

# On the Inauthenticity of John 5:3b-4

by Gordon D. Fee

*Dr. Fee has already earned for himself a considerable reputation in the field of textual criticism; we welcome his first contribution to the EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY in which he applies his attention to one particular textual problem. Dr. Fee teaches at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.*

New Testament scholarship by and large has regarded the reference to the angel's stirring of the waters of Bethesda (John 5:3b-4) to be a gloss and therefore no part of the original text of the Fourth Gospel. The well-known and off-repeated reasons for this conclusion are briefly summarized by Metzger:<sup>1</sup> (1) its absence from the earliest and best witnesses, (2) the presence of non-Johannine words or expressions, and (3) the rather wide diversity of variant forms in which verse 4 was transmitted. Indeed, so certain for most scholars is this 'assured result' that one looks in vain to the scholarly literature for a fullscale presentation of the data; it simply seemed too certain to be necessary.

Nonetheless there have been a few exceptions to this consensus, especially among Roman Catholic scholars.<sup>2</sup> Most notable of these was the willingness of D. Mollat to include the disputed verses in the French original of the *Jerusalem Bible*. After acknowledging the majority opinion, he notes: 'Cependant il est attesté par l'assemble des Mss de VetLat et nous paraît authentique.'<sup>3</sup> He further suggests that the verses might have been suppressed because of the rather unorthodox character of this "sanctuary of healing."

More recently, Z. Hodges, whose text-critical methodology had already given him a prior commitment in favour of inclusion,<sup>4</sup> has offered an extensive defence of their authenticity.<sup>5</sup> In response to the traditional arguments against them, Hodges argues that the 'omission' is a basically Alexandrian phenomenon, and that the presence of non-Johannine words and expressions is a matter that counts for little. On the contrary, he argues that verse 7 demands the presence of 3b-4 and that their suppression can be explained as an early theological aversion

207

<sup>1</sup> B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 209.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g. J. M. Bover, 'Autenticidad de Jn. 5, 3b-4', (*Est Bib* 11 (1952), 69-72; T. Antolín, 'La autenticidad de Jn. 5, 3b-4 y la exégesis dels vs. 7', *Verdad y Vida* 19 (1961), 327-341. It also appears in the translation by Ronald Knox (1944).

<sup>3</sup> *L'Évangile et les Épîtres de Saint Jean* (2nd ed.; Paris: Cerf, 1960), 105. In the 3rd edition (1973) the final chapter has been softened to 'et pourrait être authentique'.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g. 'The Greek Text of the King James Version', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125 (1968), 334-345.

<sup>5</sup> 'The Angel at Bethesda — John 5:4', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136 (1979), 25-39.

to what would have been considered a 'vestige of paganism' in some parts of the church.

It is Hodges' article in particular that has prompted this present paper, which is an attempt to fill a lacuna by offering a fullscale discussion of the reasons for rejecting the passage as spurious. The discussion will proceed under the traditional rubrics of transcriptional probability, intrinsic probability, and external evidence.

### TRANSCRIPTIONAL PROBABILITY

It is especially important at the outset to set forth the textual data in full, because the discussion of transcriptional probabilities must embrace all the phenomena. The data:

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| (1) Include both 3b-4      | A <sup>2</sup> C <sup>3</sup> K Xcomm Δ Θ Ψ Ω 063 078 f1 f13 28 565<br>700 892 1241 Byz it <sup>a</sup> , aur, b, c, e, ff <sup>2</sup> , j, r <sup>1</sup><br>syrP, pal cop <sup>bo</sup> fms <sup>s</sup> arm eth Diatessaron <sup>a</sup><br>(Tertullian) Ambrose Augustine Chrysostom |
| (2) Include with asterisks | S Λ Π 047 1079 2174 pc sy <sup>h</sup>  |
| (3) Include only v. 4      | A* L Diatessaron <sup>1</sup> , i, n  |
| (4) Include only v. 3b     | D Wsupp 0141 33 it <sup>d</sup> , f, l vg <sup>ww</sup> geo   |
| (5) Omit both 3b-4         | P66 P75 X B C* 0125 it <sup>q</sup> syr <sup>c</sup> cop Cyril-Jerusalem<br>(Amphilochius) Pseudo-Amphilochius (Didymus)<br>Nonnus (Cyril Alexandria)   |

208

There is, of course, no possible way this material could have been added or omitted by accident; it was either intentionally expunged or intentionally inserted. Furthermore, we are not dealing with a *single* addition or deletion. The data demand a process — or independent additions or deletions of more than one kind.

Traditionally, it has been believed that variant 5 is original and that all of 5:3b-4 (variant 1) was added as a gloss to explain the otherwise puzzling statement in verse 7: 'I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me' (NIV). That, of course, would explain how one gets from variant 5 to variant 1. However, it seems far more likely that we are here dealing with *two* independent glosses (variants 3 and 4), which had already been joined at an early stage in the West, but which also had a period of independent existence. In any case, a variety of *additions* of two separate, and then joined, glosses is a historically probable explanation of all the textual phenomena.

On the other hand, neither variant 5 nor 3 and 4 is easily explained if 5:3b-4 had been original to John's Gospel. The question, of course, is

why one would have expunged such a pertinent datum. The only possible answer is a theological one. For some reason, someone had a theological uneasiness about an angel's giving salubrious qualities to a pool of water, and therefore omitted the offending sentence when copying his text. But the problem with this answer is twofold: (a) It fails to reckon with all the textual phenomena, especially variants 3 and 5, and (b) It fails to take seriously the theological proclivities of second-century Christianity.

First, this answer fails because it works as a transcriptional explanation *only* for variant 4 (the "omission" of verse 4 only). What cannot be explained with any degree of historical probability is why, given verse 7, anyone would also have expunged the words ἐκδεχομένων τὴν τοῦ ὕδατος κίνησιν from verse 3. Furthermore, what is even more unlikely is variant 3 itself. If variant 1 were original, then one is faced with the improbability that someone deleted *only* these words from verse 3. This in turn means that someone else deleted *only* verse 4, and still someone else deleted them both. If it is argued that variant 5 was the original corruption and that variants 3 and 4 are partial restorations of the original, that might well explain the reading of A and L (variant 3), but it presses the imagination as an explanation of variant 4 — why should one have restored only the 'moving of the water' and have left out the explanation itself? If variant 1 were original, there seems no viable alternative to the necessity of postulating at least *two independent* deletions, one of vv. 3b-4 and another of v.4. While this is historically possible, it is most highly improbable.

209

Second, there seems to be no historical basis whatever for someone in second-century Alexandria, not to mention elsewhere in the early church, to have had a theological aversion to such activity on the part of angels. On the contrary, the writers of the second century, who speak of angels at all, do so with great favour. In Hermas' *Shepherd* (*Vis.* 4.2.4.) an angel shuts the mouth of a wild beast for Hermas' sake (cf. Daniel 6:22); in Clement of Alexandria angels watch over nations, cities, and individuals (*Strom.* 6.157.5); and later, in Origen, the whole created order (air and water) is kept pure through the agency of angels (*Cels.* 8:31). Angels play a major role in apocryphal and heretical literature as well. There is simply no known aversion to angelic activity in second-century Christianity.

To be sure, Professor Hodges attempts to find the theological milieu necessary for such a deletion in a passage from Tertullian's *de Baptismo* (ch. 5), where Tertullian is arguing that pagan ritual cleansings, though demonic, in their own way bear witness to Christian baptism. In chapter 4 Tertullian argued that the Spirit through an angel sanctified the

waters of Christian baptism. In chapter 5 he contrasts this work of the Spirit and his angel with the demonic spirits present at pagan cleansings. In the midst of this argument he asks: 'Why have I referred to such matters? So that no one should think it over-difficult for God's holy angel to be present to set waters in motion for man's salvation, when an unholy angel of the evil one often does business with that same element with a view to man's perdition. If it is thought strange that an angel should do things to waters, there has already occurred a precedent of that which is to be.'<sup>6</sup> And with that Tertullian argues that the angel of Bethesda is the precursor of his baptismal angel. Hodges italicizes the protasis of this final sentence and argues that Alexandria provided just such an intellectual atmosphere for a textual deletion 'motivated by a falsely perceived "pagan tinge".'<sup>7</sup> That is, he perceives someone actually to have had the hypothetical difficulty Tertullian suggests and thereby to have deleted 5:4 from the text of John.

210

This argument, however, seems totally *non sequitur*. The problem with which Tertullian is wrestling at this point is not with angels *per se*, nor with the activity of angels in waters *per se*, but with his own non-biblical view of angels at the waters of baptism. Thus it is not a falsely perceived vestige of paganism that Tertullian is anticipating, but a response to his own view of Christian baptism. Hodges is correct that Tertullian argues *from* John 5:4 as though that were the only known text. But it is precisely for such a reason that he thinks he can argue with impunity. No one would deny the sacred text. Thus there is not a hint in any of this that Christians as early as, or in this case (because of P<sup>66</sup> and P<sup>75</sup>) earlier than, Tertullian to have had an aversion to angelic activity in first-century Jerusalem.

In the matter of transcriptional probability, therefore, the dictum *lectio difficilior potior* prevails, and the more difficult task is to explain the deletion(s). The addition(s) are fully explicable on the basis of v.7.

#### INTRINSIC PROBABILITY

This aspect of textual criticism, having to do with whether or not a given author wrote the words in question, is admittedly the most subjective dimension of our science. But it is not thereby to be discounted — or disregarded — as some today are wont to do. Professor Hodges' study again offers an interesting case in point. In the first place, apart from his confidence in the Majority Text, his argument rests on the supposition that the response of the invalid in verse 7 'demands the presence of

<sup>6</sup> Translation by E. Evans (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), 13-15.

<sup>7</sup> 'The Angel', 39.

verse 4 in order to make John's text genuinely comprehensible'.<sup>8</sup> This seems to be a case of subjectivity of the highest order; in any case it affirms the author of the Fourth Gospel to have been a much tidier writer than the evidence allows.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed the problem of intrinsic probability lies elsewhere, in this case with the unusually high incidence of non-Johannine words or expressions in such a short passage. Hodges has countered that 'this argument has no real force', because 'special subject matter often elicits special vocabulary'. As an example he points to seven Johannine *hapax legomena* (including three New Testament *hapaxes*) that appear in John 2:14-16.<sup>10</sup>

Hodges, however, seems to have missed the nature of the problem here. It is true that in 60 words in 2:14-16 John uses 11 words he does not use elsewhere; and it is further true that in this case the special subject matter has elicited the special vocabulary (after all, 8 of the 11 words are nouns). But it is further true that everything else in 2:14-16, except for 8 special nouns and 3 special verbs, is very Johannine; the adverbs, the conjunctions, the word order, the paraphrastic style — all accord with ordinary Johannine usage. It should be further noted that even these kinds of passages are extremely rare in John (*cf.* 4:52 and 12:3).

The problem in 5:3b-4, however, is significantly different from the sudden increase of special nouns found in 2:14-16. The problem here has to do with Johannine and New Testament *hapax legomena*, plus non-Johannine stylistic features, where a new or special vocabulary is in fact *not* required by the subject matter. Let us comment on each of the linguistic and stylistic *hapaxes* in their order of appearance:

1. ἐκδεχομένων — This word occurs only here in John, and six times elsewhere in the New Testament. It presents no special problems to authenticity, since the concept of 'waiting' does not occur elsewhere in John. In all likelihood this would be normal usage.

2. κίνησιν — This word presents special problems for Johannine authenticity. In this case the special subject matter has not called for *this* word. In verse 7 John refers to the water as having been 'troubled' (ταράσσω). Whoever wrote verse 4 was sensitive enough to this usage to repeat it, both in its verbal and nominal forms. Since such repetition is

---

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Besides the well-known aporias, there are similar local matters left unexplained, which would have been equally puzzling to ordinary readers (*e.g.* 4:20: 'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain')

<sup>10</sup> *Art. cit.*, 37. Actually Hodges has sold himself a little short. There are eleven Johannine *hapaxes*. Hodges has missed ἐκχέω, τράπεζα, ἀνατρέπω, and ἐμπόριον.

one of the outstanding Johannine characteristics,<sup>11</sup> it is difficult to understand his having used κίνησις in verse 3b and παραχή in verse 4.

3. τὴν τοῦ ὕδατος κίνησιν — This use of an enclosed genitive presents extraordinarily difficult problems for Johannine authenticity. The difficulties have to do with two realities about Johannine style. On the one hand, one of the marked characteristics of John's style is his frequent repetition, in close sequence, of identical words or phrases, but frequently with the second or following items appearing in word order variation. Thus, for example, he regularly varies the position of possessive or demonstrative pronouns or of subject-verb-object. On the other hand, there are some word-order invariables (e.g. ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν; never ὑμῖν λέγω). Another of these invariables is with genitive constructions where both nouns are definite (e.g. *the eyes of the blind*). There are 97 such occurrences in the Gospel (not including those places where both nouns are genitives as in 12:3 τῆς ὁσμῆς τοῦ μύρου), plus 27 others in 1 and 2 John. In every case the word order invariably is *the moving of the water*.

212

It is as improbable for John to have written τὴν τοῦ ὕδατος κίνησιν as it would be for a proper Bostonian to say, 'I'm fixin' to go up town; y'all come with me, ya hear?' One may count on it: had John written 5:3b he would have said τὴν παραχὴν τοῦ ὕδατος.

4. ἄγγελος κυρίου — almost all of the early uncials have κυρίου, which is lacking in the later majority. This use of κυρίου without the τοῦ is a septuagintalism, which occurs frequently in Matthew, but elsewhere in John only in citations of the LXX (1:23, 12:13, 12:38). In 1:51 he speaks of τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ. In no other instance in fact does John refer to God as κύριος.

5. κατὰ καιρὸν — This idiom, with the meaning 'from time to time', is a New Testament *hapax legomenon*. The phrase occurs elsewhere only in Romans 5:6 where it has the sense of an appointed time. John does not use κατὰ in a distributive sense elsewhere; on the other hand, there is nothing unusual about the usage.

6. κατέβαιναν ἐν τῇ κολυμβήθρᾳ — Although M. Zerwick allows that this use of ἐν with καταβαίνω could be accounted for as a 'pregnant construction' (i.e. with the connotation of *preceding* motion, now at rest),<sup>12</sup> the usage of ἐν with any of the βαίνω compounds (ἀναβαίνω, καταβαίνω, ἐμβαίνω) is totally out of keeping with *Johannine style*, which always reads εἰς. Again, it is not a case of John's *not being able to say καταβαίνω ἐν*; it is a matter of a proper Britisher saying 'ain't'.

<sup>11</sup> See Edwin A. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar* (London: A. and C. Black, 1906), 437-65.

<sup>12</sup> Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963), 33-4.

7. ἐμβάς — Elsewhere in the New Testament, including John 5:7(!), people καταβαίνουνσι into water and ἀναβαίνουνσι out of it — unless they are cast, or cast themselves, into the water, in which case βάλλω is used. Εμβαίνω is reserved for getting into boats. The usage is unusual on every count. In this case the special subject matter has not only *not* called for the usage, but on this matter John elsewhere is in total conformity to the rest of the New Testament.

8. ὃ δῆποτε — This construction is also a New Testament *hapax legomenon*. And again, it is *not* called forth by the special subject matter. This idiom poses nearly insurmountable problems for Johannine authorship. First, because John nowhere else uses unique constructions as subordinating conjunctions; second, because John does subordinate elsewhere with the concept of ‘whatever’ and uses a variety of standard forms: ὅσα ἄν, ὅτι ἄν, ποταπός.

9. κατέχω — This is a Johannine *hapax legomenon*. As a verb to express being “held” by sickness or disease, it is a New Testament *hapax* (*cf.* the variant in D at Luke 4:38). Again, the usage is *not* dictated by the special subject matter. In the immediate context (5:5), John has ἔχω, which is the standard New Testament usage.

10. νοσήματα — Here again we have a New Testament *hapax legomenon*, which again is not elicited by the special subject matter. Indeed, this word is unusual in two ways. First, the word ordinarily refers to disease proper (*cf.* Josephus, *contra Apion* 1.282, where it refers to leprosy), a category that does not seem to be included in John’s three words in verse 3 which describe the kinds of ἀσθενοῦντων of those who were lying at the pool (blind, lame, withered). Second, John elsewhere always uses a form of ἀσθενεία to describe sickness.

In sum: No one of these perhaps is sufficient in itself to cause one to question the authenticity of 5:3b and 5:4. But the effect is cumulative — and it is devastating. In the space of 34 words there are 10 unusual words or non-Johannine features of style, only two of which (ἐκδεχόμενοι and κατὰ καιρόν) might have been called for by the special subject matter. The others are not only non-Johannine in the sense that he does not use them elsewhere, but more significantly in the sense that John uses different words or phrases when he expresses identical ideas elsewhere.

Contrary to Hodges, this argument has real force. Since John is not noted for unique expressions, but for constant repetition, it is particularly difficult to account for so many non-Johannine expressions in such a short span. Coupled with the difficulty of transcriptional probabilities, it seems unlikely in the highest degree that John could have written either 5:3b or 5:4.

### THE EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

The final (or first!) argument that favours variant 5 as the original is the external evidence itself. The three criteria of early, best, and geographically widespread all favour this variant, and alternatively indicate the secondary character of the others. To be sure, Professor Hodges, with something of a *tour de force*, argues the opposite in favour of variant 1, but to do so he seems to push historical data beyond recognizable limits.

There is no question that the evidence for both 5:3b and 5:4 is early, but it is certainly questionable whether that evidence is diverse and widespread. On the other hand, the evidence against both glosses is equally ancient, and in this case can be shown to be *independently* widespread. (In what follows we will limit our discussion only to the variant of verse 4.)

First, it must be noted that the early evidence for the gloss is *strictly Western*. Indeed, it appears to be the predominant text in the West and is found as early as Tertullian (ca. 200) in North Africa and in the Codex Vercellensis (a; 4th c.) in Italy. The only other 'early' evidence is from the Diatessaron, which has clear affinities with the Western text.

214

The earliest Greek evidence for the addition is to be found in the homilies on John by Chrysostom, which were delivered around 391. It is often asserted that Didymus (d. 398) also knew the reading, but this is not quite accurate. It is clear from *de Trinitate* 2.14 that Didymus knew the *tradition* about the angel. But it seems equally clear that he was not acquainted with the actual text of the tradition, for there is not a single verbal correspondence to John 5:4 in his sentence. Furthermore, he says the water was stirred by the angel *once a year!* That is a far cry from the *κατὰ καιρὸν* of the text.

Similarly, it is likely that Amphilochius of Iconium (d. post 394) also knew the tradition, since he refers to an *angel* who *ἐσάλευσεν* the water.<sup>15</sup> But again such language gives little confidence that he had this verse in his text of John. The lack of precise verbal correspondence is especially relevant in his case, because his homily is on John 5:19, and he picks up the narrative at 5:1. Although he does not cite every verse along the way, the *language* of his references and allusions is in every other case very close to the Johannine text.

The earliest Greek *manuscript* to have 5:4 is Codex Alexandrinus (although it has failed to pick up 5:3b). From the ninth century on it is found in almost all the Greek evidence, which by then of course was

<sup>15</sup> See *homilia in John 5:19*. (C. Datema, editor, *Amphilochii Iconiensis Opera*, in *Corpus Christianorum Graecorum* 3 (Leuven: University Press, 1978, 176).



limited to the Byzantine Church. Early evidence for this verse in the Eastern Church, therefore, simply does not exist.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, the evidence against it is not only early, but far more diverse and widespread than Hodges allows. It is the only reading known in Egypt, with the possible exception of Cyril of Alexandria, where the verse is found in the *lemma* of his commentary, but is not cited in the commentary itself.<sup>15</sup>

This text is also known very early in Syria in the form of the Old Syriac version. Although Hodges doubts the antiquity of this version he does so against the conclusions of most Syriac scholars.<sup>16</sup> In any case, the Old Syriac is early evidence from Syria for a text without John 5:4 in a manuscript that has *no* significant textual relatedness to Egypt, except in those several instances where it agrees with the Egyptian tradition simply because both are early representatives of the original text over against the later Byzantine.

This reading also has substantial Western support in the form of Codex D and the Old Latin *q*. Codex D, despite its being a fifth/sixth century manuscript, is the major *Greek* witness to the text that circulated very early in the East. Where it does *not* reflect the early Western text, it has generally been influenced by a later textual tradition. Here we have evidence quite unrelated to Egypt *in a direct way* for the early circulation of a text of John without 5:4 in the same area where early texts that have it are also circulating.

215

The other two Old Latin manuscripts (*f* and *l*) without v.4 were heavily influenced by the Vulgate and therefore add their substantial weight to the fact that the original Vulgate did not have verse 4.<sup>17</sup> In fact it is nearly impossible to account for the Vulgate evidence if verse 4 were in Jerome's original. The *addition* of this verse to any number of Vulgate manuscripts is totally explicable, given its widespread presence in the Old Latin tradition, plus the initial difficulty the Vulgate had in gaining acceptance. The fact that it was *added* to the Vulgate is con-

<sup>14</sup> The Diatessaron, which influenced later Syriac traditions, is basically 'Western', even though it found its greatest response in the East.

<sup>15</sup> *Jo.* 2.5 (Pusey 3, 304). Following v.7 (p.307) Cyril does allude to the tradition, but he mentions 'angels' in the plural and seems to reflect the 'once a year' tradition known to Didymus, specifying the angels to come to the pool on the Day of Pentecost. Again, there is nothing in his *language* that gives one confidence that he actually knew a text of *John* with this verse.

The few and late Coptic Mss. that have 5:4 have all clearly been influenced by later texts. The original Coptic versions themselves know nothing of this reading.

<sup>16</sup> *Art. cit.*, 31, n.18. See B. M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1977), 47-48.

<sup>17</sup> Hodges (28, n.10) wishes to leave doubts on this matter as well; but again he does so without evidence and over against the clear force of the data.

firmed by the fact that *three different recensions* can be found in the Vulgate manuscripts, each of which follows differing expressions of the Old Latin! On the other hand, if verse 4 *were* original to the Vulgate, several *independent omissions* are required (in the Irish Codex Dublinensis, the Italian Codex Harleianus, and some earlier manuscripts that influenced *f* and *h*). Such widespread omissions in the early medieval period, allegedly influenced by Egyptian texts, are nearly impossible to account for.

But the evidence from the Vulgate against verse 4 is probably not Western itself. Since the Vulgate is a *revision* of the Old Latin on the basis of Greek manuscripts available to Jerome in the environs of Bethlehem, and since the Old Latin tradition generally contained this verse, Jerome becomes strong evidence *outside of Egypt* for Greek manuscripts which lacked the verse. Jerome seems scarcely ever to have adopted a reading only from the Old Latin without support from his Greek manuscripts. We may deduce, therefore, that John 5:4 was in *none* of the Greek witnesses to which Jerome had access.

216 Such a deduction is strongly supported from Jerome's older contemporary, Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386), who has an extant homily on the story of the healing of the invalid in John 5. It is certain from Cyril's homily that he knew nothing of a text with the gloss in it.<sup>18</sup> Although Jerusalem is close to Egypt, Cyril's New Testament text shows affinities not with Egypt, but with other evidence from Palestine during the fourth century.<sup>19</sup> It is clear from Origen's evidence that a text similar to Cyril's existed in Caesarea *before* he got there (ca. 232) and that he was influenced by this kind of text in his later writings,<sup>20</sup> whereas Origen's own Egyptian text, which has been proven to have accompanied him to Caesarea,<sup>21</sup> does *not* appear to have had further influence in that area.

There is one further piece of significant Eastern, but non-Egyptian evidence for the text that lacks verse 4. An early homily on the feast of Mid-Pentecost, which was attributed both to Chrysostom and Amphilo-chius, is almost certainly the work of neither. This has been demonstrated recently by C. Datema in his critical edition of the works of

---

<sup>18</sup> See J. Rupp, *Cyrilli Opera* (Munich, 1860), II, 408.

<sup>19</sup> See J. Harold Greenlee, *The Gospel Text of Cyril of Jerusalem, Studies and Documents* 17 (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1955).

<sup>20</sup> This is especially true of his text of Mark and Matthew. See K. Lake, R. P. Blake, and Silva New, 'The Caesarean Text of the Gospel of Mark', *Harvard Theological Review* 21 (1928), 259-77; K. W. Kim, 'The Matthean Text of Origen in his *Commentary on Matthew*', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 68 (1949) 125-39.

<sup>21</sup> See my study of 'The Text of John and Mark in the Writings of Chrysostom', *New Testament Studies* 26 (1971-80), 525-547.

Amphilochius.<sup>22</sup> A check of the New Testament text in this homily against the text in the genuine works of Amphilochius has further corroborated Datema's conclusion. Datema dates this homily at the end of the sixth century. The author seems to have come from Asia Minor, and his New Testament text is early Byzantine, very much like that of the Cappadocian Fathers. However in a long citation of John 5:1-6 he was using a Greek text with neither 3b nor 4, and there is no hint in his comments that he even knew of the tradition about the angel. Such a text, therefore, continued to exist in Asia Minor alongside that known by Chrysostom.

All of this evidence together indicates that not only was the text without John 5:4 very early in the East, but it also is the only text found in all the extant evidence from disparate parts of the East *before* Chrysostom — except for the Diatessaron, which came from the West, and in turn influenced the later Syriac versions.

#### CONCLUSIONS

We may rightly conclude that the confidence with which New Testament scholarship has almost unanimously rejected both 5:3b and 5:4 is well-founded. Hodges' explanation as to how a deletion of this kind may have taken place does not appear to be an adequate reading of the evidence from Tertullian nor from all the other extant second century Christian literature. Given the love of angels found everywhere in early Christian piety, it is easy to account for the addition of the prevailing superstition about the pool to texts of the Gospel of John, but it still remains a singular mystery as to why anyone in the second century would have rejected it. In any case there are no *known* historical reasons for such a thing.

217

Furthermore, the fact that there is such early and widespread evidence for a text of John without 5:4, among witnesses with no *direct* textual relatedness, suggests that the 'omission' would have to have been made more than once, a possibility that seems most highly improbable. Since the passage is so thoroughly non-Johannine in style and language, we may confidently regard both additions as having had no place in the Johannine original.

#### A THEOLOGICAL POSTSCRIPT

Although this is not a part of the investigation *per se*, one might add that this is a passage one gladly gives up for theological reasons. And it

<sup>22</sup> Datema, *op. cit.*, xx-xxi.

is not antipathy towards angels nor doubts about the miraculous that is involved. Rather, on the one hand, the idea of an angel giving healing properties to water has all the earmarks of ancient superstition, rather than a New Testament view of the miraculous; on the other hand, the view of God presented in this particular superstition seems to stand over against a biblical view of God.

There is a kind of capriciousness to 'grace' that allows only one person to be healed, and only the first one into the pool at that. It is no surprise that the invalid whom Jesus cured had lain there 38 years. His condition was such that he could never have been the first one into the pool. One wonders how this can be grace that loads all the advantages toward the one who is least sick, and thus most able to jump into the pool, while month after month, year after year, those who need it most must lose hope of ever being made whole. One can gladly affirm that such an account is no part of the inspired original.