the Geniza lists 'probably crystallized the last

⁴⁷ So, for example, Strack-Billerbeck, IV, pp. 169f. Guilding cites Mann for the view that there may once have been a *haphtarah* beginning at Is. 61: 1 (*op. cit.*, pp. 109f), but this is not strong evidence. The probabilities are all against it.

⁴⁸ VI, p. 12. Similarly the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* says that during the first century the *haphtaroth* 'were by no means fixed', and that even 'In the second century the choice of the passage was still left to the scholar who was called upon to read from the Torah' (VT, p. 136). G. F. Moore also thinks it likely that on ordinary sabbaths the selection was left either to the head of the synagogue or to the reader (*op. cit.*, p. 301).

⁴⁹ In the case of the Minor Prophets this is expressly prohibited in the Talmud (*Meg.* 24a). There is not the slightest reason for thinking the case was any different with the other prophets.

⁵⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 96f.

⁵¹ *Meg.* 31a.

stage in the development of the selection' of *haphtaroth*.⁵² It needs but an elementary acquaintance with the *haphtaroth* to know that there was considerable variation. And just as we have a number of *haphtaroth* linked with some *sedarim*, so also there are some *sedarim* for which we have no *haphtaroth*.⁵³ It is plain enough both that our knowledge of the *haphtaroth* is very imperfect,

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and that considerable shifting in the lections took place. Both these considerations make it exceedingly difficult to appeal to fixed prophetic lections as a basis for interpreting the New Testament.

Variations in Readings

The preceding discussion will have shown that there is considerable variation in the readings in early times. The point is important and most authorities make it quite clear. Thus Mann can say, 'the Midrashic literature reveals the existence of many different Sedarim showing that numerous shiftings have taken place.'⁵⁴ He gives a good deal of attention to the changing both of *sedarim* and of *haphtaroth*. Büchler likewise stresses the variation. For example he points out that at one time whenever the new moon fell on a Sabbath the lection of the new moon was read in Palestine and that for the Sabbath was dropped. Later both were read.⁵⁵ Similarly he notices variations in the lections for Hanukkah,⁵⁶ and for Purim,⁵⁷ and on many other occasions also. Again it is well known that the readings for festivals as given in the Mishnah⁵⁸ were later superseded. This is all the more important in that the passage appears to imply some ordered course of readings. The preceding section⁵⁹ lists certain times when they break off the set reading, namely on the first of each month, at the feasts of Dedication and Purim, on days of fasting, at Maamads⁶⁰ and the Day of Atonement. Guilding cites Büchler in connection with this that the other festivals are not mentioned because they are already provided for.⁶¹ But this will not suit her lectionary, where, for example, the Pentecost lection is Exodus 20, whereas in the Mishnah Deuteronomy 16: 9-12 is prescribed. She has to bring in the postulated Tishri cycle to account for it.

One of the principal ancient authorities is the Talmud tractate *Megillah* 31a. But even here we find variant lections. Thus when this passage deals with New Year it gives the *seder* as Numbers 29: 1 and the *haphtarah* as Jeremiah 31: 20, but proceeds to note that 'according to others' the lections are Genesis 21 and 1 Samuel 1. It adds that now that two days are observed we 'follow the ruling of the other authority' for the first day, but on the second

⁵² *Op. cit.*, p. 37. Not many *sedarim* have as many *haphtaroth* as this. But more than one *haphtarah* is not at all uncommon.

⁵³ Mann notices eighteen *sedarim* in Genesis and thirty-one in Exodus (all shorter than twenty-one verses) with *haphtaroth* in the Geniza lists (*op. cit.*, p. 51, n. for his procedure).

⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁵⁵ V, pp. 454f.

⁵⁶ V, p. 455; VI, p. 31.

⁵⁷ V, p. 456.

⁵⁸ *Meg.* 3: 5.

⁵⁹ *Meg.* 3: 4.

⁶⁰ For this term see below, p. 63.

⁶¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 15f.

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instead of the *seder* from Numbers it prescribes Genesis 22. There are other variations.

There was variation also in the length of the lections. In time it came to be accepted that seven persons should read from the Law and that they should each read a minimum of three verses. This means that a *seder* must consist of at least twenty-one verses. This is important. Those who see the lectionary behind the New Testament usually regard this as fundamental, and, indeed, reconstruct the lectionary on the basis of lections of this length. As Guilding says, 'A minimum of twenty-one verses read each sabbath would accord with the reading of the Pentateuch in a triennial cycle.'⁶² But Büchler speaks of people reading one verse only in the time of R. Akiba (second century AD).⁶³ He also notices that the number of readers was not always fixed at seven. On different occasions five or six or seven persons might read the Torah.⁶⁴

It should moreover be borne in mind that regular reading does not necessarily mean reading according to a lectionary. Advocates of lectionary theories sometimes show that reading from the Law and the Prophets is very old and then argue as though this meant that dependence on a lectionary was proved. But regular reading and reading from a lectionary are not the same thing. This is plainly demonstrated in modern Free Church practice. There are many Free Churches today which read regularly from both the New Testament and the Old Testament in public worship (and the usual practice in this regard often stretches back over a period of centuries), but who do not use a lectionary at all. Indeed to some of them the very idea of a lectionary is anathema. It is thus quite possible to regard the regular reading of Scripture as mandatory, but to eschew the following of a lectionary. This, of course, may be a modern attitude not to be found in antiquity. But at least it is not to be overlooked. It is evidence of a love for regular, though not directed, reading, and in view of its undoubted existence we need evidence if we are to hold that such views were never held in the old synagogue.

The evidence as we have it seems to indicate that the early Christians were more like Free Churchmen than those who follow a lectionary. Paul describes the procedure at Corinth in these terms: 'When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation' (1 Cor. 14: 26).

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Again, in even the most solemn service of Holy Communion it could be said, 'one is hungry and another is drunk' (1 Cor. 11: 21). Such passages show that there was considerable freedom in early Christian worship. As a matter of fact Paul does not refer to the official reading of Scriptures at all in the services so that it is difficult to think that this had the importance that some attach to it.⁶⁵

⁶² *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁶³ V, p. 463.

⁶⁴ V, p. 464.

⁶⁵ Cf. W. D. Davies, 'it is difficult to imagine that a fixed lectionary comports in any way with such scenes as are implied in 1 Cor. xi or Acts xx' (W. D. Davies and D. Daube, *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, Cambridge, 1956, p. 129).

The 'free' practice of the New Testament apparently continued for quite some time. The first description of a Christian church service that we have appears to be that in Justin Martyr. The relevant passage reads: 'And on the day which is called the day of the sun there is an assembly of all who live in the towns or in the country; and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. Then the reader ceases, and the president speaks, admonishing us and exhorting us to imitate these excellent examples.'⁶⁶ The statement that the Scriptures are read 'as long as time permits' seems to make it quite clear that no lectionary was in use. The length of the reading depends not on what portion is prescribed but on the amount of time available.⁶⁷

If the Christians from early times were not lectionary-minded in their own services it is unlikely that they would be sufficiently interested in set readings to discern allusions to a Jewish lectionary behind Christian writings. All the more is this the case if the

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Jewish lections were not fixed and universally accepted. It is more than difficult to imagine Christians basing their writings on a Jewish lectionary which was not universally accepted even among the Jews.⁶⁸

Differences Among the Lectionary Experts

It is not without its importance that, while there are many people who appeal to Jewish lectionaries, there is little agreement among them. If all those who were expert in lectionary matters presented a united front, then those whose special qualifications lay in other fields might be disposed to accept the consensus. But there is no such agreement. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that everyone who has written on this subject seems to have a different idea from everyone else. Thus Professor Guilding, as is well known, sees the triennial lectionary behind St. John's Gospel. She sees the cycle as traversed three times, but not in order. Thus lections from, say, the third year of the cycle may be behind passages early in the

⁶⁶ *Apology*, 1, 67 (cited from H. Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church*, Oxford, 1944, pp. 94f.).

⁶⁷ Cf. W. D. Davies: 'Had Justin Martyr had a fixed lectionary in mind he would have used some such phrase as *κατὰ τάξιν*.... The whole section in Justin does not suggest rigidity of any kind.... There was little that Christianity took over neat from Judaism and particularly in its worship is this the case' (*op. cit.*, p. 130). W. O. E. Oesterley also comments on this passage: 'There was clearly freedom of choice here regarding what was read; and the phrase "as far as time permitted" (*μέχρις ἐγγωρεῖ*) shows that the passages were not fixed. This reflects the usage of the Jewish Church at the beginning of the Christian era; there were no fixed lessons. The technical terms *Parashah*, the "section", or lesson from the Law, and *Haftarah*, the "conclusion" or lesson from the Prophets which concluded the Scripture reading, were unknown at that time.... It is evident that, in Christian as well as in Jewish worship, whatever passages were read, the choice was left to the reader, and the length of them was decided by him' (*The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy*, Oxford, 1925, p. 117).

⁶⁸ Professor Guilding nowhere seems to recognize the importance of the variants that undoubtedly existed in the synagogue lections. Sometimes she admits these variations as when she says, 'There is nothing inherently improbable in the view that there may have been variations in lectionary practice in St. John's time.... If we may suppose that the period was one also of lectionary change and development...' (*op. cit.*, p. 177). But elsewhere she can say, 'We may suppose, then, that by the first century A.D. the *sedarim* of the triennial cycle were no novelty, nor in an early amorphous stage of development, but already old-established and fixed' (*op. cit.*, p. 230). How the latter statement is to be maintained in the light of the former does not appear.

Gospel. The idea is that John is concerned with ‘lectionary time’,⁶⁹ not with chronological time. R. G. Finch, however, who also sees the triennial cycle underlying the Fourth Gospel thinks the cycle is taken in order, year by year.⁷⁰ Finch gives a list of all the lections in a three-year cycle (including a number of variants). But his lections do not tally with those of Professor Guilding. If we omit a fairly considerable number of passages where the difference is only one or two verses his list over the three-year period contains sixty-three *sedarim* which are not on Professor Guilding’s list, while

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Professor Guilding has seven *sedarim* not in Finch’s list.⁷¹ Finch also lists the *haphtaroth* (which Professor Guilding does not do). It is a measure of the uncertainties attaching to this subject that about one hundred times in the three-year cycle Finch has more than one *haphtaroth* attached to a *seder* while about fifty times no *haphtaroth* at all is listed. It is not of course to be imagined that all Finch’s *sedarim* are envisaged as being in use simultaneously in the one lectionary. My point in drawing attention to the multiplicity of variations between his list and that of Professor Guilding is to show that it is difficult to maintain, as Guilding does maintain, that the cycle was fixed by the early first century.

Another upholder of the lectionary idea is P. P. Levertoff.⁷² He is concerned primarily with the First Gospel, and he stresses the importance of the synagogue lectionary. He does not say whether he has in mind a one-year cycle or a three-year cycle of lections. But Finch has examined his comments on a number of passages throughout the commentary and has shown that Levertoff is reasoning on the basis of a one-year cycle as in the modern synagogue. But Finch and Guilding are just as sure that a three-year cycle was in use in Palestine in the first century. And R. Marcus sees evidence that there was an annual cycle in Palestine prior to the triennial cycle.⁷³

Archbishop Philip Carrington is well known for his view that there is a lectionary interest behind Mark’s Gospel,⁷⁴ and this he expands to include the other Gospels also. Thus he can say, ‘If our theory is correct the gospels were composed to give a Sunday-by-Sunday arrangement of the words and acts of Jesus to be

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⁶⁹ For this term see below, p. 51, n.l.

⁷⁰ *The Synagogue Lectionary and the New Testament* (London, 1939), pp. 41-50.

⁷¹ Those in Finch but not Guilding are: Gn. 22: 20; 23: 1; 47: 28; Ex. 7: 18; 12:1; 12:13; 12:21; 12:37; 13:17; 14:30; 16:1; 16:25; 17:1; 23:20; 30: 12; 33: 12; 34: 1; 35: 1; 35: 30; 38: 1; Lv. 3: 1; 6: 1; 9: 1; 16: 1; .20: 1; 22:26; 23:1; 25:1; 25:39; Nu. 3:14; 7:48; 9:1; 9:22; 10:11; 11:1; 11: 16; 12: 1; 14: 1; 16: 25; 17: 2; 18: 26; 21; 22: 26; 23:2; 28: 11; 29: 17; 31: 1; 36; Dt. 2: 31; 4: 1; 5: 1; 8: 1; 11: 26; 14: 22; 15: 19; 17: 24; 18: 1; 20:10; 23:21; 25:17; 28:15; 31:1; 34:1. Those in Guilding but not Finch are: Gn. 12:10; Ex.7:1; 8:12; 9:13; 15:1; Nu. 17:16; Dt. 20:1.

⁷² See his special introduction to the First Gospel in *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture*, ed. C. Gore, H. L. Goudge, and A. Guillaume (London, 1928).

⁷³ See above p. 16.

⁷⁴ On this C. F. D. Moule says, ‘The attempts to relate Matt. and Mk. primarily to worship are not wholly convincing. Carrington’s theory that Mk. follows a lectionary system does not seem to stand up to closer scrutiny’ (*The Birth of the New Testament*, London, 1962, p. 86).

announced or proclaimed at the proper point in the service.⁷⁵ Such a view is quite at variance with Guilding's view of this Gospel, but it is argued strongly and on the basis of a deep lectionary interest. Carrington thinks that John 'is obviously liturgical in character, and references are made in it to the Jewish Calendar'. He goes on to say, 'Perhaps it was designed for use on special occasions, festal or sacramental or otherwise.'⁷⁶ This is not easy to reconcile with the position taken up by Guilding that the Gospel is the report of Jesus' synagogue preaching. Guilding has some statements that cut right across Carrington's hypothesis, as for example, 'This is by no means to suggest that St. John intended his Gospel to be read snippet by snippet, in a three-year lectionary cycle, since, to go no further into the matter, the long discourses do not lend themselves to such a treatment.'⁷⁷

Both are very confident, which makes the divergence all the more striking. Carrington applies his tests to his theory and says things like, 'This gives perfect results.... It fits our theory like a glove, and I do not see how it can be accidental';⁷⁸ 'We think, to begin with, that we have mathematically demonstrated the liturgical succession....'⁷⁹ Professor Guilding can say, 'Here is the clearest possible proof of the influence of the three-year lectionary system on the pattern of the Gospel.'⁸⁰ 'These may appear to be only slight literary parallels; but the chances against their occurrence twice in the same order by accident are enormous.'⁸¹ 'Is all this to be put down to mere coincidence?'⁸² 'The earliest New Testament writers are not at pains to make the lectionary background clear—they simply take it for granted.'⁸³

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We should mention also the view of J. van Goudoever who distinguishes between the reading of a Gospel and the calendar in that Gospel. St. Mark's Gospel, he thinks, was constructed with a special calendar in mind, but this is quite a different thing from Carrington's view that it was designed to be read according to the liturgical year.⁸⁴ Once again we have divergent interpretations of the same set of facts.

Other contradictions could be urged in points of detail. Thus C. W. F. Smith can write, 'The Tabernacles complex is important not as indicating that either Mark or John were designed to be read as lectionaries but that they were designed to be read *by those accustomed to hear the Jewish lectionary read* or themselves to read it.'⁸⁵ Van Goudoever, however, denies that the Christian Church had any interest in the Feast of Tabernacles. He notes that it is mentioned in

⁷⁵ *The Primitive Christian Calendar* (Cambridge, 1952), p. 44.

⁷⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 63. A. Schlatter maintains that, 'Like the other evangelists, St John wrote his Gospel for liturgical use; it was to be read in the congregation' (*The Church in the New Testament Period*, London, 1955, p. 300).

⁷⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 57. There is also an occasional contradiction in detail. Thus Carrington speaks of 'an unnamed feast in chapter v, which must be Tabernacles' (*op. cit.*, p. 44). Guilding debates whether this feast was Pentecost or New Year, and decides for the latter. But she dismisses out of hand the suggestion that it was Tabernacles (*op. cit.*, pp. 69ff.).

⁷⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁷⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁸⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 130.

⁸¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

⁸² *Op. cit.*, p. 142. Or, 'the phenomenon occurs so frequently that it cannot easily be put down to coincidence' (*op. cit.*, p. 21). So also p. 152.

⁸³ *Op. cit.*, p. 230.

⁸⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 241f.

⁸⁵ *New Testament Studies*, 9, 1962-63, p. 142 (Smith's italics).

John's Gospel but not elsewhere.⁸⁶ It is difficult to see how these two views could be held together. More could be written but this is enough to show that there is no consensus among the lectionary experts. The conclusion seems unavoidable that what evidence there is is not plain enough to lead us to any definite conclusion.

Different Calendars

The writings of J. van Goudoever, A. Jaubert, and others seem to have made it clear that during the biblical period more than one calendar was in use. In particular it seems to have been demonstrated that the calendar used in the Book of jubilees was a very ancient calendar and that it was accepted surprisingly widely. It provided a year of exactly fifty-two weeks, an arrangement which has the advantage that a given date will fall on the same day of the week year by year. There is some evidence also that the Pharisees and the Sadducees used different calendars.⁸⁷

Before the lectionary hypothesis can be accepted it needs to be demonstrated that the calendar used in the synagogue was the

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same as the calendar accepted by the early Christians. This cannot simply be assumed, for there is some reason for thinking that the Church modified the calendar, at least by way of curtailing the feasts. In the words of van Goudoever, 'The early Christians were in a tradition of a very elaborate and complicated liturgical calendar, and there were even conflicting Israelite calendars in their time. What Christians did was not to change the festivals, certainly not to create new ones, but to reduce them. In this process of reduction the "Sunday" became the feast par excellence in the primitive Christian Church.... The reduction sometimes went so far that all festivals were annulled except the Sunday. This may have been an anti-priestly tendency in early Christianity, just as we have met it with the Samaritans.'⁸⁸

In the second century the Montanists appear to have used a calendar different from that employed by the Church at large.⁸⁹ This seems to indicate that there were different calendars among the Christians. It is not easy to say how early this is, but van Goudoever traces it back to New Testament days. 'If in all four Gospels the Sunday after Passover is the first day of harvest, then it is clear that the Synoptic Gospels use the old priestly calendar in which the fifty days are counted from Sunday to Sunday. John's calendar contains a compromise between the Pharisaic and the Sadducean counting: in his calendar the Sunday after Passover

⁸⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 210. He does allow for a possible reference to this feast in Mark (*op. cit.*, pp. 263f).

⁸⁷ J. van Goudoever, *op. cit.*, pp. 19ff. J. Bowman, in an article entitled 'Is the Samaritan Calendar the Old Zadokite One?' (*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 1959, pp. 23-27), argues that there are points of contact between the calendar used by the Sadducees and that of the Samaritans.

⁸⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 151f. There are occasional references to Jewish feasts in the New Testament, as the references to Pentecost (Acts 2: 1; 20: 16; 1 Cor. 16: 8), but there is none that we can identify as a Christian observance. The Christian liturgical year appears to have begun with the observance of Easter, but this is not attested until well into the second century. Some scholars speak of an early Christian Passover, but the evidence is not convincing.

⁸⁹ van Goudoever, *op. cit.*, pp. 163, 193.

falls on 16 Nisan. That was the day (of the month) on which the first sheaf was to be offered according to the Pharisees. The compromise which is made by John resembles that in the *Pesiqta* of Rab Kahana.⁹⁰ Not all are convinced that John and the synoptists do use different calendars. But the evidence is sufficient to have convinced a number of acute scholars. Therefore it cannot simply be assumed that there was one calendar observed throughout the New Testament, that this calendar was identical with that used in the synagogues, and that the Christians were so attached to the calendar that they cherished a regard for the lections read in the synagogue on set days. If this is to be accepted evidence must be adduced to demonstrate it.

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The Use of the Septuagint

Those who see the lectionary behind the New Testament, and specifically behind the Fourth Gospel, must reckon with the fact that they are dealing with Greek documents. It would be arguable that those who heard the lectionary read in Hebrew made the necessary translations and adjustments when they wrote in Greek. But in fact there is a tendency to argue as though the lectionary were read in Greek. For example, Guilding refers to the extra Psalm found in the Septuagint in these terms: 'The supernumerary Psalm found in the LXX was probably added so that the Psalter should furnish sufficient Psalms for the Sabbaths of three lunar years.'⁹¹ This makes sense only on the supposition that the lectionary itself was based on the LXX. Otherwise the extra Psalm would be in the Hebrew, not the Greek. Moreover the general trend of Guilding's argument seems to be that this lectionary based on the LXX was used widely enough for the Fourth Gospel to reflect it and be intelligible to its readers. She quite often cites LXX readings, where these differ from the Hebrew, to prove dependence of John on the lectionary.

We may well ask what the evidence is for such a lectionary. It is well known that among the Jews there was a widespread opinion that the Scriptures should be read in public worship only in the Hebrew tongue. Where the worshippers did not understand Hebrew a concession was made to the weakness of the flesh, and the reading was turned into the vernacular. But this did not do away with the need for Hebrew, for this was always read (as far as we know) and the translation followed. The position appears to be made clear by the regulation in the Mishnah that the reader of the Law 'may not read to the interpreter more than one verse, or, in (a reading from) the Prophets, three verses.'⁹² The implication is clear. The reading in a synagogue service must be in Hebrew. Where this language was not known it was permissible to interpret. But this did not do away with the necessity for reading in Hebrew. Indeed, the restriction on the amount that might be read to the interpreter indicates a determination that the interpreter must stay close to the sense of the original. In practice, as the evidence of the

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⁹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 226.

⁹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 6, n. 1.

⁹² *Meg.* 4: 4 (Danby's translation). In commenting on this passage most refer to translation into Aramaic. But the regulation is perfectly general, and seems intended to apply to any language.

Targums shows, the reader might sometimes depart materially from the original. But the regulation clearly shows the official position. It is the Hebrew text that is determinative. Even where people do not understand it it must still be read. And it must be read in such short sections that the interpreter will be able to render it accurately.

The Targums are best known in Aramaic. But the probability of Greek Targums is widely recognized. J. A. Montgomery, for example, can say, 'In passing over into the Hellenistic Synagogue Gr. Targums arose, these for long oral in character.... That there existed some such body of received translation before the Christian age lies beyond doubt; but we must not too quickly assume a written version. Very much can be explained by the hypothesis of a Hellenistic oral Targum.'⁹³ K. Stendahl appears to accept this.⁹⁴ It may be worth noting that F. G. Kenyon argues from the opening words of Melito's Homily, 'The Scripture of the Hebrew Exodus has been read...' that among the Christians the reading was first in Hebrew and then in the vernacular.⁹⁵ This is maintained also by G. Zuntz, who argues on the grounds both of linguistics, and of current Jewish practice.⁹⁶ He specifically rejects the view that in Hellenistic synagogues the LXX ousted the Hebrew original.⁹⁷ A practice such as Melito describes could arise only out of a strong tradition received from the synagogue. There is nothing in Christianity itself to lead to it. It points to a view held so strongly within Judaism that it overflowed into the newer faith.

The practice of reading in Hebrew in the synagogues, even where people did not understand it, continued as late as the time of the Emperor Justinian. During his day a request was made that among Greek-speaking Jews the reading in Hebrew should no longer be compulsory. This meant establishing Greek as a liturgical language.

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The Emperor granted the request but he felt it wise to add a clause enjoining severe punishment for any Jewish official who penalized those who no longer read the Hebrew first.⁹⁸ This indicates pretty plainly the reception this novelty might expect to receive at the hands of orthodox Jews. Even at a time centuries later than the New Testament the most vigorous opposition could be anticipated to the reading of the Scriptures in Greek alone. With these facts before us we shall require very clear evidence before accepting the idea that a lectionary based on the LXX ever existed. Whenever the Jewish lectionary system was first

⁹³ *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Edinburgh, 1959), p. 50. He further speaks of Theodotion as 'the Hellenistic Onkelos; whose work was facilitated by the presence of a large amount of customary oral translation of the Scriptures, possessed by him *memoriter*'. P. Kahle differs from Montgomery in a number of points, but he speaks often of Greek Targums, and, indeed, ascribes a number of variations in Greek Old Testament reading to different Greek Targums (*The Cairo Geniza*, Oxford, 1959, pp. 236, 247, 251).

⁹⁴ *The School of St. Matthew* (Uppsala, 1954), p. 178.

⁹⁵ *The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri*, fasc. viii (London, 1941), p. 10.

⁹⁶ 'On the Opening Sentence of Melito's Paschal Homily', *Harvard Theological Review*, XXXVI, 1943, pp. 299-315.

⁹⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 308f.

⁹⁸ See J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans L'Empire Romain*, I (Paris, 1914), pp. 369ff. The date of this order is AD 553. P. Kahle publishes a translation into English (*op. cit.*, pp. 315-317). The preamble gives the reason for the Novella, 'from reports made to us we have learned that some hold to the Hebrew language and wish to use it alone for the reading of the Holy Scriptures, whereas others wish to use the Greek language as well...'. There appears no question of doing away with the reading of the Hebrew, but only of whether the Greek might be read in addition.

established we must accept that it was established on the basis of the Hebrew text. Any LXX readings must be subsidiary to that.⁹⁹

Not quite the same but nevertheless not without its importance is the presupposition which lies behind Guilding's discussion of John 4. Of the Samaritan woman's abrupt changing of the topic of conversation with the words, 'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship' (Jn. 4: 20) Guilding says, 'the unexpected turn of the conversation from the topic of living water to the topic of the proper place of worship—apparently quite unrelated themes—is explained by the fact that one of the lections for the time when the conversation took place was that very text of Deuteronomy which was the Samaritans' proof that "the place which the Lord your God shall choose to put his name there" was Gerizim and not Zion.'¹⁰⁰

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This appears to mean that the Samaritan woman in her conversation followed the Jewish synagogal lectionary, or alternatively that she did not do this but that John expected his readers to accept without question that she did. Either way the implication is that an ordinary Samaritan is expected to know the Jewish synagogal lectionary with some exactness.

From all this it is obvious that a good deal of work remains to be done before the lectionary in use in New Testament times, if there was one, can be said to have been established. Wherever we look there are conjectures and uncertainties. We do not know when systematic reading began or what form it first took. When the triennial cycle evolved we do not know at what time of the year it began and whether there may not have been several different triennial cycles. We do not know the relation of the triennial to the annual cycles, nor the precise connection of the LXX with the cycles. The confusion is matched only by the confidence of some of the lectionary experts, a confidence be it noted which yields mutually exclusive hypotheses.

⁹⁹ It is possible that H. St. J. Thackeray thinks of the LXX as at the basis of a lectionary for he says, 'The Septuagint, which doubtless owed its existence to the lectionary needs of a Greek-speaking community...' (*op. cit.*, p. 41). This however may mean no more than that the LXX was produced to be read in conjunction with a Hebrew lectionary. In any case Thackeray cites no evidence, and it is evidence that we need. G. F. Moore also seems to think that the Scriptures were read in Greek only in the Greek-speaking synagogues (*op. cit.*, I, p. 111). But he, too, cites no evidence for this. J. Rabinowitz says that Blau has shown that there were non-Hebrew-speaking Jewish communities which read the Scriptures in the vernacular, but he does not say whether this was in addition to or as a substitute for the reading in Hebrew (*op. cit.*, p. 62).

¹⁰⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 209 (Guilding's italics).

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CHAPTER II

Differences Between the Synagogue and the Church

It appears to be assumed in much discussion of the lectionary background to the New Testament that the Christians by and large carried on the Jewish tradition of worship. Undoubtedly they worshipped in the synagogues at first, but also from the first they appear to have had their own gatherings (Acts 2: 42, *etc.*). The assumption of many scholars is that the Christians carried over the practice of the synagogue into these gatherings of their own. This is held to be inherently likely and to be supported by such incidental information as the New Testament supplies (*e.g.* the use of the term 'synagogue' for a Christian assembly in Jas. 2: 2). The later the Gospels are dated, the more important it is to establish this point.

Now it is beyond dispute that the background to the New Testament is fundamentally Palestinian. The Gospels are redolent of the air of Palestine. The rabbinic elements in Pauline thought have been stressed in much recent writing. And it is widely agreed that even behind the writings of Gentiles like Luke we are to see a Semitic basis. All this may be freely admitted. Yet we must go on from there to say that the Church was no pale imitation of the synagogue. From the very beginning Christian worship had distinctives of its own. Though it is true that the Christians for some time continued to worship in the synagogues there is no evidence that in their own assemblies they made any attempt to perpetuate synagogue-type worship. They were not trying to do the same thing as were the Jews. Their worship was conditioned by their fundamental conviction that the Messiah had come and had wrought salvation for mankind. Their worship at all points was Christian worship, not simply a variant on the synagogue pattern.

Indeed it is not at all clear that the synagogue is to be regarded as concerned with worship, at least in the first instance. Worship, of course, was carried on there but we must be on our guard against reading back ideas derived from Christian worship, or even from the modern synagogue, into the practices and the theory of the first-century synagogue. The fact is that the synagogue appears

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to have developed primarily as a house for the reverent study of the Law,¹ not as a centre for worship. It was a place of instruction, an institution where the Law was read and interpreted and its application to life made plain.

¹ Cf. F. C. Grant, 'the synagogue... is still primarily the "house of study" of God's Word. One may almost say that it is only incidentally a "house of prayer"... or of public worship, or of sacramental ministrations' (*Ancient Judaism and the New Testament*, Edinburgh and London, 1960, p. 158). So also E. Schürer, 'the main object of these Sabbath day assemblages in the synagogue was not public worship in its stricter sense, *i.e.* not devotion, but religious instruction, and this for an Israelite was above all *instruction in the law*' (*A History of the Jewish People*, II, ii, Edinburgh, 1885, p. 54; he cites Josephus, Philo and the New Testament in support).

Because of this preoccupation with the Law we might almost say that in time a lectionary was bound to appear. An institution dedicated so whole-heartedly to an understanding of the Law could scarcely manage without one indefinitely. Yet we must add that the evidence, as indicated earlier, shows that there was no simple and obvious path to the final form of the lectionary. In other words, while the logic of the synagogue demanded a lectionary which would forward the systematic study of the Law, yet logic did not demand a lectionary of a particular kind. The Law might be systematically read and studied in more ways than one. And, in fact, a number of paths were tried before final agreement was reached on the best way of attaining the lectionary goal.

The Church, though it had a high regard for the Scriptures, did not in its meetings for worship come together primarily for the study of the Law in the Jewish fashion. There appears to have been quite a variety in early Christian worship and this variety bears witness to different ideas of the way in which the worshipping community might discharge its responsibility as the body of Christ. The ministry of prophets and the celebration of the sacrament of Holy Communion we might mention as only two indications of an approach to worship fundamentally different from that of Judaism.²

Indeed some authorities go so far as to say that synagogue worship had very little influence indeed on Christian. Thus G.

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Delling says bluntly, 'The order of the synagogue service has obviously not influenced the early Christian one.'³ A little later he goes on to point out: 'It is clear that no influence of this service on the structure of the primitive Christian service is demonstrable. The essential parts of the former are lacking in the latter, and vice versa; only isolated formulae are taken over.... Certainly the Jewish-Christian section of the primitive Christians attended the synagogue service; but they built up independently their own celebrations as a whole in the Jewish-Christian and in the Gentile-Christian areas. That was necessary because of the entirely different content of their life of faith.'⁴

Specifically, evidence is lacking that the early Christians systematically read from the Scriptures in their worship. We may feel that this is what we would have done. We may reason that since the Church in later days has always read from the Scriptures as part of worship this must have been the case with the New Testament Church also. But this is not evidence, and if we are to demonstrate a concern for the lectionary in New Testament times it is first of all necessary to show that the New Testament Christians read systematically from the Scriptures. Some scholars are extremely doubtful. If we may cite Delling again, 'There does not appear to be any justification for supposing that in the forms of service peculiar to

² Cf. W. D. Davies, 'The Church, it must be remembered, was not always imitative of the Synagogue; there was not only assimilation to synagogal forms of worship among Christians but also a deliberate cultivation of differences. The multiplicity of forms which the specifically Christian services developed should warn us against elevating any lectionary concern to any such place as would demand a fixed lectionary as early as Carrington maintains' (*The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube, Cambridge, 1956, p. 128).

³ *Worship in the New Testament* (London, 1962), p. 42.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 43.

Jewish Christianity readings from the Old Testament took place: there is no indication in the New Testament that they did';⁵ or again, 'There is also no evidence that the reading of passages from the Old Testament took place in the Gentile Christian area. One might perhaps even expressly conclude from a saying of Paul, that at Corinth, at any rate, the Torah was not read aloud (the saying he has in mind is 2 Cor. 3: 14f.). If Christ is the end of the "law" there is no need to bear it to the Gentile Christians. Nor can any firm evidence be produced for readings from the Prophets; their own prophecy occupies the foreground.'⁶

We should also mention the view of O. Cullmann that the first Christians had no 'service of the Word'. He rejects the legitimacy of distinguishing sharply 'between gatherings for the proclamation of the Word and gatherings for the Lord's Supper, corresponding

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to the arrangement in Judaism, where synagogue service and temple cult stood side by side'.⁷ Among the Christians he sees evidence for but one service, that of the Lord's Supper, and he thinks that the preaching of the Word was carried on in the context of the celebration of the sacrament. Many think this position too extreme. And it may be. I do not think that we know enough about the apostolic age to affirm dogmatically that there was no such thing as the service of the Word. But if it did take place we know nothing about it. As far as the evidence goes, Cullmann can scarcely be related. We have no real evidence for thinking that Christian worship ever modelled itself on that of Judaism. It had distinctives of its own, and these were such as to render the use of the synagogue lectionary unlikely if not impossible.

It may not be without significance that there are New Testament passages which protest in the strongest terms that Christianity is independent of Judaism in important ritual matters. Thus Paul can write to the Romans, 'One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let everyone be fully convinced in his own mind' (Rom. 14: 5). Here we have a fundamentally different attitude to the subject of the sabbath, the day of rest and worship for the Jews. Paul carries the same attitude still further when he writes to the Galatians, 'You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years! I am afraid I have laboured over you in vain' (Gal. 4: 10f.). It is difficult to see what this means if it is not a vigorous repudiation of the whole idea of the liturgical year. To observe special periods in this way is to nullify Paul's apostolic labours. The same writer enjoins the Colossians, 'let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ' (Col. 2: 16f). As late as the time of Justin Martyr it would seem that Christians in some places, at least, kept no festivals. It is a point of agreement between Justin and Trypho, his Jewish opponent, that Christians observe no festivals or Sabbaths.⁸

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 92. C. R Gregory thought that the Church did take over Sabbath lections from Judaism (*Canon and Text of the New Testament*, Edinburgh, 1907, pp. 387f.). But he cited no evidence.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 93.

⁷ *Early Christian Worship* (London, 1954), p. 27. He does not deny that other services took place, as baptism and services of preaching for the conversion of the heathen, but he does not see within Christianity a worship service, modelled on that of the synagogue and consisting of reading of Scripture, preaching, prayer, blessing and perhaps also singing of Psalms' (*loc. cit.*).

⁸ *Dialogue with Trypho* X.

In this connection it may not be irrelevant to refer to the Quarto-deciman controversy. Had there been agreement among the

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Christians of New Testament times on the liturgical year it is difficult to see how the controversy could ever have arisen. The fact of the controversy indicates a disagreement on an important point of the calendar. But if Christians were not agreed as to when their most important festival was to be observed it is impossible to think of them as interested in the minutiae of lectionaries. It is more than difficult to see how this controversy squares with such a lectionary interest as would enable Christians from the first to discern the lections behind New Testament passages without a word of explanation.⁹

It must also be borne in mind that the relationship between the Church and the synagogue seems normally to have been one of controversy rather than of harmony.¹⁰ T. W. Manson, dealing with John 3: 14, finds evidence for controversy with the Jews. He thinks in terms of 'Palestinian Christian proofs and Palestinian Jewish rebuttals'.¹¹ It is plain that this kind of thing went on on a considerable scale. Now when parties are at loggerheads it is not unknown for one to borrow ideas and practices from the other. But it is not to be assumed that this will take place. Indeed, the presumption will be the very opposite. When there is serious dispute over the very central truths of religion we shall need clear evidence before postulating dependence. And in this case the very point at issue is to a large extent the question of the use of Scripture. The Christians said that Jesus was the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament and they ransacked the Law and the Prophets and the Writings to find proof-texts for their contention. It was not a minor peripheral point, but one of major concern when they accused the Jews of misunderstanding and misusing the Law. Under these circumstances it seems in the highest degree unlikely that the Christians unhesitatingly took over or even were influenced by

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⁹ Cf. W. D. Davies, 'Nor is it irrelevant to point out in this connection that were the calendrical interests of the early Christians as strong as is suggested by Carrington it is unlikely that the controversy on matters of chronology to which he refers, the Quarto-deciman controversy, would have arisen at all' (*op. cit.*, p. 134).

¹⁰ Thus O. S. Rankin can give as one reason for the difference between synagogue and church worship, 'the cultivation of dissimilarities'. He says, 'The early occurrence of tension between Jews and Jewish Christians had the effect of emphasising differences rather than resemblances in the content of their worship' (*Journal of Jewish Studies*, I, 1948, p. 31). His whole article is an inquiry into the reason why the first Christian services had so few resemblances to those of the synagogue.

¹¹ *Journal of Theological Studies*, XLVI, 1945, p. 132.

Leon Morris, *The New Testament and the Jewish Lectionaries*. London: The Tyndale Press, 1964. Pbk. pp.78.

Jewish lectionary practices whatever they were. If anyone maintains the contrary the onus is on him to prove the point. Evidence must be cited. There is certainly some evidence which would lead us to think that the Christians repudiated all Jewish forms of worship. Can this evidence be controverted?

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CHAPTER III

St. John's Gospel and the Lectionary

So far we have been concerned with the general topic of the Jewish lectionary and of the relation between Jewish and Christian worship. It is time that we looked more closely into the specific allegation that the lectionary is to be discerned behind the New Testament. As the case has been made out most convincingly for the dependence of the Fourth Gospel on the lectionary we shall confine our attention here to this one section of the New Testament. And, since Professor Guilding's argument is the most cogent, we shall concentrate on what she has to say. There is little point in repeating her arguments. They have been set forth with great learning in her book. Here we shall content ourselves with a discussion of certain features of her argument and with observations on the validity of the deductions she makes.

The Wide Range of the Lections

A somewhat disconcerting feature of Professor Guilding's treatment is the exceedingly wide range of the lections to which she makes her appeal. Thus in chapter 5, where she is dealing with the Passover, the lections she considers as the background to the one chapter, John 6, include Genesis 2; 3; 6; Exodus 14; 15; 16; Numbers 11; 14; Isaiah 26; 51; 54; 55; 63. Now it is not a matter of proving dependence either by a quotation of considerable length or by a more or less faithful adherence to the theme of the lection. It is enough to draw attention to such facts as the use of ὀψάριον in John and ὄψος in Numbers 11: 22.¹ It is not, of course, to be denied that this is the kind of coincidence of language which

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often appealed to Jewish exegetes. But when it is borne in mind that we have on the one hand a Johannine chapter of seventy-one verses and on the other thirteen chapters of the LXX it is not in the least surprising that some coincidences of language are found. Indeed, it would be very surprising if there were none such.

Moreover, inconvenient aspects of the evidence are sometimes not dealt with. Thus it is regarded as significant that in chapter 6 John uses the word σάρξ, 'flesh', whereas other New Testament passages referring to the Lord's supper use σῶμα, 'body'. The explanation is found in the use of the term 'flesh' in the lections in several places, *viz.*, Numbers 11: 4, 13, 18, 21, 33; Exodus 16: 3, 8, 12. But if we take the trouble to look up the LXX we find that in not one of these verses is the word σάρξ found. The term is always κρέας. It would be a more

¹ *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship* (Oxford, 1960), p. 61. A similar argument is that the use of τρώγω in chapters 6, 13 only in the Gospel is said to indicate a connection with the lectionary (*op. cit.*, p. 59). But many examples might be cited of significant words which occur twice only in this Gospel and which do not fit in to the desired cycles, *e.g.*, Messiah, which is found in 1: 42; 4: 25 only, ἀγαλλιάω (5: 35; 8: 56); ἀλείφω (11: 2; 12: 3); ἐπερωτάω (9: 23; 18: 7; John's usual word is ἐρωτάω which he uses twenty-seven times); διώκω (5: 16; 15: 20); ἀπόκρισις (1: 22; 19: 9); γράμμα (5: 47; 7: 15); ἀσθένεια (5: 5; 11: 4). The list could certainly be prolonged, but surely the point is clear. It takes more than the occurrence of words in two places only in John to establish dependence on the lectionary cycle.

convincing demonstration that John depended on the lections at this point if he had used the word employed in the LXX. Moreover Professor Guilding does not notice either that ‘flesh and blood’ form a very natural pair (so that one need not postulate dependence on a lectionary to account for the appearance of ‘flesh’ in a context where ‘blood’ is found), nor that John uses *σάρξ* elsewhere (so may be following his habit rather than a lectionary).

It has also to be borne in mind that the lections which are said to be behind John 6 are not the right ones. Guilding says, ‘although the miracles recorded in verses 1-21 took place shortly before the Passover, and the discourse was given next day, yet the lections on which Jesus’ sermon is based are those that would be read towards the end of Nisan.’² The explanation given by Professor Guilding is as follows: ‘Possibly the Evangelist has conflated an informal discussion held at Passover-time with a synagogue sermon preached shortly afterwards.’ Possibly. But this is not really convincing evidence that he is following the lectionary, and, indeed, writing a commentary on it.³ If such hypotheses must be introduced it does not give much confidence in the method. It sounds as though the evidence does not square with the theory. It is one thing to say that Jesus’ Passover sermon is based on the Passover lections and quite another to say that at Passover Jesus preached on something read not so very long afterwards, or even that John has run together sermons which were originally separate.

In her discussion of the Feast of the New Year (chapter 6) Professor Guilding again shows a tendency to appeal to a rather

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wide range of lections. She begins not with the lections for the feast alone but with those for the two preceding sabbaths as well as those for the feast.⁴ With the three-year cycle this makes nine *sedarim*, and, of course, there will also be nine *haphtaroth*. But soon, the discussion is extended to take in two more sabbaths⁵ making another six *sedarim* plus six *haphtaroth* over the three years. This gives a total of thirty possible passages from which to find our parallels. But we are not yet through. A *seder* cited for discussion is not the regular *seder* nor even a recognized variant, but a second variant which is postulated on the basis of certain statements in *Tanḥuma* and *Shemoth Rabbah*.⁶ Nor is the number of possible passages yet complete. A little later Professor Guilding gives serious consideration to a lection in the Tishri cycle.⁷ If we follow up the implications of this our thirty possible passages, together with variants, should be doubled. And the Tishri cycle is stretched as far as a cycle well may go when appeal is made to the reading in the LXX of a passage ‘which may have formed part of an alternative *haphtarah*’.⁸ It is not even certain that this was a *haphtarah* and appeal is made to the Greek translation!

² *Op. cit.*, p. 61 (Guilding’s italics).

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 231.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 85.

It is the same with the Feast of Tabernacles (chapter 7). Nine *sedarim* are considered in the lections as the background to three full chapters of John.⁹ Allow for the *haphtaroth* and there is an impressive number of passages. Moreover even this number may be extended. In the paragraph after she has stated that the relevant lections begin with Genesis 35: 9 Professor Guilding goes on to include the lection in Genesis 34¹⁰ and a little later she is found conjecturally allocating a *haphtarah* to Genesis 35: 9.¹¹

The same phenomenon of a multiplicity of *sedarim* is seen in the discussion of the man born blind (chapter 8). At first it seems as though we are to have a discussion based on the *seder* Leviticus 13: 29 and its *haphtarah* 2 Kings 5.¹² But before we are off this page three more *sedarim* are brought in, so that once again we are given quite a large tract of the Old Testament as a possible source of parallels. In passing it may be worth noticing that Jeremiah 13: 16 has parallels with this section of John at least as plausible as those she has cited, though it is not one of the relevant *haphtaroth*. This

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kind of explanation raises questions in one's mind as to whether the relationship of John to the Old Testament is always determined by the lectionary.

In the discussion of the Feast of the Dedication (chapter 9), again there is an extension of the lections. Thus we are informed that the *seder* for the first year of the cycle is Genesis 46: 28-47: 31. But immediately appeal is made to Ezekiel 37: 16ff. because it is the *haphtarah* not to Genesis 46: 28, but to Genesis 44: 18.¹³ It is, it would seem, not necessary that John should echo the correct lectionary passage but only one not so very far away. An extension in the opposite direction is seen when appeal is made to Leviticus 25: 34,¹⁴ though according to the list of lections Professor Guilding gives us at the end of her book this comes in the next *seder*. The same phenomenon recurs in connection with the raising of Lazarus (chapter 10). The material for the background to this chapter is to be sought in the lections and the Psalms for Tebeth and the beginning of Shebat. This makes at least five sabbaths and thus, on the triennial cycle, fifteen *sedarim* plus fifteen *haphtaroth* plus fifteen Psalms. Even this list must be extended a little because one of the *sedarim* is lengthened and a variant *haphtarah* introduced.¹⁵ Then a little later the whole is doubled by bringing in the Tishri cycle.¹⁶

We have noted that appeal is commonly made to comparatively minor verbal coincidences. Appeal is also made on occasion to great themes common to the Fourth Gospel and the lections. These, however, are not always significant, as close examination shows. For example, in chapter 5 Professor Guilding shows that the theme of faith is found in the lections and also in John 6. She does not mention that John uses the verb πιστεύειν in all ninety-eight times and that it is absent only from chapters 15, 18, 21 in the whole Gospel. It is clear that

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 96.

¹⁰ *Loc. cit.*

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 121.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 130.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 131.

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 143.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 146.

this theme could be found in almost any part of the Fourth Gospel. It is not specially significant that it occurs in chapter 6. Again the theme of belief and unbelief is not uncommon in the Pentateuch. A very large number of *sedarim* could be found in which one or other of these thoughts is present. The fact that a reference to faith can be found in a given passage in the Law and a given passage in John is not of itself evidence for a connection between the two.

In connection with the themes, some of the interpretations are at least questionable. Guilding says of the walking on the water, for

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example, that it 'seems to symbolize the death and resurrection of the Lord, seen in terms of the crossing of the Red Sea'.¹⁷ This is far from being self-evident.¹⁸ It is not at all easy to see the death and the resurrection of Christ in this incident and, while, the crossing of the Red Sea might come to the mind of some, yet there are differences. The Israelites were said to have passed through on dry land. Jesus is said to have walked on the water. But unless the walking on the water can be shown to mean the death and resurrection of Christ seen in the light of the crossing of the Red Sea then the whole of the following discussion is irrelevant. Similar defects may be encountered elsewhere. Thus in dealing with the Feast of the New Year Professor Guilding sees the dominant themes as those of judgment and witness and she points out that these are to be found in John 5 and 14. This is true. But it is also true, and it ought to be taken into consideration, that these are among the great themes of the Gospel and are to be found in many places. If they came from the lectionary in these two chapters where did they come from in other parts of the Gospel? It is the same with the themes of light and glory which are seen as prominent in John 1.¹⁹ So they are, but they are found throughout a great part of the Gospel. It is difficult to demonstrate anything conclusive from the occurrence in a particular passage of a theme or themes which are to be found throughout the Gospel. Professor Guilding does not seem to deal with this point.

A somewhat different aspect of the discussion of themes is also to be seen from time to time. For example, in her section on the Feast of Tabernacles, Professor Guilding makes a great deal of the fact that the dominant themes in the feast are the same as the dominant themes in the relevant sections of the Fourth Gospel. These she sees as the pouring of water, the illuminations, the dwelling in huts, and the vintage. Her argument depends on the fact that these four are the important things in the Jewish understanding of the feast and in the Fourth Gospel. But it is not at all certain that she is accurate in her selection. Thus if we take such a standard work as Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* the points singled out for mention at the Feast of Tabernacles are the following: the

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¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 66.

¹⁸ This interpretation is not even mentioned, let alone discussed, by such standard commentaries as those of Westcott, Barrett, Hoskyns, *etc.* If outstanding commentators do not regard the interpretation as worthy even of mention it can hardly be assumed without argument.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 175.

harvest home at the end of the year, the sacrifices (far more numerous at this feast than at any other), 'the procession to Siloam to fetch water and its solemn libation at the altar (Jn 7³⁷), the singing of the Hallel (Pss 113-118), the daily processions round the altar, and the sevenfold repetition on the seventh day (Ps 118²⁵), the lighting of the four great golden candelabra in the court of the women (Jn 8¹²), the singing of Pss 105. 29. 50. 94. 81. 82, and the public reading of the law on the first day of the week in the Sabbatical year'.²⁰

It will be seen that this authority does not see as specially significant the same things as does Professor Guilding. In particular one may query her emphasis on the vintage and suspect that it is found only because of the references to the true vine in John 15. Thus Exodus 23: 16 speaks of this feast as 'the feast of ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labour', and this seems to be the way in which it was generally taken. It marked the end of harvest. This, of course, included the vintage, perhaps indeed especially the vintage, because this came late in fruit harvest and was always a very joyous occasion. Yet the stubborn fact remains that in our records there is no particular stress on the vintage in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles. This is true of the Bible and it is true also of ancient Jewish writings. Philo, for example, has a long treatment of this feast,²¹ but he never once mentions vintage. Similarly C. R. North in his treatment of the subject in the *Theological Word Book of the Bible* makes no mention of the vintage at all.

Nor is it beyond question that Professor Guilding has rightly selected the dominant themes in the Fourth Gospel. Thus C. H. Dodd in his treatment of the relevant passages has very little to say about the themes which matter so much to Miss Guilding. He says of John 7 and 8 that this section 'bears the appearance of a collection of miscellaneous material. It consists of a series of controversial dialogues, often without clearly apparent connection.'²² He further says, 'The tone of the whole is markedly polemical. The debate in its earlier phases proceeds largely upon the plane of Jewish messianic ideas, though it moves into other regions before the end. The evangelist has brought together here most of what he has to say in reply to Jewish objections against the messianic claims made for Jesus. There are of course other controversial passages in this

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gospel, but scarcely another where the controversial note is so sharp and so sustained; and this in itself gives a certain unity to the whole episode.'²³ Dodd draws attention to the repeated statement that Jesus was in danger of His life (7: 1, 13, 19, 25, 30, 32, 44; 8: 37, 40, 59). He takes this as important and goes on to say: 'The dialogues are in fact punctuated all through by these references to hostile action against Jesus. They help to build up a background against which the dialogues are to be read. As compared with other episodes in the Book of Signs, this fourth episode is dominated by the motive of conflict.'²⁴

²⁰ I, p. 861.

²¹ *De Spec. Leg.* ii. 204-213.

²² *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1953), p. 345.

²³ *Op. cit.*, p. 346.

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 347.

Dodd sees the passage as dominated by the note of conflict. Guilding does not even mention this note.²⁵ It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the themes in John and in the lectionary are not quite as similar as Professor Guilding claims.

Before we leave the use of themes it may be worth pointing out that themes popular among the early Christians are sometimes a better explanation of Johannine passages than the postulation of a lectionary background. For example Professor Guilding can say, ‘the story of Noah and the ark appears frequently in early Christian writings as a type of baptism.’²⁶ Quite so. We do not need a lectionary to discern an allusion to this passage. And the same may well be true of many other themes. Whether they used a lectionary or not the Christians made the Old Testament their own and they delighted to dwell on certain great themes they found there.

Having It Both Ways

Those who affirm lectionary interest sometimes show a determination to get the best of both worlds. Their handling of the evidence in some of its aspects will seem to most to be more ingenious than convincing.

For example, Professor Guilding’s treatment of John and the *haphtaroth* is very much a case of reasoning in a circle. The evidence outside John is clearly not sufficient to demonstrate the existence of fixed *haphtaroth* in the first century. She therefore has to take this Gospel as part of the evidence required to prove the existence of the *haphtaroth*. Having used John to prove the existence of the lectionary passages Professor Guilding proceeds to interpret John

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on the basis that the existence of the lectionary has been proved. This kind of reasoning inevitably arouses suspicion. Anyone who uses it should make clear what are the grounds for thinking it satisfactory. Incidentally in connection with the *haphtaroth* it must be borne in mind that Mann regards the Geniza lists (on which Professor Guilding leans heavily) as the last stage in the selection of *haphtaroth*.²⁷

Or we might give another illustration. Not infrequently Professor Guilding appeals to two *haphtaroth* attached to the same passage.²⁸ This is needed to account for all the facts. Either of the two *haphtaroth* taken by itself will not suffice. But if appeal has to be made to two or more *haphtaroth* this is fatal to the hypothesis that by the first century the *haphtaroth* were fixed. And if they were not fixed, it is difficult to see how appeal can be made to the lectionary as something well known. Exactly the same criticism can of course be urged against the inclusion of both the Tishri and the Nisan cycles. If the facts can be explained on the basis of the Nisan cycle this is taken as evidence that the Nisan cycle was used in the circles of John and his readers. But if the facts cannot be explained on the basis of the Nisan

²⁵ *I.e.*, she does not mention it among the leading themes. She does refer briefly to the theme of hatred (*op. cit.*, pp. 102, 113f.).

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 217.

²⁷ See the statement quoted on p. 22 above.

²⁸ *E.g.* on p. 110 she speaks of two *haphtaroth* attached to Gn. 35: 9. But the practice is so frequent that specific examples are hardly necessary.

then another cycle is brought in, though there does not appear to be any evidence that any synagogue in any place ever used both cycles, and the hypothesis is inherently unlikely.

In Guilding's treatment of Hanukkah there are some unusual features. One of them is that Guilding discards the special lections for the feasts in favour of those for the sabbaths. If John's method is to use the special lections then some reason should be given for his abandoning of them at this point. Again this looks like a desire to have it both ways. If the lections of the feast can be discerned behind the Gospel then John is using the lectionary. But if these lections cannot be discerned John is still using the lectionary, only now he prefers the Sabbath lections to those for the feast.

Overstatement

Sometimes we seem to get a statement stronger than that warranted by the evidence. Thus Guilding can say, 'In chapters 6-12 the whole cycle of the Jewish religious year is traversed, and this cycle

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is repeated in the Supper Discourses.'²⁹ But even on Professor Guilding's showing this is not the case. The staple of the triennial cycle is the regular sequence of lections for the sabbaths. Special lections for the feasts are few and, as far as the cycle is concerned, comparatively unimportant. What makes the cycle significant is its provision for the Sabbath readings. Quite apart from a lectionary it is not at all difficult to assign certain Old Testament passages to the feasts. It is, for example, quite elementary that the account of the institution of a feast, or of some specially important happening which took place in connection with a feast in the Old Testament, should be read in later days when that feast was being observed. We do not require a lectionary to provide such passages. Precisely because they so obviously lend themselves to the festivals in question they will be read on those festivals in the lectionary cycle. But it must be stressed that evidence for the cycle as such must be demonstrated not in the special readings for the feasts, but in those for the sabbaths.

Now John shows very little interest in the ordinary Sabbath lections. Professor Guilding makes no attempt to show otherwise. She concentrates, as the Evangelist does, on certain great feasts, though with what seems to some an illegitimate extension to include lections which may have been read before or after the feast. It must be strongly emphasized that to pick out the lections which can be linked with the feasts is not at all the same thing as traversing 'the whole cycle of the Jewish religious year'.

All the more is this the case in that John does not use all the feasts. Guilding says at the beginning of her book that John arranges Jesus' sermons 'against the background of the Jewish liturgical year, keeping to the regular order of the feasts without breaks or dislocations'.³⁰ But this is over-strong. John does not in fact keep to the feasts 'without breaks' for he does not mention some of the feasts. He does not make use of Pentecost for

²⁹ *Op. Cit.*, p. 118; this thought is repeated elsewhere, see pp. 52, 118, 154. Similarly we read that Jesus 'attends in order all the feasts of the Jewish year' (*op. cit.*, pp. 47, 51).

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

example. Though at the end of her book Professor Guilding makes an attempt to deal with this problem,³¹ her explanation is not particularly convincing. And in any case it is in conflict with the statement elsewhere that ‘the whole cycle’ is traversed. If for special reasons Pentecost is not dealt with in the body of the Gospel then the Gospel is not based on ‘the whole cycle’ of the Jewish religious year.

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John’s interest, in that case, may well have points of contact with the Jewish religious year, but it is not to be explained as an attempt to follow that year.

Again, the Feast of Purim is not mentioned. It is true that some have regarded the unnamed feast in John 5 as Purim (*e.g.* Godet), but Guilding rejects this identification.³² She does not claim that Purim is specifically mentioned anywhere in the Gospel, but only that the lections for this feast are to be discerned behind chapters 11b and 18: 28-19: 17.³³ There is, further, no specific mention of the New Year festival. Guilding identifies the feast of John 5 with New Year³⁴ but this is far from certain. Hoskyns and Bernard, for example, incline to Passover (as did the Greek Fathers), while Barrett apparently thinks it cannot be identified.³⁵

Another noteworthy omission in the Gospel is that of all reference to the Day of Atonement which appears to have been one of the most important occasions in the Jewish religious year and this both in the Temple and in the synagogue. This omission can hardly be squared with the statement that ‘the whole cycle of the Jewish religious year is traversed’. For reasons of his own John has omitted the great fast as well as some of the important feasts. The fact has to be faced that John does not traverse the whole year but rather that he selects certain feasts and concentrates on them. He does not traverse the whole year, nor the whole lectionary. He refers to Passover, Tabernacles, and the Feast of the Dedication. We cannot get round the fact that he names no other feast, and that it can be maintained on quite reasonable grounds that he has no other feast in mind. When the identification of unnamed feasts is so precarious one cannot but wonder at the confidence of those who maintain that he bases his Gospel on the liturgical year and that he traverses the entire year according to the lectionary. It does not appear to me that the facts as known to us will sustain the hypothesis.³⁶

Unconvincing Explanations

Sometimes Professor Guilding gives explanations which are not particularly convincing. For example she sees the cleansing of the Temple as having been inserted where it is since it is in the right place from the point of view of lectionary time. It was put

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³¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 222-228; see also p. 53.

³² *Op. cit.*, p. 69.

³³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 49, 154.

³⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 71.

³⁵ *I.e.* if the reading ἑορτῆ (without the article) be accepted. If ἡ ἑορτῆ is the true reading Barrett thinks the reference will be to Passover, or Tabernacles.

³⁶ For John’s treatment of the feasts see further, pp. 64f below.

there rather than at the end of Jesus' life so as to explain Markan teaching about Jesus destroying the Temple and raising it up.³⁷ Jesus' body was raised and after that the Gentiles had to hear and believe. So John put the cleansing early and followed it with, preaching to the Gentiles. That this is ingenious goes without saying. But that it is a valid explanation of the position of the narrative of the cleansing in John is not so clear.

Again it is difficult to follow Professor Guilding in her suggestion that John 1-2 'cover Jesus' ministry from his birth to the cleansing of the Temple at the last Passover'.³⁸ It will seem to most that this is a *tour de force*. There is a great deal in Jesus' ministry that is not covered in John 1-2. It would never have occurred to many of us that these two chapters represent such a survey and even when the suggestion is made I, at least, cannot follow it. I do not see any sense (even though I have read the relevant sections of Professor Guilding's book carefully) in which these two chapters do any more than cover a very small part of Jesus' ministry.

Often parallels which are alleged to demonstrate dependence on the lectionary are not tremendously significant. For example the parallels (plural) between John 4 and Exodus 1: 1-2: 25 are regarded as 'close'. But the only one adduced is the fact that in John 4: 6 Jesus sat by the well at 'about the sixth hour' while Exodus 2: 15 'as expanded by Josephus' speaks of Moses resting by a well at noon.³⁹ When Josephus has to be brought in to help out the Scripture, and when even then it is in such a comparatively unimportant detail, it is difficult to see a significant connection.

In some places the explanation involves improbabilities of a different kind. For example, Guilding's acceptance of the reversal of order of John 5 and 6 and the explanation she gives for it require us to think of an early Christian editor, deeply interested in this Gospel, but not as well able as a modern scholar to see the

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connection with the lectionary. If this is true, then one reader in antiquity, at least, failed to discern the lectionary background which is alleged to be so obvious to men of the day that the author felt no need to draw men's attention to what he was doing. If such a sympathetic reader would miss it why could not others? And if so, what becomes of the hypothesis? I find the suggestion most improbable.

Neglected Factors

Professor Guilding sometimes overlooks specific statements of the Fourth Gospel. If we may give one example in a matter of major importance, John tells us what he set out to do in these

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 204ff. She explains what she means by lectionary time in these words: 'for the Fourth Evangelist time is at once historic time and lectionary time. Thus, although he places the cleansing of the Temple in a different year, the season of the year is approximately the same as in the Synoptic Gospels, namely, not long before Passover, and the Johannine and Synoptic accounts are based on the same sequence of lections. So for lectionary purposes the month was important, but the year was not, and St. John preserves the proper place of the incident in the lectionary calendar while departing from its historic time as preserved in the earlier tradition. It is lectionary time that is all-important to him... for his purposes real time is lectionary time, and this perhaps accounts for the impression we get that the Fourth Gospel stands outside and beyond time' (*op. cit.*, p. 4).

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 206 (Guilding's italics).

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 208.

words 'these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name' (Jn. 20: 31). Professor Guilding sees John's aim not in these terms, but in terms of an interest in the lectionary: 'In the Fourth Gospel the use of the Old Testament lections is entirely systematic and explicit; indeed, the Gospel might fairly be described as a Christian commentary on the lections of the triennial cycle. The Evangelist seems to have wished to preserve a tradition of Jesus' synagogue sermons that has found no place in the Synoptic Gospels, and to present them in a form which would be familiar and acceptable to Christian Jews who had been recently excluded from the synagogue.'⁴⁰ It might of course be argued that these two aims are not incompatible. It could be urged that this Gospel is an attempt to evangelize by an intelligent use of the lectionary and the synagogue sermons. But this is not what Professor Guilding says. In the last analysis she leaves the Gospel to be understood as a commentary on the lections. In the last analysis John wants it to be known as a piece of evangelism.

Another omission will strike many who read Professor Guilding's book, namely that she has so little to say about modern discussions on this Gospel. For example the index to her book contains no reference at all to C. H. Dodd or R. Bultmann, and only one to C. K. Barrett. It can scarcely be maintained that scholars of this calibre have little or nothing to say which is relevant to the purpose and to the historicity of this Gospel.⁴¹ A treatment which totally ignores significant modern contributions cannot be held to be convincing.

⁴⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 231.

⁴¹ Scholars like K. Stendahl, also, though primarily concerned elsewhere (in this case with the First Gospel), have much to say about the use of the Old Testament by John. It is somewhat surprising to find such work ignored.

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CHAPTER IV

The Use of the Old Testament in the New

It is a defect of the method of most of those who see lectionary concern behind the New Testament that they ignore the fact that there are other ways of using the Old Testament than the lectionary method. They are usually content to draw attention to those aspects of the New Testament which accord with their theory and to leave it at that. The fact that there are other parts of the Old Testament than those required by the lectionary which are used by New Testament writers is surely relevant. So is the other fact that even those passages which are found in the lectionary need not necessarily have been derived from the lectionary. One needs to give careful thought to this point.

An example of the kind of thing that is possible is given by C. F. Evans in his argument that the central section of the Third Gospel (Lk. 9: 51-18: 14) is deliberately presented as 'A Christian Deuteronomy'.¹ Evans has drawn up an impressive table in which he sets side by side the relevant passages from St. Luke and from Deuteronomy. He may be right or he may be wrong, but it is at least as arguable that this is the kind of thing that is behind the use the New Testament writers make of the Old Testament as is the lectionary hypothesis. Evans says, 'Luke has cast that section of his Gospel which is made up of non-Markan material into the form of a journey to the borders of the promised land, a journey which follows that of Deuteronomy by way of correspondence and contrast.'² This is an interesting and suggestive approach and it may well give the truth of the matter. At any rate it is a seriously argued position, with evidence adduced, and it cannot be lightly dismissed. But if it is true, then Luke was not actuated by a lectionary interest, at least when he wrote this section of his Gospel. Due weight must be given to considerations of this kind if the lectionary hypothesis is to stand. Guiding sees in the same passage evidence that Luke is following the lectionary, but she does not mention Evans' handling of the material.³

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Another possibility arises from the facts which caused Rendel Harris to postulate the existence of testimony books-collections of Old Testament passages which the Christians might find useful.⁴ That such Testimony Books at one time existed is undoubted. Melito of Sardis (second century AD) says that he compiled six books of 'extracts' (ἐκλογαί) from the Old Testament which he describes as 'extracts from the Law and the Prophets concerning the Saviour, and concerning all our faith'.⁵ Actual specimens of Testimony Books survive in

¹ See *Studies in the Gospels*, ed. D. E. Nineham (Oxford, 1955), pp. 42ff.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 51.

³ *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship* (Oxford, 1960), p. 231.

⁴ *Testimonies*, Part I (Cambridge, 1916); Part II (Cambridge, 1920).

⁵ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* iv. 26, 13f. (cited from Loeb edn.). J.-P. Audet expresses doubts whether these 'extracts' are rightly to be understood as 'testimonies' (*Revue Biblique*, LXX, 1963, pp. 381f.).

Cyprian's *Books of Testimonies against the Jews*,⁶ and such may be reflected in the works of others of the Fathers. The question is as to the age of such books. Harris thought that one important Testimony Book was very old, and that in fact it underlies parts of the New Testament.

He drew attention to five phenomena in particular:⁷

(a) The recurrence of quotations from the Old Testament in forms differing from the LXX and other known translations. (These are found sometimes in the Fathers also, but this may not be so significant, as the Fathers could have derived them from the New Testament.)

(b) The recurrence of sequences in which Old Testament passages are quoted (e.g. passages which speak of Christ as the 'stone', as Is. 28: 16; Ps. 118: 22; Is. 8: 14; see 1 Pet. 2: 6-8; Rom. 9: 32f.).⁸

(c) The citing of a passage from one prophet by the name of another (as in Mk. 1: 2f., where verses from Mat. 3: 1 and Is. 40: 3 are cited as from Isaiah; this would be explicable if the two were already combined in a Testimony Book so that the reference is to their place in this rather than in the Old Testament).

(d) Introductory or explanatory clauses.

(e) Subject-matter which would be useful for the controversialist.

All this suggested to Harris the thought that the first Christians may well have possessed a book which set out Old Testament texts in such a way as to help them present their case cogently.

This has not seemed quite so clear to later generations of students, and damaging criticisms may be levelled against the developed

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idea.⁹ But this does not mean that Harris's work has gone for nothing. P. Prigent, in a recent study of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, finds evidence for Testimonies, though he finds himself unable to accept certain features of Harris's presentation. A critical study of 'Barnabas, he maintains, 'conduit tres rapidement a la conviction que Barnabé utilise des documents dans lesquels les textes en question étaient déjà groupés, organisés et altérés en fonction de buts déterminés'.¹⁰ He discerns three types of document, 'des recueils de *Testimonia* messianiques

⁶ See *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, V (Grand Rapids, 1957), pp. 507ff.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, I, p. 8.

⁸ Harris, *op. cit.*, I, p. 18.

⁹ Thus C. H. Dodd points out that had such a work existed it is hard to see how it has vanished so completely. He also notes that the places where two or more New Testament writers agree on a non-septuagintal reading are not numerous, 'certainly not more numerous than cases where one agrees with the LXX and the other differs, or where both differ from the LXX and from one another'. He also reminds us that there are not many combinations of passages like those in Mk. 1: 2f., and that the 'stone' complex is almost unique (see *According to the Scriptures*, London, 1952, p. 26).

¹⁰ *L'Épître de Barnabé I-XVI et ses Sources* (Paris, 1961), p. 7.

et polémiques, et des midraschim chrétiens'.¹¹ And we should not overlook the strengthening of Harris's case afforded by the discovery among the Qumran material of the documents which J. M. Allegro calls '4Q Florilegium' and '4Q Testimonia'.¹² These, and especially the latter, show that testimony-type documents did occur among some, at any rate, of the pre-Christian Jews, and make it not unlikely that the Christians should have followed their example. At the same time we should notice that it is not certain whether these Qumran documents are 'published' documents or private memoranda compiled by individuals for their own use.

Other approaches are possible. Thus C. H. Dodd has subjected the quotations of the Old Testament in the New to a close scrutiny, and he has been able to show that there are certain favourite Old Testament passages of some length. These, he thinks, were cited for the total context and not for isolated proof-texts. He finds that 'The relevant scriptures were understood and interpreted upon

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intelligible and consistent principles as setting forth "the determinate counsel of God" which was fulfilled in the gospel facts, and consequently as fixing the meaning of those facts.'¹³ But for our present purpose the most important of his conclusions is the last, which he expresses in these words: 'This whole body of material—the passages of Old Testament scripture with their application to the gospel facts—is common to all the main portions of the New Testament, and in particular it provided the starting point for the theological constructions of Paul, the author to the Hebrews, and the Fourth Evangelist. It is the substructure of all Christian theology and contains already its chief regulative ideas.'¹⁴

If Dodd is right then John, as much as other New Testament writers, had a definite method of using the Old Testament, and this method not that of the lectionary. It will be noticed that Dodd is not claiming that these writers used the Old Testament as a useful source of illustrations. Rather he maintains that the group of passages he has isolated is basic. For John's Gospel, as for the other writings, it is 'the substructure', it 'contains already its chief regulative ideas'. That is to say, there is a certain group of Old Testament passages which are basic, and there is a certain way of handling them which John shares with others.

I do not see how this can be reconciled with the lectionary hypothesis. The two seem mutually incompatible. It seems to follow that if a lectionary hypothesis is to succeed it must be shown that Dodd's conclusions ought not to be accepted. But this is not done. His work is ignored by those who advance the lectionary hypothesis.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 8. J.-P. Audet has subjected Prigent's work to a searching examination in his article, 'L'Hypothèse des Testimonia' in *Revue Biblique*, LXX, 1963, pp. 381-405.

¹² See his articles in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXV, 1956, pp. 176f, 182-187; LXXVII, 1958, pp. 350-354. See also the article by J. A. Fitzmeyer, '“4Q, Testimonia” and the New Testament', in *Theological Studies*, XVIII, 1957, pp. 513-537. This article incidentally contains an excellent summary of the history of the 'Testimony' hypothesis.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 126f.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 127. C. F. D. Moule is more tender to the idea of testimony books than is Dodd. He mentions Dodd's view and goes on, 'It is difficult, even so, to see, *prima facie*, any reason why written collections should not also have been in circulation' (*The Birth of the New Testament*, London, 1962, p. 83); 'If written testimony-collections were used...' (*op. cit.*, p. 84).

Fr. Barnabas Lindars has taken Dodd's work a stage further in the endeavour to show that the New Testament writers used the passages Dodd adduces in such a way as to bring out certain great doctrinal truths.¹⁵ Even if his entire argument be not accepted (and I, for one, find certain parts difficult) his emphasis on the determination to document great Christian doctrines from Scripture is surely sound. And, again, the questions are raised, Is not this a

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possible understanding of the way the New Testament writers used the Old? And if it is, then what becomes of the lectionary hypothesis? It seems that once more we are under difficulties in trying to accept both.¹⁶

Another who has worked in the field of New Testament quotations is E. Earle Ellis. He, too, sees evidence that there was a method of using the Old Testament common to several, at any rate, of the New Testament writers. He follows Dodd in seeing certain Old Testament passages as particularly fruitful from the point of view of the New Testament writers. He thinks of a common way of handling such passages and a common line of interpretation, possibly worked out by the early Christian prophets. Thus he says: 'The λέγει κύριος quotations and a few other striking parallels indicate that some OT texts were already in stereotyped form when Paul used them. It therefore appears that some texts from the testimony "text-plots" had, previous to Paul's letters, received specific interpretation and application by others in the early Church. There are grounds for supposing that this may have arisen and been carried on in informal fashion by those filling the role of prophet in the early Church.'¹⁷

K. Stendahl has examined the use of the Old Testament in the Fourth Gospel and he does not find dependence on the lectionary the most likely explanation, though, as his book makes clear, he is not averse to explanations which reckon seriously with liturgical practice. He speaks of 'the School of St. John, a school where the Scriptures were studied and meditated upon in the light of the preaching, teaching and debating in which the church was involved. Compared with the formula quotations of Matthew, those in the Fourth Gospel are less elaborate; but the Ephesian school possessed and used the authority to produce a translation of their own. To them this was more natural than the use of the text of the LXX in which the synoptic tradition took refuge as a matter of course. Thus the Johannine method is not what is usually meant by loose citations, or those more or less freely quoted from memory. It is rather the

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¹⁵ *New Testament Apologetic* (London, 1961).

¹⁶ Among Lindars' conclusions is the following: 'The scriptures used to defend the primitive faith were those already commonly employed in apocalyptic-eschatological speculation, which is thus the proper Jewish background to Christianity' (*op. cit.*, p. 284). The relevance of this to the suggestion that the proper background is the official synagogue and its lections is obvious.

¹⁷ *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh, 1957), p. 113.

opposite since the form of John's quotations is certainly the fruit of scholarly treatment of written O.T. texts.'¹⁸

This is not cited to indicate complete agreement with Stendahl. There is room for more than one opinion about his 'School of St. John', to say no more. But the important point for the present inquiry is that his careful study of the use of the Old Testament in this Gospel leads him to think that there is scholarly treatment of the Old Testament in the light of prolonged study and meditation. But this does not mean an exposition of the lectionary. The facts are such that Stendahl can come to the conclusion that this scholarly activity is a reasonable explanation. The lectionary hypothesis is far from being obvious.

G. D. Kilpatrick is another who has examined the use of the Old Testament by New Testament writers. He reminds us of the testimony books of Tertullian and Cyprian and he thinks that older than these collections is the 'common stock of exegesis' which they imply. He says, 'It is indeed only on some such hypothesis that we can explain the coincidence whereby Zech. ix. 9 is independently quoted in both Matthew and John for the entry into Jerusalem. This, of course, need not imply that the Christians of the first century had a testimony book apart from the Greek Bible itself. More truly it could be said that this was their testimony book and that, apart from the general view that Scripture *in toto et in Partibus* was fulfilled in our Lord already, homiletic exposition was accustomed to use certain quotations from the Old Testament regularly in connexion with certain events of the Gospel story. Beyond the existence of the Bible and a certain theory about it, this view requires no more than the homiletic context.'¹⁹ From yet another angle we see that it is quite possible for the men of the New Testament to have drawn upon the Old Testament Scriptures without the need for a lectionary. Indeed, though each of the writers cited in the present chapter has his own point of view and none is simply reproducing the thoughts of the others, yet something approaching a consensus appears in their writings. Basically they appear to be thinking that the men of the New Testament, having seen the work of salvation wrought by God in Christ, used the Old Testament to prove their point that this was indeed God's doing. They are not taking a lectionary or anything like it as primary, so that they simply follow where it leads. They are taking as primary what God has done in

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Christ and they concentrate on those Old Testament passages which in their judgment bear on this.²⁰

To my way of thinking it is a major defect of such works as that of Professor Guilding that such treatments of the evidence are simply ignored. I do not see how the lectionary hypothesis

¹⁸ *The School of St. Matthew* (Uppsala, 1954), p. 163.

¹⁹ *The Origins of the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Oxford; 1946), p. 66.

²⁰ We should notice the article 'On Testimonies' by Albert G. Sundberg, Jr., in *Novum Testamentum*, III, 1959, pp. 268-281. Sundberg criticizes Dodd in particular, and brings statistical evidence to show that the New Testament writers do not manifest any such preference for particular passages as Dodd suggests. He makes some very searching criticisms of Dodd's hypothesis. But his views will give little aid and comfort to those who support lectionary hypotheses. In his Table in which he seeks to show 'The relative importance of Old Testament books cited in the New Testament' he finds in John .24 quotations per page from the entire Pentateuch, the basis of all lectionaries, against .44 quotations per page from the Prophets, and .28 from the Writings (all from the Psalms). If his views are sound it is difficult to see a primary interest in the lectionary behind the Fourth Gospel.

can stand unless they are refuted. But a lot of work and considerable thought has gone into the building up of their case.

Throughout the argument of such a book as that of Professor Guilding alternative explanations of any sort are usually ignored. For example, it is pointed out in the discussion of John 8 that Isaiah 43 is probably behind this passage.²¹ Now this is a conclusion which many exegetes have reached quite independent of the lectionary hypothesis. It does not require the lectionary to see this. Throughout the New Testament there is a general tendency to appeal to the ancient Scriptures whether or no they occur in the lectionary pattern. And, in any case, Professor Guilding scarcely does justice to the fact that, while the *Haphtarah* with which she is dealing is Isaiah 43: 1-21, verse 27 of that chapter is echoed in John 8: 41-44 (she even considers that Is. 44: 3 may also be alluded to²²). One would have thought that this is an argument that it is not the lectionary that accounts for the reference to Isaiah 43. The lectionary is inadequate, for it does not go far enough.²³

Coincidences of language with the Old Testament are universally explained as due to the influence of the lectionary. What is not noticed is that there are frequent coincidences of language with passages outside the hypothetical lections. For example, many exegetes have seen Isaiah 26: 17ff. as the background to John

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16: 21f. Jesus is using the theme of the travailing woman to show the joy after sorrow that the disciples would have when His resurrection followed His death. The Isaiah passage goes immediately from the thought of childbirth to that of resurrection, and it contains John's exact word for 'a little time' (μικρόν, Is. 26: 20 and seven times in Jn. 16: 16-19). It is very difficult to avoid the conclusion that the two passages are connected. But Isaiah 26 is not in the appropriate place in the lectionary (Guilding sees it as behind in. 14: 6, 19²⁴).

Are not such passages as these significant? Should they not also be explained? And will not whatever explains them explain also the passages which occur in the lectionary? Until we have the answer to the second of these questions we do not, of course, know whether it will satisfactorily explain the third. But the point I make is that in view of the existence of many such passages we cannot simply assume the lectionary hypothesis. If there were few or no coincidences of language in the New Testament with the Old Testament other than passages attested by the lectionary then we might be justified in not looking too hard for an alternative explanation. But when we have coincidences of language both with passages in the lectionary and with passages not in the lectionary we cannot affirm dogmatically that the New Testament writers wrote with the lectionary in mind. They may have. They may have written on the basis of the lectionary, and there may be a further explanation of the other passages. But on the other hand they may not. Whatever explains the other passages may also explain the lectionary passages. In view of the many uncertainties extending even to the very

²¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 107f.

²² *Op. Cit.*, p. 105.

²³ I am not unmindful of the fact that the *hophtaroth* were sometimes extended. But is there evidence that this *hophtaroth* was extended? If so, it should be given. Is. 43: 1-21 is, in any case, the exact *haphtaroth* that Guilding postulates.

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

existence of the lectionary at this period we are not justified in assuming a lectionary interest until we have satisfactorily dealt with Old Testament allusions which are not covered by the lectionary hypothesis.

One or two specific instances might be given. Thus Professor Guilding explains the reference to 'the lamb of God' (in. 1: 29) as possibly due to an allusion to 'the Passover lamb' (Ex. 12: 3), or to the scapegoat (Lv. 16: 21f). She sees difficulty with both these explanations and proceeds, 'The difficulty is met by a consideration of the lectionary background. The Day of Atonement, which was regarded as the termination of the penitential season of New Year, was on the 10th Tishri, and the Paschal lamb was selected on the 10th Nisan. Since the Evangelist used a double lectionary cycle,

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he had both occasions in mind; hence he used a deliberately ambiguous phrase which would suit both the 10th Nisan and the 10th Tishri. The words of 1. 29, then, illustrate the immense care with which the Gospel is written, the subtlety and flexibility of the language, and the Evangelist's habit of combining more than one Old Testament thought in a single phrase in order to adapt his Gospel to variations in lectionary usage.'²⁵

The whole of this discussion, it will be seen, rests on the theory that John was actuated by lectionary motives and that somehow in the lectionary an explanation must be given of his procedure. Two meanings of 'the lamb of God' are given, and everything hinges on them. No consideration whatever is given to the possibility that John may have had other ideas in mind than the Passover victim (which incidentally was not called 'the Passover lamb' as G. Buchanan Gray has made clear²⁶), or the scapegoat. But it is not at all certain that the passage is to be explained in terms of the Passover victim or of the scapegoat. John's language is a precise reference to neither. Many other suggestions have been made with great seriousness. Thus some authorities see a reference to the 'lamb that is led to the slaughter' of Isaiah 53: 7.²⁷ J. Jeremias sees a reference to 'the servant of the Lord',²⁸ and A. Richardson to the lamb which God Himself will provide for the burnt offering (Gn. 22: 8).²⁹ Other ideas are that John 1: 29 refers to the lamb of daily sacrifices, to the 'gentle lamb' of Jeremiah 11: 19, to the triumphant lamb of the Apocalypses or simply to the guilt offering. Many scholars adopt an eclectic approach, thinking that more than one of these references may be in mind. In confining attention to the Passover victim and the scapegoat it is clear that Professor Guilding has over-simplified the problem. Her ignoring of other possible explanations of the passage throws doubt on her conclusions.

A similar phenomenon may be observed elsewhere. I have tried to check whether the passages in the lections are in fact behind one or two chapters in John. This is not as easy as it sounds since the lectionary experts may refer to two or even three different cycles (Nisan, Tishri, Shebat). Moreover there is no accepted list of *haphtaroth*. They may find a *haphtarah* from one of the Geniza lists,

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 179.

²⁶ *Sacrifice in the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1925), p. 397.

²⁷ So Vincent Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice* (London, 1939), p. 227.

²⁸ W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, *The Servant of God* (London, 1957), p. 82.

²⁹ *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (London, 1958), pp. 180f.

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or, by inference, from a sermon somewhere in the vast Midrashic literature. But in chapter 10 Professor Guilding discusses the raising of Lazarus (Jn. 11) under the heading 'A Narrative for the 7th Shebat', and mentions a large number of passages, namely, Genesis 48: 1; 47: 29; 49: 1ff.; 49: 27ff.; Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28; 29; 31: 14. As *haphtaroth* she speaks of 2 Kings 13: 14-23; 1 Kings 2: 1ff.; Joshua 24 and Judges 2: 7. The Psalms she sees as 38; 39; 41; 88; 89; 90; 91; 141; 143 and on the Tishri cycle, 16-18; 69-71; 115; 116. This is a total of twenty-nine passages. If now we take such a work as the British and Foreign Bible Society's Greek New Testament (1958 edition), and look at the passages noted in the margin as reflected in the text at this point the following only are listed; Genesis 50: 20; Exodus 28: 30; Numbers 27: 21; 2 Chronicles 30: 17. Not one of these passages is in Guilding's list of twenty-nine.

Let us take one more example. When she discusses John 4 Professor Guilding lists the following *sedarim*: Genesis 24; Exodus 1; 2; 3; Numbers 1; Deuteronomy 27; 29. As *haphtaroth* she suggests Joshua 24; Isaiah 12: 3ff.; 27: 6ff.; 28: 1; Ezekiel 16; 20; Hosea 2.³⁰ This gives us a total of thirteen passages. The margin of the Greek New Testament lists Genesis 48: 22; Deuteronomy 12: 5; Joshua 24: 32; 1 Kings 17: 29-41; Psalm 122; Isaiah 2: 3; Micah 6: 15. Of these seven passages only one is found in Guilding's list.

I have not taken the examination further, but I often have the feeling that the passages most students find beneath John's Gospel are not those the lectionary experts discern, while contrariwise those from the lections are often passages which have not been at all obvious to the generality of scholars. The second group is perhaps not as important as the first. Perhaps scholars have not discerned allusions as they should have done. But the former group is certainly significant. If this Gospel is based on the lectionary, and indeed is a commentary on the lectionary, then some convincing reason is needed to explain why so many passages not in the lectionary sequence manifestly underlie it.

Again, all theories which see a lectionary behind John's Gospel are committed to the view that the synagogue is a major interest of this Evangelist. But is it? John uses the word 'synagogue' twice only, though it is found nine times in Matthew, eight times in Mark, fifteen times in Luke and nineteen times in Acts. Nor is it

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only the word that is missing. There is no interest in the synagogue as such to be discerned anywhere in this Gospel. By contrast, to John the Temple is important. He often speaks of scenes in and about the Temple and its courts, and some discussions, such as that in John 2: 19f, hinge upon the significance of the Temple. John clearly is very interested in the Temple but there does not appear to be any evidence connecting the lectionary, triennial or annual, with the Temple rather than the synagogue. We are faced with the awkward fact that John has little interest in that part of Judaism where the lectionary eventually flourished, but a great deal in that part where, as far as we know, it was never used.

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 206ff.

If we are to seek a Jewish liturgical background for the Fourth Gospel it may be better to look for it in a custom connected with Temple rather than synagogue, namely the *maamads*. H. Danby explains the custom. He points out that maamad means 'place of standing' and proceeds: 'It is the name given to a group of representatives from outlying districts.... Part of them went up to the Temple as witnesses of the offering of the sacrifices (Taan. 4: 2), and part came together in their own town, where they held prayers at fixed times during the day coinciding with the fixed times of sacrifice in the Temple.'³¹ At the gatherings in the home town passages of Scripture were read, as the Mishnah makes clear.³² Certain of these are laid down, but it is quite possible that others were read, especially at the festivals. If so there is nothing inherently improbable in the idea that the festal passages with which he was familiar were at the back of the mind of the writer of this Gospel. But we have no means of knowing this for sure. It must remain a conjecture. But it is just as possible a conjecture as the lectionary hypothesis.

Many people have been content with a more simple assumption than that which occupies the lectionary experts. They have thought that both Christ and the early Christians were earnest students of the Old Testament, and that they made use of the types and the teaching they found there to drive home their message. John, it would seem, made use of the festivals for the same purpose. It does not require the use of a lectionary to acquire a deep love for, and profound knowledge of, the Old Testament Scripture. But this possibility does not seem to be treated by the lectionary experts.

³¹ *The Mishnah* (Oxford, 1933), p. 794.

³² *Taan.* 4: 1ff.

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CHAPTER V

The Passover in John

We have already noticed that certain writers see in the Fourth Gospel an interest in the Jewish feasts, and that sometimes this is exaggerated, *e.g.* when it is said that John traverses the whole cycle of the Jewish liturgical year. It is worth looking a little more closely at John's alleged interest in the feasts. It is true that he has a good deal more to say about the feasts than has any of the other Evangelists. Thus the word ἑορτή, 'feast', is found in Matthew and Mark twice each, in Luke three times, in the Pauline Epistles once, and in John's Gospel seventeen times. The only feast the synoptists mention by name is the Passover (Matthew four times, Mark five times, Luke seven times; also in Acts and Paul once each). John mentions the Passover more than any other New Testament writer (ten times). He also has a number of references to Tabernacles (the 'feast' ἑορτή is referred to seven times, all in chapter 7, though the name 'Tabernacles' σκηνοπαγία is used once only), and one to the Feast of the Dedication (10: 22). Once he mentions a feast without giving its name (5: 1). All this can be understood to mean that John has a great interest in festivals.

Sometimes this is exaggerated. For example it is often suggested that John 8 is part of the treatment of the Feast of Tabernacles. There is no doubt but that Tabernacles is behind chapter 7. As we have just seen the feast is specifically mentioned a number of times in that chapter and there are several allusions to the crowds which thronged Jerusalem on this occasion. But we cannot assume without further ado that the same feast is the background to 'The Light of the World' discourse in John 8. There is a reference to the last day of the feast in John 7: 37 which leads one to think that this is the end of John's treatment of this particular occasion. Moreover, as is not always noticed, John uses the word ὄχλος eight times in chapter 7 and not at all in chapter 8. In fact the term does not occur again until 11: 42. In a writer like John it is difficult not to think of this as significant. Is this his way of telling us that he has now finished with the feast and its crowds? It must be borne in mind that there is no time note between John 7: 37, the Feast of Tabernacles, and John 10: 22, the Feast of the Dedication, a couple of months later. Somewhere in between these two references there

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is a lapse of months. And it may be that an interval of some sort is envisaged between John 7 and John 8.

It is true that light was a prominent part of the ceremonial of the Feast of Tabernacles. But this idea is not sufficient to establish that feast as the sole background to John 8. We have already had occasion to notice there were several features of this feast which might catch the imagination rather than the illuminations. And the fact must be faced that light is a very common theme in many religions. C. K. Barrett thinks there is an extremely complex background to John 8, and specifically to the expression 'the light of the world'. He sees references to several Old Testament passages, to Judaism, and to pagan religions as well as to

the Feast of Tabernacles and its ceremonies.¹ The Old Testament has such statements as ‘The Lord is my light and my salvation’ (Ps. 27: 1); ‘with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light do we see light’ (Ps. 36: 9); ‘The light of Israel will become a fire, and his Holy One a flame’ (Is. 10: 17); ‘I... the Lord ... have given you as ... a light to the nations’ (Is. 42: 6; cf. 49: 6); ‘the Lord will be your everlasting light’ (Is. 60: 20). There are also passages about the pillar of fire which gave light by night (Ex. 13: 21f., etc.). It is not, of course, contended that in John 8 there is no reference at all to the illuminations at the Feast of Tabernacles.² But what is contended is that in the first place there is no reason in the Gospel itself for thinking that this chapter is meant to be a sermon preached at the Feast of Tabernacles, and in the second place that the background to the chapter is much more complex than can be afforded by the lectionary, or by the feast itself. John may be referring to the feast, but he is referring to much besides.

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It is quite possible, then, for modern students to see a reference to a feast where John may not mean one. It is also possible to be led astray by concentrating on the number of occurrences of the word ‘feast’ (ἑορτή). One can easily get the impression, as many writers have done, that John is interested in the whole round of Jewish feasts. But the fact is that he mentions three feasts only.³ Of these the reference to the Feast of the Dedication (10: 22) seems to be little more than a time note. John does not make any reference to the ceremonial observed on this occasion nor does he try to bring out the significance of this feast.

This leaves us with two feasts only which receive any extended treatment, Tabernacles and Passover. Close attention to the passages where these two feasts are mentioned seems to indicate that John’s purpose is not to traverse the whole of the Jewish liturgical year, nor even the whole of the Jewish festal year. Rather he is out to do no more than draw attention to the way in which Jesus completely fulfilled all the significance of two of the feasts. It does not appear to be an interest in liturgical matters as such but an interest in the symbolism of these two feasts which secures John’s attention. And even this may give a wrong impression, for John’s interest in Tabernacles comes out in one chapter only. Apart from this one chapter it would be true to say that John’s interest in feasts is to all intents and purposes confined to the Passover. This festival is referred to several times throughout the Gospel from 2: 13 on, and it is possible to distinguish Passover imagery also in several places where the feast is not specifically mentioned. It is truer to say that John is interested in developing Passover symbolism, together with one venture into that of Tabernacles, than to say that he has an interest in the Jewish feasts as such.

¹ *The Gospel according to St. John* (London, 1955), pp. 277f. He concludes with. ‘This brief review of the background of the phrase “the light of the world” shows that John stands within the primitive Christian tradition (cf. also Acts 13.47; Phil. 2.15; Col. 1. 12f.; Eph. 5.8; 1 Peter 2.9). Nevertheless, it remains very probable that in the formulation of his statements he was influenced both by Hellenistic religion and by Jewish thought about Wisdom and the Law...’.

² Though this might be done, and has in fact been done by Sir Edwyn Hoskyns. He rejects the suggestion that the expression ‘I am the light of the world’ was, as some commentators suggest, ‘provoked by the ceremony of lighting the great candelabra in the Court of the Women on the first night of the Feast of Tabernacles’. He dismisses a number of other suggestions and concludes that, ‘the use of the metaphor of light in the earlier Christian writings ... is wholly sufficient to account for the manner and form in which it is employed in the Johannine writings’ (*in loc.*).

³ See above, pp. 49f. for the view that other feasts may sometimes be meant, though not mentioned by name.

In the case of the Feast of Tabernacles it is plain enough that John makes no attempt to develop systematically the way the feast was celebrated, the scriptural passages that were read then, or even the whole of the symbolism. He is interested in the fact that certain aspects of the feast illuminate the saving work of Christ. Thus a prominent feature of the celebrations was the ritual manipulation of water. Each day that the feast lasted water was drawn from the pool of Siloam and carried in triumphant procession in a golden flagon to the Temple. There it was poured into a bowl beside the altar and it emptied itself through a tube at the base of the altar.

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Jesus made use of this piece of ceremonial to teach that He would give 'living water'. John interprets this in terms of the Holy Spirit who would be given when Jesus was glorified (7: 39). Another important part of the Tabernacles celebrations was the illuminations. Brilliant candelabra were lit in the Court of the Women and the bright light was a very imposing part of the observation of the feast. We have already noticed that there is probably a complex background to John 8. But part of the background will certainly be the illuminations at Tabernacles. Jesus is 'the light of the world' and in this way He completely fulfils all that is involved in the Jewish feast.

This appears to be John's intention then. He uses the well-known observance of Tabernacles (this feast was called 'the' feast, it was the outstanding event in the year) to bring out important aspects of the meaning of Jesus. What is set forth in symbol in the festal observances found its fulfilment in our Lord and His work for men.

But Passover means much more to John than does Tabernacles.⁴ The Passover motif recurs throughout the Gospel from 2: 13 on. The actual expression 'the Passover' (τὸ πάσχα) is found ten times (2: 13, 23; 6: 4; 1: 55 *bis*; 12: 1; 13: 1; 18: 28, 39; 19: 14) and 'feast' (ἑορτή) is used with reference to this feast nine times (2: 23; 4: 45 *bis*; 6: 4; 11: 56; 12: 12, 20; 13: 1, 29). Thus Passover is rarely out of sight for any great length of time. It is also possible that a reference to Passover ought to be discerned in places where the feast is not actually mentioned. Thus many scholars are firmly of opinion that John arranges his Passion narrative so as to bring out the truth that Jesus was crucified at the very time that the Passover victims were being slaughtered in the Temple. This would be a way of saying that Jesus was the true Passover Victim.

The Passover commemorated the deliverance of the people of God from oppression in Egypt. It was the great festival of redemption. It reminded the Israelites of the occasion, so many centuries before, when the lambs had been slain and their blood put upon the door-posts and the lintels in order that the destroying angel might see and pass over. And this of course led to the wilderness wanderings and eventually to the land of Canaan. Thus it is not

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⁴ R. H. Lightfoot has an Appended Note in which he discusses 'The Lord the true passover feast' and cites evidence that the idea of Christ as 'the true paschal Lamb' pervades this Gospel. See *St. John's Gospel. A Commentary* (Oxford, 1956), pp. 349-356.

at all impossible that imagery from the desert wanderings may be intended to point back to Passover. It was all part of the deliverance. In this way the reference to the serpent of brass (3: 14) may be not unconnected with the Passover. Whatever the truth about such references, certainly John makes use of Passover imagery three times with great effect.

The first of these is in connection with the cleansing of the Temple. This he places at the very forefront of Jesus' ministry. As John describes it, this is connected with the destruction of the Temple. When Jesus was asked what sign He showed because of His cleansing of the Temple He replied, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up' (Jn. 2: 19). John further goes on to explain that this temple was 'the temple of his body' (Jn. 2: 21). The passage is undeniably difficult, but it seems tolerably clear that we have here a reference to the death and resurrection of Jesus, and to this as instituting a new religious system in which the Temple at Jerusalem would have no place. When we reflect that this is placed in a Passover context (the Passover is mentioned in verses 13, 23, both before and after the cleansing and its explanation), it is difficult to resist the impression that John wants us to see that the coming of Christ means the inauguration of those events which would bring in the true Passover. Now was beginning the sequence which would lead inevitably to the offering of the perfect Passover sacrifice.⁵

John mentions the Passover briefly in chapter 4, but the next time he really tries to bring out the teaching of this festival is in chapter 6.⁶ In verse 4 the Passover is explicitly referred to as John begins his narrative of the feeding of the multitude. This story leads on to the discourse in which Jesus reveals Himself as 'the bread from heaven', 'the living bread', and in which He uses the symbolism of the manna in the desert to bring out these truths. In

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other words He thinks of the Passover imagery (as we have seen, the events in the wilderness are to be understood in terms of this Passover complex) as pointing us to the way in which Jesus fully supplies man's spiritual need. In the days after the original institution of the Passover men were fed by manna from heaven. Now they would be fed with the true bread, the flesh and the blood of the Saviour. This would indeed bring life.

The climax of the treatment of this feast is reserved for the end of the Gospel, when the death of the Lord is described. The Passion took place in the context of the Passover (13: 1; 18: 28, etc.). We have already noticed that John appears to place the time of the crucifixion at the very moment when the Passover sacrifice was being offered in the Temple. There is likely to be a further reference to the Passover in the fact that Jesus' legs were not broken as He hung on the cross, 'that the scripture might be fulfilled, "Not a bone of him shall be broken"' (Jn.

⁵ Cf. R. V. G. Tasker: 'He places the incident here and not at the end of the ministry, as do the earlier evangelists, because it shows that the advent of the Christ means that the older type of sacrificial worship is now to be done away with, because He has come, who is to make the perfect sacrifice, to which the older sacrifices are but as shadows to reality' (*The Old Testament in the New Testament*, London, 1946, p. 50).

⁶ Cf. the monograph of Bertil Gärtner, *John 6 and the Jewish Passover* (Lund, 1959). Gärtner mentions the possibility of Jewish Passover readings' having influenced this chapter, but he is careful to point out that 'Previous attempts to reconstruct the first-century synagogue lectionary have met with considerable difficulties, since the text-lists which exist are of a more recent date' (*op. cit.*, p, 14).

19: 36). The reference appears to be to the requirement that not one bone of the Passover victim was to be broken (Ex. 12: 46; Nu. 9: 12).⁷ There can scarcely be any doubt but that John wants us to see Christ as the perfect Passover sacrifice. All the more is this the case in that when he wrote his Gospel the division between Jews and Christians seems to have been wide. The Christians, accordingly, could scarcely have had anything to do with the observance of the Jewish Passover. In other words Christ's death was the Passover sacrifice which fulfilled all that Passover signified. Henceforth there was no need and no place for the annual sacrifice.

The crucifixion is that to which John's whole Gospel leads up. Right from the beginning Jesus was set to attain this 'hour' (see a remarkable series of passages saying that His 'hour' or His 'time' was not yet come, 2: 4; 7: 6, 8, 30; 8: 20; then, with the cross in immediate prospect Jesus says, 'The hour has come', 12: 23; see also 12: 27; 13: 1; 16: 32; 17: 1). And just as the Gospel moves inevitably to this climax, so also the Passover imagery keeps recurring. I find it difficult to resist the conclusion that John is trying to use the symbolism of this particular feast because it was the most suitable for his purposes. He is not, apparently, interested in the feasts as such. He omits all reference to too many of them for

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that. But he is interested in what Passover, and to a less extent, Tabernacles, can tell about the saving work of Jesus Christ.

All this is to be seen in the context of John's interest in the way Jesus fulfils that to which the patriarchs point. He has a good deal to say about Moses (he mentions him twelve times), while he also refers to Abraham (eleven times), and to Jacob (three times).⁸ It is not impossible that John's interest in the festivals he mentions arises out of their connection with Moses. But it seems preferable to understand them in the way indicated above. They are a way of drawing out the implications of certain aspects of Jesus' work for men. And the patriarchs are used for the same reason. They, too, help us to see the way in which Jesus perfectly fulfils the purpose of God.

With a subtle writer like John one hesitates to affirm that one has exhausted his meaning. There always remains the lurking suspicion that the Evangelist means more than the reader has discerned, and that underlying his narrative there is a more complex background than the critic has unearthed. But, when full allowance is made for that, I find it very difficult to hold that John's interest is primarily liturgical. His Gospel does not appear to be constructed as a commentary on the Jewish lectionary. He goes to the Old Testament rather than to the synagogue. He selects from sacred Scripture those feasts and those people which serve his underlying purpose. We must never forget that he has let us know what he is trying to do (Jn. 20: 31). Any understanding of the Gospel which obscures this declared purpose is self-condemned. To see in John a primary interest in commenting on the lections does seem to me to come under this condemnation. It is much preferable to see his limited interest in the feasts

⁷ This is not absolutely certain because we read in the Psalms: 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones not one of them is broken' (Ps. 34: 19f.). Some are of opinion that John is referring to this psalm. Most however see a reference to the Passover.

⁸ Cf. R. V. G. Tasker, 'So the Fourth Evangelist brings into the clear light of day what is not so clear in the other Gospels that not only the Law and the Prophets, but also the Patriarchs testify of Jesus' (*op. cit.*, p. 53).

as a way of bringing out the great central teaching of Christianity, and bringing it out in such a way ‘that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name’.

It may be of significance that John wrote in a time when there were certain calendrical quarrels. The work of such scholars as A. Jaubert and J. van Goudoever has made it clear that more than one calendar was in use among the Jews at this time. Moreover statements in the Book of Jubilees and in the Qumran scrolls make it clear that, in certain circles at least, there was a pronounced

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emphasis on the importance of keeping the feasts at the right time. The men of Qumran held that the feasts as observed by the priestly party in Jerusalem were kept up at the wrong times. They called down their anathemas, accordingly, on anybody who observed the feasts other than at the times laid down in their own calendar. Lucetta Mowry sees this as a possible background to the Johannine usage: ‘it would seem that the writer of the Fourth Gospel, prodded by the calendar quarrel, used with remarkable creativity the cycle of festivals as a literary device to interpret the meaning of Christ for a Christian group living in the midst of an Essene group in Syria.’⁹ It is not at all impossible that this is the correct explanation. There was certainly in some quarters a keen interest in the correct observation of the feasts at the scheduled times. John may well have utilized this, selecting certain feasts as significant, and fastening attention on them with a view to showing that Jesus perfectly fulfilled all the spiritual significance of these feasts. This appears to be essentially the view of J. J. von Allmen: ‘This determination of Jesus to be present is, as it were, a declaration that He Himself is the “substance” of these festivals and that He is come to fulfil them, as He also comes to fulfil the whole law (*cf.* Matt. 5: 17). These passages may therefore be set side by side with those telling of Jesus’ attitude toward the Temple at Jerusalem.’¹⁰

The possibilities of typology as an explanation of the Johannine method should not be overlooked. Thus in chapter 2 the Evangelist pictures Jesus as the true Temple, in chapter 3 he sees Him as the true brazen serpent, in chapter 6 as the true manna, in chapter 7 as the true water-giving rock, in chapter 8 as the true fiery pillar. And of course in various places, particularly at the end of the Gospel, he shows Him as the true Paschal Victim. The use of types is not a complete explanation of John’s method. But it is certainly part of the explanation. And we do not need a lectionary to discern the possibility of types. It has also been pointed out that John depicts Jesus as going up to Jerusalem only for the feasts. It may be that he has an interest in

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⁹ *The Biblical Archaeologist*, XVII, December 1954, p. 89. She also says: ‘For him the festivals became an occasion for Jesus’ pronouncement of a new and higher expression of the meaning of each feast. The basic idea seems to be that Christ in his signs, discourses, and religious ideas associated with each of the Jewish feasts finds a higher and absolute meaning in them’ (*op. cit.*, p. 88). While John does not use all the feasts (as Mowry appears to imply), this statement seems true of those he does use.

¹⁰ *Vocabulary of the Bible* (London, 1958), p. 123.

showing the significance of Jesus' visits to Jerusalem rather than, or in addition to, the feasts. Thus on the first occasion Jesus went up as Purifier of the Temple (Jn. 2: 13ff.). The second time He went simply as a pilgrim, and as one of a group of pilgrims (Jn. 5: 1ff.). The third time, at Tabernacles, He went up to give a prophetic message (in. 7: 10ff.). Finally He went up as King (in. 12: 12ff.). It seems to me that the Passover motif means too much to John to be dismissed for such a view as this. Yet we should not be unmindful of the fact that each of Jesus' visits to Jerusalem does show Him in a different character. It is unlikely that this is accidental.

From all this it is plain that there is more than one way of understanding the Fourth Gospel, and specifically of understanding what John means by his handling of the feasts. I have not been greatly concerned to choose between the various suggestions, because my purpose is not to give a definitive study, but rather to show that the evidence is not as crystal clear as the lectionary experts would have us think. The facts are such that students have drawn a variety of conclusions. We must resist the temptation to over-simplification. In my own judgment the most important clue to this aspect of the Gospel is the centrality of the Passover. But this does not exclude a possible reference to one or other of the other ideas put forward.

The fact is that John has a subtle mind. He is capable of working out his purpose in complex fashion. No one key, be it the feasts, or typology, or the signs, or the discourses, or a postulated lectionary, will open all the doors. It must always be borne in mind that he is master of his material. There is no conclusive evidence that he is following any guide, be it the lectionary or anything else. He sees in Jesus the supreme revelation of God. He sees in His life and death and resurrection the supreme outworking of God's purpose. He sees eternal life as dependent on faith in the Son of God. And he writes to bring men into saving faith. In the pursuance of this overriding aim he makes use of a variety of considerations. We limit him unnecessarily if we think of him as concerned only with the bringing out of the implications of the lectionary system.

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