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A STUDY IN ST. JOHN XXI.

THIS chapter is an appendix to the Gospel ; in this there is a general agreement ; beyond it, there is a large field open to the opinions of different scholars, and some of these opinions have an important bearing not only on the chapter itself, but on the whole Johannine problem, and its relation to other problems in the New Testament.

The style presents certain difficulties. On the one hand, there are distinct points of agreement with the Johannine phrases in the Gospel. Among these are the words :— λέγει οὖν (v. 5), ὡς ἀπὸ (v. 8), ὀψάριον (v. 9), πάλιν δεύτερον (v. 12), ἀμήν ἀμήν (v. 18), τοῦτο δὲ εἶπεν σημαίνων (v. 19), περὶ τούτων and ταῦτα (v. 24) in their special relation to the word of witness. These points of contact are noted by Alford and are among the grounds on which he assigns the chapter to John himself : “ On the whole, I am persuaded that in this chapter we have a fragment, both authentic and genuine, added, for reasons apparent on the face of it, by the Apostle himself, bearing evidence of his hand, but in a ‘ second manner ’—a later style.”¹

But there are other phrases which show points of difference. The ἐφανέρωσεν ἑαυτόν is mainly used of our Lord’s appearances by the author of St. Mark xvi. 12, 14, where it occurs in the passive. This word sums up the Resurrection Life in the Epistle of Barnabas² : διὸ καὶ ἄγομεν τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ὀγδόην εἰς εὐφροσύνην, ἐν ἣ καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνέστη ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ φανερωθεὶς ἀνέβη εἰς οὐρανοῦς. It would seem to be a sub-apostolic expression for the events of the Resurrection Life, belonging to the first half of the second century.³ The conclusion of St. Mark has been ascribed on Armenian

¹ Alford, *Gk. Test.*, vol. iv., p. 922.

² Barn., *Ep.* xv. 9.

³ The Epistle of Barnabas is dated c. 130 by Harnack (*Chr.* i. 427).

tradition¹ to the presbyter Aristion, one of the disciples of the Lord at this period. This phrase has, therefore, analogies with the literature of the subapostolic age.

The use of *ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης* (v. 1) contrasts with the Johannine use of *ἐπὶ* with the dative (iv. 6, v. 2). The phrase "*οἱ τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου*" occurs nowhere else in the Gospel. It is derived from the Synoptic Gospels. *τολμᾶν* and *ἐξετάζειν* are absent from St. John. The latter word only occurs in St. Matthew.

There is a reminiscence of the Synoptic phrase in St. Matthew xxii. 46, "*οὐδὲ ἐτόλμησέν τις . . . ἐπερωτῆσαι*. The expression *τοὺς ἀδελφούς* has no parallel in the phraseology of the Four Gospels. It has high Apostolic authority, and was a favourite expression of the Church in the second and third centuries.²

The argument from style does not therefore go very far. It is on the whole Johannine, with some few points of difference which show a different hand. It is almost certainly the work of one who was a master in the Johannine thought and style, and yet probably not to be identified with the writer of the Gospel.

The arguments from the contents of the chapter are more far-reaching. But even these are to some extent determined by the weight attached to the conservative or the critical standpoint from which they may be examined. The conservative view is tenable, that St. John, having completed the Gospel, wrote this appendix to describe the circumstances leading up to the solemn charge to St. Peter, and the prophecy concerning the manner of his death. At the same time it was an opportunity for denying the strange story concerning himself. Westcott indeed regards this as the actual motive of the appendix: "The occasion

¹ Conybeare, *EXPOSITOR*, 1893, 2, pp. 241-254.

² Harnack, *Mission.*, p. 290.

of the addition is probably to be found in the circulation of the saying of the Lord as to St. John (xxi. 23). The clear exposition of this saying carried with it naturally a recital of the circumstances under which it was spoken.”¹ But this seems to reverse the importance of the incident. The central feature of the chapter is the pastoral charge to St. Peter. The fishing leads up to it, the reference to St. John flows off from it. What has been said of the second half of the chapter seems certainly true of the whole: “The purpose of the second half of the chapter is to bring the dignity of Peter into somewhat greater prominence than it had received in the Gospel. The unnamed disciple indeed is always placed even higher than he; but the purpose of rehabilitating Peter is plain. This circumstance also makes against the identity of the author of this chapter with the author of the rest of the book.”²

This purpose seems to be strengthened by the character of the narrative. St. John, according to general testimony, is referred to again and again in the Gospel as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”: *ὁ μαθητῆς ἐκεῖνος ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς*. This phrase occurs not only in xxi. 7, 20, but in xiii. 23, xix. 26. In xx. 2 the phrase is: *ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς*. Is it therefore not probable that the test of love applied to St. Peter in the three-fold question: “*ἀγαπᾷς με; ἀγαπᾷς με; φιλεῖς με;*” is closely connected with this traditional prerogative of St. John. It is this prerogative which in the Gospel gives the pre-eminence to St. John in the Apostolic body. Without diminishing this prerogative, the writer of this chapter gives St. Peter a share in this same prerogative, and thereby raises him up to the same level as St. John. The answers given by St. Peter give evidence to the reality and the intensity of his love, and consequently

¹ Westcott, *St. John ad loc.*, chap. xxi.

² *Encycl. Bibl.* p. 2543.

to his special fitness for the great charge conferred upon him. Such a desire to bring St. Peter to at least a level with St. John would be strong in any Church in Asia which had inherited or assimilated strong Petrine traditions.

It has been suggested that the Montanist Churches in Phrygia recognized such a pre-eminence in St. Peter.¹ These Churches were largely Jewish. It was in the neighbourhood of the Jewish centres of population—Eumeneia, Apameia, Alcmeneia, that the centres of the Montanist movement are found. “Pepouza lies to the west of Eumeneia; Hierapolis and Otrous lie to the north-east of Eumeneia, higher up the Glaucus river; Ardeban, the birthplace of Montanus, was in Phrygian Mysia, and is identified by Ramsay with Kallataba, west of Pepouza.”² It was at Pepouza that the New Jerusalem was founded as the centre of a new religious movement. It was in Phrygia that St. Paul criticized the proneness of the Galatians to Judaizing influences. It is there that he speaks of St. Peter as entrusted with the Apostleship of the Circumcision (Gal. ii. 8). The Christian Jews of Phrygia would therefore be quick to recognize the apostolic authority of St. Peter, and the more so if, on other grounds, they were being treated as separatist churches. It is for this reason that there are grounds for thinking that Montanism was in fact a Jewish-Christian reaction against the Gentile Christianity of the Church. It has been already suggested that the two Epistles of St. Peter in their present shape belong to the Montanist circle of Themison of Pepouza.³ Is the appendix to the Gospel of St. John an earlier example of the same desire to give prominence to the Apostle of the Circumcision?

There are reasons for thinking that this is so. It has

¹ EXPOSITOR, July 1903, p. 59.

² Ibid., p. 58.

³ EXPOSITOR, July 1903, pp. 40-62; May 1904, 369-392.

been said that "the Fourth Gospel shows an indubitable contact with Montanism in the idea of the Paraclete."¹ This idea is further developed in Montanism than in the Gospel. The rise of Montanism is placed in the year 156. The new prophecy gave a new impulse to the study of the Johannine writings, and this in its turn brought about the attack not only on the Montanists but on the genuineness of the Johannine writings by the Alogoi c. 165.² Harnack remarks: "The Alogoi arose in opposition to the Montanists. Can it be that about the year 175-180 Catholic Christians began their attack on the Johannine writing?"³ The Montanists appear therefore as the upholders of the Johannine traditions. The Church even in Rome had its doubts. Gaius of Rome was an orthodox writer of very great learning.⁴ He wrote a dialogue against Proclus a Montanist. He also attacked the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel. On this occasion Hippolytus, himself perhaps a bishop with Montanist affinities, stood up in defence of St. John. This was about the year 222.⁵ So widespread was the hesitation of the Church as to the authority of the Gospel, perhaps in part due to the favour shown it by the Montanists, that a prominent writer of the Roman Church as late as the first quarter of the third century could be reckoned among its critics and opponents.

Has chapter xxi. of the Gospel any reference to this controversy? Is there anything in it which would imply that it was due to the work of some Montanist writer not only to give authority to the pre-eminence held by St. Peter in the Montanist Church, but also to strengthen the witness in favour of the genuineness of the Gospel. The Montanists

¹ *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 2551.

² *Harn. Chron.* i. 379.

³ *Ibid.* note.

⁴ *Eus. H.E.* ii. 25. 6, vi. 20. 3.

⁵ *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 1824.

appear between 156 and 225 as the defenders of the Gospel. Is it not probable that they would issue some form of attestation to strengthen its position in the Church ?

The Montanists were noted for their boldness in prophecy, and Themison is distinctly accused of writing, "in imitation of the Apostle, a certain catholic epistle to instruct those whose faith was better than his own, contending for words of empty sound, and blaspheming against the Lord and the Apostles and the Holy Church."¹ This charge is coloured by the strong bias of the anti-Montanist writer. But it proves that the Montanists put little restraint on their boldness in the vindication of their spiritual privileges. Reasons have been given in a former paper² to show that the Epistles of St. Peter may be regarded as catholic epistles of Themison. If they were bold enough to write in imitation of the Apostles, if they boldly dramatized the eye-witness of St. Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration (2 Pet. i. 17), they would not hesitate to do the same with regard to the fishing of St. Peter.

The prophecy on the martyrdom of St. Peter in *v.* 18 is thus an example of their practice of prophecy, and also of their boldness in dramatizing past events. It is the same in reference to the early belief that St. John would not die. Both are referred to, one as a martyrdom known to all (*v.* 19), the other as a rumour which needed contradiction (*v.* 23). And it has already been said that no stronger claim could be made on behalf of St. Peter than that involved in the three-fold test of love which brings the love of St. Peter on a level with the love of St. John.

Is it an accident that the Apostolic body is represented not as a group of twelve, but of seven ? Papias in giving his authority for the facts of our Lord's life gives the names

¹ *Apollonius ap. Eus.* *v.* 18. 5.

² *EXPOSITOR*, July 1903 ; May 1904.

of seven of the elders, and two of the disciples of the Lord. He allows that there was more than seven, but it is only seven whom he mentions by name. Were these seven identical in the list of St. John xxi. and in that of Papias? In St. John xxi. 2 the names are Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others. In Papias¹ the names are: Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John, and Matthew. Resch identifies Nathanael with Matthew.² Are the two unnamed Apostles in this chapter Andrew and Philip? Such an identification agrees with the association of these two names in St. John xii. 22, and perhaps also in St. John i. 35-40.

The seven Apostles hold a prominent position in the Johannine Gospel, with the one exception of St. James. And early Church tradition represents their activity in the Churches of Asia Minor, and the countries adjacent to it.

The opening verse of the First Epistle of St. Peter is the earliest testimony, probably about the year 180,³ of the interest of St. Peter in the Church of Asia Minor. Origen says that "Peter seems to have preached to the Jews of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, and Asia."⁴ Edessa is the earliest field of the missionary labours of St. Thomas. Ambrose gives Persia as the missionary sphere of St. Matthew.⁵ St. John is associated with Asia. St. James, about whom the Gospel is silent, died before the Apostles were separated. St. Andrew is regarded as the Apostle of the Scythians; St. Philip, who in the early legends is identified with the Evangelist, is found throughout

¹ Pap. *Fragm.* iii. 4, ap. Patr. Ap. op. Gebh. Harn. Zahn, i.

² Resch. *Agrapha*, vol. iii. p. 829.

³ EXPOSITOR, July 1903, p. 61.

⁴ Comm. in Gen. *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 4590.

⁵ S. Ambr. *in Ps.* xxv. 21.

Asia. These seven Apostles may therefore be regarded as the founders of the Churches of the nations immediately in touch with Phrygia.

This mission to the Gentiles is represented by the Fishing of the Seven. The narrative seems to be based on that of the Fishing of St. Peter in St. Luke v. 1-11, with this significant touch representing the progress and success of the Church: "for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken." The earliest explanation of the mystic number 153 is found in Cyril of Alexandria. The 100 represents the fulness of the Gentiles, the 50 the remnant of Israel, the 3 the Holy Trinity to whose glory all alike are gathered.¹ Another interpretation of the same era is that of Augustine. 10 is the number of the law, 7 of the Spirit; thus 17 represents the fulness of the revelation of life. And the sum of the numbers from 1 to 17 is 153. Perhaps the latter, though more complicated, may be the true one, as representing a closer knowledge of the value of numbers. They probably represent some earlier tradition.

There is one other link which is of importance in this argument. The words of 2 Peter i. 14, "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me," seem to point to the prophecy in St. John xxi. 18, 19. If the Second Epistle of Peter is the Catholic Epistle of the Montanist Themison, the reference to this prophecy in St. John xxi. 18, 19 strengthens the suggestion that it was a Montanist addition to the Gospel.

The last two verses are the attestation of the Church. The words, "We know that his testimony is true," may refer to the whole Gospel; but the special reference is to the love of St. Peter and the great charge committed to his care. It is also a challenge to the adverse criticism of the Alogoi, who were at this period (160-170) depreciating the

¹ Cyr. Alex. *in loc. ap.* Westcott, *St. John*.

value of the Gospel, and attributing it to the heretic Cerinthus.

The theory of a Montanist origin for this chapter is only inconsistent with the conservative view, that it is by the hand of the writer of the Gospel, and that the writer is St. John himself. This was the position taken by Alford and Westcott, and it has been defended by the Warden of Keble in a recent article on "the historical character of the Fourth Gospel."¹ The conservative position is defended also by Dr. Drummond, Mr. Richmond, and in part by Dr. Lindsay.

But it agrees with either of the leading critical views of the origin of the Fourth Gospel. The moderate view is represented by the position of Harnack, who regards it as "the Gospel of John the Presbyter according to John the son of Zebedee,"² and dates it between 80 and 110. The advanced view is that of Professor Schmiedel. He fails to find any definite trace of the Gospel before 140. He thinks it possible to do justice therefore to its relations to early Gnosticism, though it cannot have been intended to meet the later developments of Valentinian Gnosticism.³ He therefore is tempted to find in *v.* 43 a reference to the rebellion of Barchochba: "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." This estimate of the permanent value of the Gospel and First Epistle is the estimate which the Montanists set on it, and the reason why they stood up in defence of it, even against the criticism of some who were in full communion with the Church. "Both writings rendered an extraordinary service to their time by absorbing into Christianity as they did every element in the great spiritual tendencies of the age that was

¹ *Interpreter*, July 1907, p. 356.

² *Harn. Chron.* i. p. 677.

³ *Encycl. Bibl.*, pp. 2550-2557.

capable of being assimilated, and thus disarming their possible antagonism . . . Of supreme value, not only for that age, but for all time, is the full assurance of its faith in the truth of Christianity (iv. 14, viii. 31-32, 51, xvi. 33, 1. 7. v. 4). . . . Truth is not only seen ; it is done (iii. 21, 1. 7. i. 6). . . . The Johannine theology can claim the most universal and absolute acceptance for the highest which it has to offer, the place which it assigns to love. This is the central idea of the first Epistle (ii. 7-8, iii. 23, iv. 7-21), and equally central is the saying of the Gospel in xiii. 34-35, xv. 12.”¹ And Dr. Lock also has a final word for those who are not able to accept the historical character of the Gospel : “ Yet if others cannot feel this confidence that they are in the presence of historic fact, still much remains, much that is spiritual, central, and vital, much of essential truth that comes with the sanction of the Church.”²

It was this essential truth, this spiritual element in the Gospel, which, having been the outcome of all that was best in the tradition and theology of the Johannine Churches of Asia, was taken up by the Montanists as being the truest expression of their own belief in the Person of Christ, and the sternness of His moral character, and attested by them in this appendix to the Gospel.

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¹ *Encycl. Bibl.* 2558-2560.

² *Interpreter*, July, 1907, p. 370.