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A

CRITICAL CATECHISM.

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A CRITICAL CATECHISM,

RESPECTFULLY OFFERED TO THE CONSIDERATION
OF THE ORTHODOX.



CATECHIST.—Taking John to be the precursor of Jesus the Messiah, did he fulfil his mission in “turning the hearts of the fathers to the children,” and “the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,” “making ready a people prepared for the Lord”? (Luke i. 17.)

DISCIPLE.—He effected nothing of the kind. Though “the world” was “made” by Jesus, “the world knew him not.” “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” (John i. 10-11.) Jesus was in effect rejected and put to an ignominious death.

C.—Was John “filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb”? (Luke i. 15.)

D.—I should scarcely think so.

C.—Why?

D.—Because his disciples “had not so much as heard whether there was any Holy Ghost,” (Acts xix. 2.)

C.—Was Jesus of the lineage of David? (Luke i. 32.)

D.—No. His mother “was found with child of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. i. 18.)

C.—What certainty is there of the fact?

D.—His mother Mary was told thereof by an angel.

C.—Did she communicate the information to her affianced husband Joseph?

D.—No ; as when he found out her condition, and “thought on these things,” he was “minded to put her away” (Matt. i. 19, 20.)

C.—Whom did she teach Jesus to look upon as his father ?

D.—Joseph, to whom she adverted as such when speaking to Jesus of him. “Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing” (Luke ii. 48.)

C.—Does it appear, nevertheless, that Mary herself apprehended that Jesus was of divine origin ?

D.—It would seem not. When she heard Simeon in the temple proclaim the greatness of his mission, she “marvelled at those things which were spoken of him” (Luke ii. 33.) When at the age of twelve she found him in discussion with the doctors in the temple, she, with “all that heard him,” was “astonished at his understanding and answers” (Luke ii. 47.) And when he said that he was then engaged in his heavenly “Father’s business,” she, and the others, “understood not the sayings which he spake unto them” (Luke ii. 49, 50.)

C.—Supposing Joseph to have been the father of Jesus, would that make him out to have been of the lineage of David ?

D.—Matthew and Luke give genealogies to that effect.

C.—Do these genealogies agree ?

D.—They do not. Matthew (i. 6-16) traces Joseph from the regal line of Solomon, through twenty-three descents, to one Jacob, whose name is given as that of his father, while Luke (ii. 23-31) derives him from the unregal line of Nathan, Solomon’s brother, through thirty-eight descents, to one Heli, who is said to have been his father.

C.—For what purpose can these genealogies have been introduced unless Joseph is to be looked upon as really the father of Jesus ?

D.—I am at a loss to understand.

C.—Was not Joseph a carpenter ?

D.—He was (Matt. xiii. 55.)

C.—And yet he came from a whole race of kings ?

D.—He did. Pursuant to Matthew all the reigning sovereigns of Judah were his direct ancestors, numbering, according to the Old Testament, eighteen rulers from David to Jehoiakim.

C.—Strange, is it not ! To what calling did Joseph bring up Jesus ?

D.—To his own. He made him a carpenter (Mark vi. 3). The tradition, according to Justin Martyr (A.D. 140), was that Jesus worked at the construction of ploughs and other agricultural implements.

C.—And yet we are to believe that both Joseph and Mary were well assured of his divine birth ?

D.—We are.

C.—Was Jesus, when an infant, in peril from Herod, as stated by Matthew ? (ii. 13, 16).

D.—No ; for, according to Luke, he was taken openly to the temple, and there proclaimed as the expected redeemer or Messiah by Simeon and the prophetess Anna (ii. 22, 27-38).

C.—Did not his parents, under divine instructions, flee with him to Egypt, and thence return and take up their abode in Nazareth ? (Matt. ii. 13-23).

D.—Not according to Luke. He shows that they went direct from Jerusalem to Nazareth without going near Egypt (ii. 39).

C.—Was Jesus, “immediately” after his baptism, “driven into the wilderness” of Judea, where he remained “forty days tempted of Satan ?” (Mark i. 12, 13).

D.—John has it that on “the third day” after meeting with the Baptist, he was at Cana in Galilee, some sixty miles off, where he turned water into wine (ii. 1).

C.—So that if Jesus underwent his temptation, he did not perform the miracle at Cana ; and if he per-

formed the miracle at Cana, he did not undergo the temptation ?

D.—Just so.

C.—When did Jesus purify the temple ?

D.—Matthew says four days before his death (xxi. 1, 12, 18 ; xxvi. 2).

C.—Is that sustainable ?

D.—No. John says it happened at the beginning of his ministry, at the first of three passovers with which he associates him, or two years before his death (ii. 13-16).

C.—Is John (ii. 13 ; vi. 4 ; xix. 14) supported in his statement that the ministry of Jesus lasted over three passovers ?

D.—No. The other evangelists limit it to a portion of a year, embracing but one passover, namely that occurring at the time of his death.

C.—Where was the ministry of Jesus carried on during the last six months of his life according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke ?

D.—Always in Galilee, till within three or four days of his death, when he came to Judea.

C.—What does John say as to this ?

D.—He makes it appear that Jesus was all this time in Judea. He shows him to have been at Jerusalem at the feast of tabernacles (vii. 2, 10), which was held in Tisri, or October ; and at the feast of dedication (x. 22), which was in Chisleu, or December ; the passover, when he suffered, occurring in Nisan, or April.

C.—When Jesus left Galilee, pursuant to the earlier evangelists, by what route did he go to Judea ?

D.—According to Matthew (xix. 1) and Mark (x. 1), he crossed over the Jordan, and kept along its eastern side, thus avoiding Samaria.

C.—What does Luke say ?

D.—According to him he did not cross over the

Jordan, but "passed through the midst of Samaria" (ix. 51, 52; xvii. 11).

C.—What support is there for John's account of the raising up of Lazarus from the dead?

D.—None. The other evangelists show no knowledge of such a person as Lazarus, and make it appear that the event could not have occurred. John has it that when Jesus was summoned to attend on Lazarus at his illness, he was at Bethabara on the Jordan (x. 40); that he remained there two days; and that on going to Bethany he found that Lazarus had been dead and buried four days (xi. 6, 17); and at some interval after the resurrection of Lazarus, he goes on to say that it wanted six days to the passover (xii. 1). Here we have Jesus occupied about Lazarus, at least say a fortnight before his own death. But pursuant to Matthew and Mark he was then in Galilee, not arriving at Bethany until three, or at most four, days before his death; and when he did arrive, they describe his doings till his death without saying a word about any such miraculous action.

C.—Is John upheld in his statement (xii. 1-3) that Jesus was anointed at Bethany in the house of Lazarus?

D.—No. Matthew (xxvi. 6) and Mark (xiv. 3) say it occurred at the house of Simon the leper of Bethany.

C.—What does Luke say on the matter?

D.—That it was at the house of Simon the pharisee, who was not of Bethany, which is in Judea, but of Galilee (vii. 37, 40).

C.—Is John borne out in saying that it was Mary, the pious sister of Lazarus, who anointed him?

D.—No. Matthew and Mark describe her as an unknown female who entered the house for the purpose; while Luke says she was a well-known sinner.

C.—Did the woman, whoever she was, apply the ointment to the head of Jesus, as related by Matthew and Mark?

D.—That is altogether uncertain. Luke and John

declare she anointed his feet, and wiped them with her hair.

C.—Did Judas Iscariot object to the act as wasteful, as John states ?

D.—That cannot be relied on, for Luke says the objector was Simon the host, and that the objection taken was the contamination of the woman's touch.

C.—Can it be said that Luke was describing a different occasion from the others ?

D.—It cannot. The four all agree that it occurred while Jesus sat at meat, and was objected to ; Luke has it, in correspondence with Matthew and John, that the host's name was Simon, and that the ointment was in an alabaster box ; the incident was of an unusual character, having a special import, and Matthew and Mark, who place the event at the latest period, distinctly make it appear that such a thing had not occurred before, saying that the act should be cited, in memorial of the devotion to their lord thus manifested, "wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world."

C.—Did Judas betray Jesus with a kiss as related by Matthew, Mark, and Luke ?

D.—John represents the matter otherwise, and says that Jesus proclaimed himself ; and with such boldness and miraculous power, that the armed party, who came to take him, retreated "backward and fell to the ground" (xviii. 5, 6.)

C.—What did Judas do with the wages of his treachery ?

D.—Matthew (xxvii. 3-8) says that he cast the money down in the temple, whereupon the chief priests and elders bought a field with it.

C.—May that be accepted ?

D.—No ; in the Acts (i. 18) it is stated that Judas himself bought the field.

C.—What became of Judas afterwards ?

D.—He went out of the temple, according to Matthew, and hanged himself.

C.—What is the statement in the Acts?

D.—That, after purchasing the field, he “fell headlong, and burst asunder in the midst,” apparently coming to his end by some accident.

C.—Why was the field in question called “The field of blood”?

D.—The accounts differ. Matthew says it was in commemoration of the blood of Jesus, with the price of which it had been bought; while in the Acts it is stated that it acquired its name “inasmuch” as the blood of Judas, when he met with his accident, was shed there.

C.—How is John borne out in his statement that Jesus suffered death on the day of the paschal offering (xviii. 28; xix. 14)?

D.—Not at all. The other evangelists declare that he “ate the passover” with his disciples on the evening before his death (Matt. xxvi. 17-19; Mark xiv. 12-16; Luke xxii. 7-15), differing thus with John’s allegation that this “last supper” was held the day “before the feast of the passover” (xiii. 1, 2, 29).

C.—John (xix. 25-27) represents that when he and Mary, the mother of Jesus, with Mary Magdalene and another female, were standing by the cross, Jesus committed him and Mary to each other. Is this borne out by the other accounts?

D.—It is not. None of the other evangelists speak of the presence of the mother of Jesus on the occasion of the crucifixion, and Matthew (xxvii. 55, 56) and Mark (xv. 40, 41) state that Mary Magdalene and the other women, who were there, were not near the cross, but were “looking on afar off.”

C.—John (xix. 31-34) says that Pilate, in order that the bodies of Jesus and of the thieves who were crucified with him might be taken down from the crosses before the approaching sabbath-day, directed the soldiers to put an end to them by breaking their

legs, but that Jesus being found already dead, one of the soldiers contented himself with thrusting a spear into his side. Do the other evangelists support this representation ?

D.—They do not. They say nothing of such a circumstance, which was of a character not possibly to be overlooked. Luke (xxiv. 39, 40) has it that Jesus, after his resurrection, pointed to the wounds on his hands and feet, not indicating any on his side. Mark (xv. 42-45) observes that when permission was asked of Pilate, in the evening, to bury Jesus, he was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Pilate, consequently, could not have issued the order to put the criminals to death by the violent means attributed to him by John, and on which he builds his statement as to the wound on the side.

C.—Was it the case that three females visited the tomb of Jesus, as stated by Mark (xvi. 1, 2) ?

D.—No. Matthew (xxviii. 1) says there were but two.

C.—Can two then have been the number ?

D.—No. John (xx. 1) says there was but one.

C.—May we hold to this, that there was but one ?

D.—No ; for Luke (xxiii. 55 ; xxiv. 10) declares there were a considerable number.

C.—May it be believed that Jesus first showed himself in resurrection life to two females, as represented by Matthew (xxviii. 1, 9) ?

D.—No. Mark (xvi. 9) says that he showed himself but to one.

C.—Is that believable ?

D.—No. Luke (xxiv. 23, 24) shows that the women had merely had “a vision of angels,” from whom they heard that Jesus “was alive.” On this some men went to the tomb, “but him they saw not.” Up to this time, therefore, which was late in the day (ver. 29), Jesus had been seen by no one.

C.—If Jesus was not first seen by women, one or more, to whom did he first reveal himself?

D.—Luke (xxiv. 13-15, 31) has it that his first appearance was to two disciples at Emmaus.

C.—Is that clear?

D.—No. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 5) says he was first seen by Cephas (Peter).

C.—Where is the account of that apparition?

D.—Nowhere.

C.—Is the apparition to the disciples at Emmaus, described by Luke, supported by the other evangelists?

D.—It is not. Matthew (xxviii. 7, 10, 16, 17) says that after the alleged apparition to the females, the next manifestation was to be in Galilee, and there took place. He says nothing of the occurrence at Emmaus, for which, in fact, he gives no room. Neither does Mark say anything of it. John speaks of an apparition in Galilee, of which he says, "this is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead" (xxi. 14), the first to ten persons, and the second to eleven, having occurred in Jerusalem (xx. 19, 24, 26). This, therefore, excludes the alleged apparition to the two at Emmaus.

C.—Is Matthew supported in his statement (xxviii. 7, 10) that the manifestation of Jesus to his disciples was appointed to be in Galilee?

D. Luke declares otherwise, saying that Jesus enjoined it on them to "tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until endued with power from on high" (xxiv. 49). The Acts supports this, saying that he "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father," which promise was fulfilled fifty days afterwards at Pentecost (i. 4; ii. 1-4).

C.—Is it clear that the apostles were kept thus, for such a period, without the gift of the Holy Ghost?

D.—No. John assures us that it was imparted to them on the evening of the day of the resurrection (xx. 22).

C.—Allowing that it is uncertain which was the first manifestation that Jesus made of himself after death, is it apparent which was the last occasion on which he so showed himself?

D.—According to the Acts (i. 3) “he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them (the apostles) forty days.”

C.—Is that supported elsewhere?

D.—It is not. John implies that Jesus exhibited himself to the apostles but three times, namely, on the day of his resurrection, eight days later, and then at some subsequent time in Galilee (xx. 19, 26; xxi. 14).

C.—Is that representation corroborated?

D.—It is not. Matthew declares that Jesus appeared to the apostles but once in Galilee, at a spot “where he had appointed them,” and there parted with them after giving them his final instructions (xxviii. 16-20). Matthew thus negatives the appearances described in Mark, Luke, and John to have taken place in Jerusalem, and where he speaks of one in Galilee it is in a different locality to that described by John. John says the occurrence was “at the sea of Tiberias,” and Matthew on a certain “mountain.”

C.—How does Matthew’s statement stand the test of examination by those of Mark and Luke.

D.—Not at all. If Jesus enjoined it on the apostles to remain in Jerusalem for a particular purpose, which was fulfilled only fifty days afterwards at Pentecost, as stated by Luke and in the Acts, then there could have been no such appointment to meet in Galilee as Matthew describes. Moreover, Mark and Luke declare that on the evening of the day of his resurrection Jesus was “received up into

heaven," and there assumed his appointed seat "on the right hand of God" (Mark xvi. 19; Luke xxiv. 51); so that as Galilee is at least fifty miles from Jerusalem, or at a distance of two or three day's journey, there was no time for the apostles to have gone there to meet with Jesus. This statement of the ascension by Mark and Luke also negatives John's accounts of a second and third manifestation, as also all those, enduring for forty days, spoken of in the Acts.

C.—So that Matthew disallows the apparition at Emmaus, described by Luke, the several appearances in Jerusalem recounted by Mark, Luke, and John, and the meeting in Galilee declared by John; while Mark and Luke disallow the appearance in Galilee of which Matthew speaks, and the second and third appearances in Jerusalem and in Galilee which we hear of from John!

D.—It is so. Each several representation is distinctly negated by some other representation.

C.—Is Paul's statement that Jesus "was seen of above five hundred brethren at once" (1 Cor. xv. 6) in any way corroborated elsewhere?

D.—On the contrary, it is shown that no such manifestation occurred. Peter declares that Jesus showed himself, "not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God" (Acts x. 41); that is, not to a large promiscuous multitude, but to a select few, namely, the apostles. Nor were there so many as five hundred brethren to whom he could have shown himself, for when all were gathered together in these early days, their number was but "about an hundred and twenty" (Acts i. 15).

C.—According to Mark and Luke the ascension occurred at the close of the day of the resurrection. How does the matter appear by the accounts elsewhere?

D.—According to Matthew it could not have taken

place until several days later, so as to give time for the appearance in Galilee he describes. According to John it could not have happened until ten or twelve days later, as he mentions a second appearance in Jerusalem eight days after the first, and then one in Galilee. And according to the Acts it did not occur for forty days.

C.—Where did this great event take place?

D.—Pursuant to Matthew from a mountain in Galilee (xxviii. 16-20); to Mark from a house in Jerusalem, where Jesus met with the apostles at meat (xvi. 14-19); to Luke at Bethany (xxiv. 50); and to the Acts from the mount of Olives (i. 9-12). John says nothing on the subject.

C.—And yet the fact of the resurrection is an essential point of doctrine, is it not?

D.—So essential, that it is absolutely fatal to question it. "He that believeth not," said Jesus at one of these apparitions, "shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16). "If Christ be not risen," declares Paul, "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ. And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (1 Cor. xv. 14-18).

C.—What an advantage, is it not, that these histories have been transmitted through inspired channels, and may therefore be accepted, without hesitation, as reliable, notwithstanding all these irreconcilable contradictions!

D.—It is so. In that faith all Christendom have stood for now above eighteen hundred years.

Any one is at liberty to reprint or translate this Catechism.