

What Have We gained in the Sinaitic Palimpsest?

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IV.

The Gospel of John.

1¹⁻²⁴ is unfortunately on a lost leaf. But they are to be found in the Curetonian manuscript, and therefore not lost to the Old Syriac versions.

1³⁴.—‘And I saw, and bear record that this is the *chosen* of God’ (with Codex Sinaiticus and the Curetonian). Possibly this is the original form, for John’s knowledge of our Lord’s relation to the Father was probably less at this period than what St. Peter afterwards attained to, as we know from Mt 16¹⁶. There are obvious reasons why over-zealous scribes might change ‘chosen’ to ‘Son.’ They knew it from other sources to be true; then why not say so? The Palestinian Syriac has ‘the Son of God, his chosen.’

*1³⁸.—‘and beheld them following,’ is omitted.

1³⁸.—‘which is to say, being interpreted, Master,’ is naturally omitted; ‘Rabbi’ or ‘Rabban’ being an Aramaic word (with the Curetonian and the Peshitta).

1⁴⁰.—‘And the name of one of these disciples of John, was Andrew, the brother of Simon.’ ‘Peter’ is omitted (with the Peshitta), but then Simon had not yet received the name. The first clause of this verse agrees with the Curetonian, which, however, adds ‘Cepha.’

1⁴¹.—‘And Andrew saw Simon his brother on that day, and saith unto him, My brother, we have found the Messiah’ (almost with the Curetonian, which omits ‘on that day,’ and ‘My brother,’ and adds ‘Cepha,’ and almost with the Peshitta).

*1⁴².—‘which is, being interpreted into Greek, Peter.’

1⁴⁴.—‘Now Philip was by his family of Beth-Saida, of the city of Andrew and Simon.’

1⁴⁷ to 2¹⁵ is on a lost leaf. This portion is wanting also in Cureton’s MS.

*2¹⁷.—‘When he did these things his disciples remembered that it was written,’ etc.

2¹⁷.—‘The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up’—not ‘shall eat’ (with the Peshitta and the

Palestinian Syriac). ‘Shall eat’ has the majority of witnesses on its side, but ‘hath eaten’ is supported by the Hebrew text of Ps 69⁹.

*2²³.—‘in the days of the feast of unleavened bread,’ instead of ‘at the passover, during the feast.’

*2^{24, 25}.—‘But our Lord did not trust himself to them, and needed not that any should testify about the *work* of man: for he knew the *heart* in man *what it is*.’

*3⁶.—‘and that which is born of the spirit is spirit; because God is a living spirit.’ The Curetonian and the Old Latin Codex Vercellensis have ‘because God is a Spirit, and of God it is born.’

3⁸.—‘so are they which are born of *water* and of the Spirit’ (with Codex Sinaiticus, the Curetonian, and some Old Latin MSS).

*3¹³.—‘the Son of man, which is *from* heaven.’ This has no corroboration; but it seems to be an improvement.

3¹⁵.—‘That whosoever believeth in him *should not perish*, but should have eternal life.’ Here we have the reading of the Authorized Version (with the Peshitta and some Old Latin MSS).

*3¹⁸.—‘in the name of the only Son’; ‘of God,’ is omitted.

*3²⁰.—‘lest his deeds should be *seen*.’

*3²³.—Here we have the name ‘Ain Nun,’ the Fish Spring.

*4⁵.—‘a certain town of the Samaritans, which was called *Shechem*,’ instead of ‘Sychar.’ Some light is thrown upon this by a statement of St. Jerome, quoted by Tischendorf. Under the name Sichar in *De nominibus Hebraicis*, he says, ‘Corrupte autem pro Sichem quae transfertur in humeros, ut Sichus legeretur usus obtinuit.’ And again, ‘Alioquin Hebraice Sichem dicitur: ut Joannes quoque evangelista testatur: licet vitiose ut Sichar legatur, error inolevit: et est nunc Neapolis urbs Samaritanorum.’ (*Quaest. Hebr. in Genesisim.*)

4⁶.—‘and the fountain of water of Jacob was there.’ Orientals make so decided a distinction between the *ain*, ‘spring, fountain,’ *πηγή, βρύσις*, and the *bir*, ‘well,’ *φρέαρ*, that we wonder to find both words used in the same narrative. A well is something that has been dug or formed artificially, whereas in the spring or fountain the water gushes naturally from the ground. What is now shown as Jacob’s Well, near Nablûs, certainly is a well. Perhaps it might deserve both epithets, for it may have been fed from a fountain near at hand on Mount Gerizim.

V.⁸ is here placed between v.⁶ and v.⁷, and the fact that our Lord had sat down is twice repeated. ‘And our Lord came and sat above the fountain . . . that he might rest from the toil of the way. And his disciples had gone up to that town to buy themselves food. And while our Lord sat, it was the sixth hour. And there cometh a certain woman of Samaria,’ etc. (with the Curetonian).

4²³.—‘for the Father even seeketh these worshippers, *those who worship him in spirit and in truth.*’ This is a repetition of the idea in the former clause of the verse (almost with Codex B of the Palestinian Syriac version, and the Old Latin Codex Veronensis).

*4²⁶.—‘he will *give* everything.’

*4²⁷.—‘And while they were talking, his disciples came and wondered that with the woman he was *standing* and talking.’

This slight detail in the narrative is found, so far as we know, in no other manuscript. But it is quite in keeping with our Lord’s character that He should have forgotten His own weariness, and should have risen to His feet in order to impress more vividly on the woman those great truths which He was revealing to her. And the change of attitude may have been prompted by an innate feeling of the chivalry which was eventually to blossom out of His teaching. Standing is not the usual habit of the Jewish Rabbi when he is engaged in teaching, so it is all the more remarkable that our Lord should have shown so much courtesy to our sex in the person of one of its most degraded representatives. The little word *qâem*, ‘standing,’ has so much significance that we cannot suppose it to be a mere orthographical variant.

4²⁷.—‘What hast thou said unto her?’ instead of ‘Why speakest thou with her?’ (almost like the Coptic).

*4³⁰.—‘and every one who heard went out to him.’

4³⁶.—‘And the reaper *straightway* receiveth wages’ (with Codd. Bezae, Veronensis, and the Curetonian).

4³⁸ to 5⁶ is on a lost leaf.

5¹².—‘They asked him, Who is the man that said unto thee, Take up, and walk?’ is omitted (with the Old Latin Codex Veronensis). The sense does not suffer by the loss of this verse.

V.²⁶ to v.⁴⁶ is on a lost page.

*6⁴.—‘And the feast of the *unleavened bread* of the Jews was nigh.’

*6¹⁰.—‘in number about five thousand,’ is omitted.

6¹¹ is imperfect, being difficult to read, but we notice a variant, ‘and he distributed to his disciples’ (with the Authorized Version and with Codd. Bezae and Veronensis). It may have come here from Mt 14¹⁹ or 15³⁶, or Mk 8⁹, or Lk 9¹⁶, and in this case our palimpsest has the interpolation.

*6¹³.—‘and they filled twelve baskets with the remains of these five barley loaves *and of these two fishes.*’

*6¹³.—Here we have an addition, ‘Now the men which did eat of this bread were five thousand’; evidently by a transposition of v.¹⁰.

6¹⁸.—‘And *the lake* was tumultuous against them, and a great wind blew,’ etc. (almost with the Curetonian). The word ‘sea’ is used in v.¹⁶.

*6³².—‘Jesus therefore said unto them,’ is omitted, although the sense seems to require it.

*6³⁹.—Instead of ‘And this is the will of him that sent me,’ we have only ‘This is it.’ Possibly the scribe has dropped a line, but possibly also it is intentional.

6⁴².—‘Is not this Jesus Bar-Joseph? and we know his father?’

6⁴².—‘and mother,’ is omitted (with Codex Sinaiticus, the Curetonian, and the Old Latin Codex Veronensis).

6⁴⁶.—‘save he which is *with* God,’ instead of ‘save he which is from God’ (with the Curetonian).

6⁴⁷.—‘He that believeth *on* God hath life’ (almost with the Curetonian).

*6⁶³.—‘It is the Spirit that quickeneth *the body*; but ye say, the body profiteth nothing.’

6⁶⁴.—‘who they were that believed not, and,’ is omitted (with the Curetonian).

6⁰⁹.—‘that thou *art the Christ, the Son of God*’ (with several Old Latin MSS, almost with Codex Alexandrinus, the Curetonian, the Peshitta, and the Palestinian Syriac). The Curetonian omits ‘*the Christ,*’ and the others add ‘*living*’ before God). This emphasizes the higher degree of knowledge possessed by Simon Peter over that of John the Baptist, as shown in Jn 1³⁴. It is observed in the majority of ancient manuscripts.

6⁷⁰.—‘Have not I chosen you *all,*’ instead of ‘the twelve’ (with the Curetonian).

*6⁷¹.—‘Judah the Iscariot,’ instead of ‘Judas of Simon Iscariot.’

*7¹.—‘because he would not walk *openly* in Judæa.’

*7¹².—‘And there was much murmuring because of him in that *great multitude which had come to the feast.*’

*7¹⁴.—‘And in the midst of the days of the feast of tabernacles,’ or literally, ‘and when the days of the feast of tabernacles were divided,’ (with the Curetonian).

7²¹.—‘I have done one work *in your sight,* and ye all marvel’ (with the Curetonian).

7³².—‘*And the chief priests* and the Pharisees heard that the people murmured’ (almost with some Old Latin MSS).

7³⁵.—‘will he perhaps go teaching *the seed of the Gentiles?*’ instead of ‘will he go unto the Dispersion among the Greeks?’ (with the Curetonian).

*7³⁶.—‘And what is the word that he said, I go away, and ye shall not find me,’ etc.

7³⁷.—‘*the last day,*’ is omitted (with the Curetonian).

*7⁴⁰.—‘of a truth this is the *Christ.*’

*7⁴¹.—‘Others said, This is the Christ,’ is omitted.

*7⁴⁵.—‘And these officers returned, and came to *those multitudes* and to the Pharisees; and the priests and the Pharisees said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?’

*7^{48, 49}.—‘For who of the chief men or of the Pharisees has believed on him? only this mob, who knoweth not the law.’

7⁴⁹.—‘are accursed,’ is omitted.

7⁵⁰.—‘he that came unto him before *by night*’

(with Codex Bezae and the Peshitta, almost with Codex Alexandrinus and the Old Latin Codex Monacensis).

7⁵⁰.—‘being one of them,’ is omitted. The Coptic version and some Old Latin MSS have both readings.

7⁵³ to 8¹¹, *i.e.* the story of the woman taken in adultery, is omitted (with Codd. Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and many other ancient Greek MSS, also with some Old Latin MSS). Tischendorf says that ‘St. John certainly never wrote this narrative; but that it is found in the MSS of his Gospel from the third century onward.’ Dr. Hort says that ‘the argument which has weighed most in its favour in modern times is its own internal character,’ but that ‘it presents serious differences from the diction of St. John’s Gospel, which strongly suggests diversity of authorship.’

‘When the whole evidence is taken into consideration,’ he continues, ‘it becomes clear that the section first came into St. John’s Gospel as an insertion in a comparatively late Western text, having originally belonged to an extraneous independent source.’ That this source was either the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* or the *Expositions of the Lord’s Oracles* of Papias is a conjecture only; but it is a conjecture of high probability.’

‘Erasmus showed by his language how little faith he had in its genuineness.’

This section stands after Lk 21³⁸ in the archetype of the Ferrar group of Greek MSS. This Dean Alford considers to be its apparent chronological place; though why it should have dropped out of Luke’s Gospel cannot be readily explained.

With regard to this and two other interpolated passages, we must recollect that they all have the prestige of tradition in their favour; and that though they may never have been penned by the evangelist in whose narrative they occur, they are records of what was believed by Christians of the Apostolic Age, from whose memory the genuine words and deeds of the God-Man had not yet faded. As such they are entitled to our profound respect, especially when they harmonize so well as this does with our Lord’s life and character.