

INTERPOLATIONS IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

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IT is taken for granted that 7 53—8 11, and 5 4 do not belong to the true text of the Fourth Gospel and no attempt will be made in this essay to prove it. It would also be taken for granted that 21, does not belong to the main part of the Gospel if it were not for two facts. The first is that it is a thesis the truth of which many scholars still deny. The second is that the present writer is of the opinion that the person or persons responsible for the authorship of chapter 21 are also responsible for editing chapters 1—20. But before we can collect the arguments in favor of the second opinion, we must show that we have reasons for holding the first. Our first task therefore is to prove that chap. 21 comes from a different hand than do chapters 1—20.

The criticism which must be brought to bear upon this chapter is solely internal. There is not a single manuscript in existence which does not contain it. We will examine the chapter from three points of view, (1) connection, (2) style and vocabulary, (3) contents.

(1) *Connection.* After reading chap. 20 30—31, it seems strange that the same author should go on to describe another post-resurrection appearance. The verses are a grand finale to the Gospel; the seven signs are complete, Jesus has appeared three times to the disciples (to Mary Magdalene, to the Eleven without Thomas, and to the Eleven with Thomas), he has given his commission to the disciples (20 21—23), he has given them the physical proofs of his resurrection (20 20—27), the disciples have

clearly recognised him (20 25), and then we are given the conclusion which states that the whole book has been written that the readers may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing, they may have life in his name. After that, there seems nothing more to add. Chap. 21 comes as a decided anti-climax.

(2) *Style and Vocabulary.* If 21 was not written by the same man who wrote the main part of the Gospel, it was certainly written by one who had saturated himself in its thought and language. And yet there are minute signs that another hand has been at work. *ἐφάνερωσεν ἑαυτόν* in verse 1 is unusual to describe a resurrection appearance. The verb is not used in Mt or Lk. We have the passive for a post-resurrection appearance in Jn 21 14, and the reflexive in this verse and also in the spurious ending of Mk. The word *φανερώω* is itself a favorite one of Jn. but it is used generally of the self-manifestation of Jesus. *ἐπί* with the genitive *τῆς θαλάσσης* is entirely different in meaning from the same words in 6 19. The name of the sea, Tiberias, does not occur anywhere else in the Gospels except here and in 6 1, but the two references are distinct: 6 1 reads *τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Γαλιλαίας τῆς Τιβερίδος*, and 22 1 reads *τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Τιβερίδος*. In the first reference, both the earlier name and the name by which the lake came to be called in the second century are used; in 21 1, only the latter is used. (This may be noted as a minor proof of the comparative lateness of the Gospel.) Of course, this distinction does not necessarily prove difference of authorship, but it may be that *τῆς Γαλιλαίας* has been introduced into 6 1 by an editor as an explanatory note. || *οἱ τοῦ Σεβεδαίου* in verse 2 is quite unique in Jn. There is a marked enumeration of disciples here, which is alien to the general method of the author. Jn particularises his characters, but generally he does not name those who are not to form part of the dialogue. And when he does particularise them, he caricatures them. That is, he makes them into types, representing certain classes of people. "Jn makes the fishing an extemporised affair. Throughout his Gospel he nowhere describes the occupation of the apostles, whether fishermen, taxgatherer or anything else." (Abbott, *Proclamation*, p. 47). || *παιδιά* in verse 3

deserves mention. The disciples are nowhere else addressed by this word, but *τεκνία* is used in 23 33. Both *παιδιά* and *τεκνία* are used in I Jn. || *προσφύγιον* is *ἄπαξ λεγόμενον*. || *ἀπεκρίθησαν* is used in an unusual way. It is generally used in conjunction with some form of *λέγειν*. Yet the use of *ἀποκρίνεσθαι* by itself is more common in Jn than in the Synoptics. This verse is almost exactly like 1 21. || *ἰσχύειν* in verse 6 is a word found nowhere else in Jn. *ἀπό* with genitive in causal sense is found only here. || *ἐπειδύτην* in verse 7 is found only here in the New Testament. In verse 8, *τῷ πλοιαρίῳ ἦλθον* without any preposition and *τὸ δίκτυον τῶν ἰχθύων* are both strange. || *ἀπό* is used in a partitive sense in verse 10; *ἐκ* is used elsewhere in Jn for this. || *τολμάω* in verse 12 is not used elsewhere in Jn. It is used, however, only four times in the Synoptics. || *ἐγερθεῖς* in verse 14 has been noted by Moffatt and Bacon as a mark of difference between this chapter and the rest of the Gospel. Yet *ἀναστῆναι* and *ἐγερθῆναι* are both used in reference to the resurrection of Jesus in Mk, and in Mk 12 25, *ἀναστῆναι* refers to the general resurrection. In Lk, both words are used for the resurrection of Jesus, and *ἀναστῆναι* for the general resurrection in 16 31. Paul generally has *ἐγερθῆναι*, but in I Thess. 4 14, he has *ἀνέστη* for the resurrection of Jesus, and in I Thess. 4 16, he has *ἀναστήσονται* for the general resurrection. So that it cannot be said that the use of the one or the other verb can be cited in order to find a difference of authorship or date. *πλέον τούτων* seems to refer to Mt 26 33; there is no ground for it in the Fourth Gospel. Also the phrase is not quite Johannine. To judge by 4 1, Jn would have used *πλέον ἢ οἱ τοιοῦτοι*. || In verse 20, the reference to the disciple whom Jesus loved as *ὁς καὶ ἀνέπεσεν κ. τ. λ.* is slightly unnatural from one who had described the act itself, but not so unnatural from an editor who wished to define more minutely the disciple referred to. || In verse 25, *οἶμαι* is found. This is common in classical Greek in the same sense, but is found nowhere else in the New Testament.

It seems to me that these alone are the differences which can be fairly brought up. There are many more forms of expression which are found nowhere else in this Gospel, but they can easily be explained by the difference of subject matter.

(3) *Contents.* There are three distinct sections in this chapter, the one referring to the miraculous draught of fishes; the second, to the rehabilitation of Peter; and the third is the editorial note in verses 24 and 25. The first section has difficulties of its own. It reveals the disciples in a state of doubt and despondency, with no consciousness at all of having met the risen Jesus or of having received a high commission from him. They are listless and not active as we should have expected. They are slow in recognising Jesus, which is strange when we remember that, according to the preceding chapter, Jesus had revealed himself plainly to them. This points to the fact that the story of 21 1-14 is of the first of a Galilean series of appearances. Perhaps the author knew of two distinct lines of tradition about the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, the one locating them in Galilee and the other in Jerusalem, and wished to make up what was lacking in the preceding chapter. There are two important theories with regard to the origin of 21 1-14. (a) The first theory associates it with the lost ending of Mk's Gospel, either as an edited account of that lost ending or as a variant of it. (So Rohrbach, *Der Schluss des Marcusevangeliums*, followed by Harnack, *Chronologie*, I, p. 696 f.) It is clear from Mk 16 7. that, if the conclusion were ever found, it would contain the account of a Galilean appearance, in which Peter, perhaps because of his denial, would have a peculiar part to play. It by no means follows that Peter would have the only or most important part to play in that appearance, as the prediction is that Jesus would appear to others as well as to Peter, but it does follow that Peter would have some particular intercourse with Jesus, because of the emphatic way in which his name is added to *τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ*. Now the last chapter of Jn agrees with this almost exactly. There are other disciples there, and Peter does have that particular business with Jesus of which Mk seems to speak. And yet the conclusion that Jn 21 1-14 represents the lost ending of Mk is by no means conclusive. For (1) Peter is not the only one or even the first to see Jesus; (2) it is not the eleven or the disciples as a whole who are there, but only a definite number of them; (3) the connecting link between Mk's original ending and Jn is generally found in the Gospel of Peter. There we are told that the disciples left

Jerusalem, without having heard apparently that Jesus was risen, and the Gospel breaks off at the beginning of a fishing scene. From this it is inferred, because of the ignorance of the disciples, and because of the special mention of Peter in Mk 16 7, that the fishing scene in Jn and the Gospel of Peter both embody the lost ending of Mk. But the appearance 'according to Jn, is to seven disciples only, and therefore is not the fulfilment of the prediction in Mk. Also the Gospel of Peter may have taken the fishing scene from Jn quite as well as that both should have taken it from Mk. It seems conclusive that the author of the Gospel of Peter knew all four canonical Gospels. (4) Schmiedel and Moffatt find a fourth argument in the fact that Mk and Mt practically agree until they come to the spurious ending in Mk, and they say that it is therefore natural to suppose that Mt 28 embodies the proper ending of Mk rather than Jn 21. This argument is not conclusive. It is quite conceivable that Mt did not use Mk until after the ending had been lost. This possibility is made into a probability when we read the ending of Mt, which is totally unlike the Markan style. It is a mere orthodox catalogue, without anything individual or graphic. Above all, it is ecclesiastical and theologising.

(b) The second hypothesis is that Jn 21 1-14 is a story based upon the tradition embodied in Lk 5 1-11. Lk substitutes for Mk 1 16-20 a call which puts Peter first (a strange order), and which makes the power of Jesus the occasion for the confession of sin on the part of Peter and the recognition of the distinctiveness of Jesus, all of which is made to lead up to the appointment of Peter to the apostolic office. That there is some point of contact between the traditions of Lk and Jn is clear. The Gentile mission is plainly symbolised in both. There are vital differences between the stories of Lk and Jn, and the absence of linguistic likenesses between them goes to show that they were relying upon a common oral tradition which was not known to Mk and Mt. This common oral tradition seems to show itself in many other scenes relating to the latter part of the ministry of Jesus. The tradition centres round Jerusalem.

The rehabilitation of Peter is the second part of the concluding chapter, and it is clear that the incident is to be closely

connected with the preceding narrative regarding the draught of fishes. It is just possible that there were two separate stories floating about, one referring to a draught of fishes and the appointment of Peter, and the other referring to a post-resurrection appearance to Peter and the predictions referring to his death and that of the beloved disciple, and that these have been telescoped together. But it seems that the forgiveness of Peter is vital to the fishing scene. It is probable that the predictions are additions to the primitive tradition. It is rather unnatural to relate the story of the prediction of the death of the beloved disciple living until Jesus came, if that disciple were already dead. Jesus did not will that he should survive until the second coming. It is more natural that the story should be written about a man who was dead than that a man should write it in reference to his own future death. Besides, the teaching about the Parousia is similar to what we have in the Synoptics. It is not the kind of teaching that we generally have in the Fourth Gospel, in which the Parousia is treated spiritually as the coming of Christ or the Spirit in the life of the disciples and the church (cf. 14 2, 3, 18, 19).

The third section of this last chapter is simply the last two verses, 24 and 25. It is most unnatural that anyone who had written 20 30-31 should end his Gospel at 21 23. It is quite possible that he should have ended it at 21 24, verse 25 being an editorial addition. But it is equally plain that 21 24 does not come from the man who wrote the main part of the Gospel. Verses 24 and 25 must go together. "The 'we' of 24 includes the 'I' of 25, but excludes the 'he' of 24" (Zahn). Both 24 and 25 must be an addition not by one man but by a body of men, either the Ephesian or some other church or a group of apostles or disciples of the writer. There is practically no textual evidence for saying that the Gospel was ever published without 21 or even without 21 24-25. It may be therefore that the whole of chapter 21 comes from the same circle. It is almost a certainty that none of it comes from the author of chapters 1-20. It is absolutely certain that 21 24-25 comes from a group of men. It does not come from an unauthorised person, but is a supplement added to the Gospel not long after it was written and

probably before it was published, and in the same region where it originated.

We will now begin to look for interpolations in the main part of the Gospel. And the interpolations we look for will be those without any external evidence to support the hypothesis. For example *οὐ γὰρ συνχρῶνται Ἰουδαῖοι Σαμαρείταις* is held to be an interpolation. But we have external evidence for so regarding it. No attempt therefore will be made here to support the view.

(1) The first case I would point to is 5 28, 29. The reasons for regarding these verses as interpolated are: (a) They break the connection of verses 27 and 30, which naturally go together; (b) They are hardly compatible with 5 25; (c) They are alien to the main thought of the Gospel. The main thought of the Fourth Gospel on the question of judgment is clear. The resurrection of judgment, that is to say, the resurrection of the wicked, is nothing more than a deliverance of the wicked over to judgment. Eternal life is not a time conception, but an ethical and purely timeless one. In only a few passages does it retain a temporal meaning. In these, it refers to the future heavenly life (4 14 6 27 12 25). But in 5 28, 29, we have a totally unspiritual conception of the resurrection. *οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις* probably comes from Is 26 19.

(2) The references to the last day in 6 39, 40, 44, 54 are also probably interpolations. (So Wendt, Charles and Schmiedel.) The references are quite superfluous, they spoil and even contradict the context, and are against the point of view expressed in 5 24 8 51 11 25, which quite definitely maintains that eternal life is a gift enjoyed here and now by those who believe in Christ. We have this shown to us in chapter 11, where, as against the crude orthodoxy of Martha and the belief that her brother would rise again on the last day, Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life. Everyone who believes in me shall never die." The fact that all the four references to Christ raising the dead appear in the same context and nowhere else in this Gospel, the fact that they are entirely opposed to the spirit of the Gospel as a whole and are so like Synoptic teaching, points rather to interpolation by one who did not agree fully with the Johannine point of view than to the fact that a

writer like the author of this Gospel should, in one passage alone, fall back to such an extent into primitive ideas. Pfeleiderer (*Primitive Christianity*) objects to this, and says that the Gospel was written almost solely to attack Gnosticism and to mediate between the Synoptic and Gnostic views. This necessitates its taking over without modification certain primitive ideas. But this thesis cannot be carried through. It demands too late a date for the composition of the Gospel. The Gnosticism reflected in this Gospel is only incipient. Also the purpose of the Gospel is much more complex than that. Wernle also (*Beginnings of Christianity*, vol. II. p. 136, 137), makes the Gospel a mediation between primitive eschatology and its Hellenization. "He is really a representative of the old eschatology from first to last; only, as an apologist, he tried to meet the Greeks in this point as in many others, by endeavoring to adapt the Christian hope for the future to their own views." But when Wernle says that Jn 14 1-3 can scarcely mean anything else than that Jesus will fetch the Christians to God and will not himself live upon earth, we begin to suspect his point of view. 14 1-3 can hardly be interpreted by anything else but 14 17-21.

(3) An interpolation is probably to be found in 4 2, "and yet Jesus did not baptize, but his disciples." (So P. W. Schmidt, *Geschichte Jesu*. II. 92 and Wellhausen. *Evang. Joh.*, p. 20.) This is a clear contradiction of the preceding verse. The whole question of the rival baptisms of Jesus and John is difficult and obscure. John baptizes, though Christ has come and substituted the baptism of the Spirit for the baptism of water. The disciples of John are indignant at the success of Jesus, a success which John is said to have predicted. They do not recognise Jesus, though John had acclaimed him. Jesus baptizes with water, though his mission was to baptize with the Spirit. Here we have a clear case of the feeling of the Christian Church obtruding itself into the Gospel tradition. It is not enough to say *quod quis per alium fuit, id ipse fecisse dicitur*. That is only the harmonization of despair. It may be John's method to contradict the Synoptics, he may now and again be confused in his own thinking. But it would show unpardonable carelessness for an author to say one thing in one sentence, and give a clear

contradiction of it in the next. It is possible that the words arose in the form of a marginal note by a scribe to explain away a difficulty and that the words slipped into the text. Abbott (*Diat.* 1925) takes it as an anacoluthon due to a desire to make readers see the striking things at a glance and then gradually take in the rest. He refers to 1 15 and 20 18 as examples.

(4) Probable interpolations are 2 21, 22 7 39 12 33 and 18 9. Wendt marks these, not as interpolations, but as signs of a later writer using a Johannine source. We cannot now examine the whole theory. I take it to be wrong. But though the theory of Wendt may be wrong, some of his facts may be right. 2 21, 22 are certainly a poor explanation. What the words probably mean is, as Wendt and others say, "If you destroy the place of the worship of God, I, in the shortest space of time, will raise in renovated state that worship which you have abused." But the text then goes on to say that Jesus spoke thus of the temple of his body, and that, after his resurrection, the disciples remembered and understood. Pfeleiderer, following Jakobsen, says the story comes from Mk's account of the cleansing of the Temple, and Lk's story of 2 41-52, and that Jn 2 19 comes from the Gospel of the Hebrews, and he takes "body" as equivalent to the Christian church. Except for the first statement, which is probably right, this is all mere conjecture. The logion of Jesus was certainly enigmatical, but it would have been enigmatical to a hopeless extent had Jesus referred to his own physical body, or to the church as being, in the Pauline phrase, the body of Christ. It is doubtful whether the author of the Gospel would have so interpreted the church. The fact that the saying was brought up against Jesus at his trial shows that his hearers also understood him to speak of the destruction of the Temple, though they misunderstood the nature of the destruction. The comment of the Evangelist shows a misinterpretation of a spiritual utterance which is unusual. His method is to spiritualise a saying having reference to a physical event rather than to materialise what is meant to be symbolical.

8 39 shows the same kind of thing. Jesus is reported to have said, "He who believeth in me, as the Scripture saith, out of

his belly shall flow forth streams of living water". These words are a favorite passage for exegetical discussion, but the solution proposed by Dr. C. F. Burney (*Expositor*, Nov. 1920) seems to be the best. He takes the stop to be after ἐμέ and then ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμέ is part of the invitation of 7 37. (So E. W. Bullinger.) The passage quoted in 7 38 cannot be connected with any Old Testament reference. Dr. Burney takes the text to arise from a misunderstanding of מַעַיִן and מַיִן. When the verse is reconstructed, it reads, "He that thirsteth, let him come unto me, and let him drink that believeth on me. As the Scripture hath said, 'Rivers shall flow forth from the fountains of living waters!'" This can mean that Christ, the object of faith, would be the fountain, and we are thus saved the difficulty of explaining what is unique in John, the fact of a believer himself being a source of inspiration. If we accept Dr. Burney's view, we have a wide field of study opened up for us. To what extent is the Fourth Gospel dependent on Aramaic sources? These are more frequent probably than has yet been supposed. Such a source lies, it seems to me, behind the difficult phrase of 8 25. Dr. Briggs thought that our present Gospel was a translation of a Hebrew original. But the whole tone of the Gospel seems to militate against this. The final decision on the question of origin is not a linguistic one. Cheyne (*Enc. Bib.*, "Nathanael") also suggests, in one instance, a mistranslation of a Hebrew original. But to go back a little. The text says that this saying refers to the Spirit, "which was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." Now, whether we take Burney's reconstruction or not, the preceding verse most certainly does not mean that. Not only so, it limits the glorification of Jesus to his death and resurrection, which is alien to the thought of this Gospel. The whole life of Jesus was a glorification before men, and it was only the consummation of the glory which was given on the cross, cf. 12 28.

12 35 is another case of misinterpretation. Jesus says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth (ἐκ τῆς γῆς), will draw all men unto me". The text then goes on to say, "this he said, signifying by what death he was about to die". This corresponds to 18 32. The meaning of the verse is therefore that ὑψώσθαι refers in the mind of Jesus to the crucifixion. But the context,

which refers to the glorification of Christ in his life, the use of *ἐκ τῆς γῆς*, and the general meaning of *ὑψοῦσθαι* as equivalent to *δοξάζεσθαι* is against this interpretation. Moreover, we have exactly the same kind of sentence in 21 19 (the appendix), and the same kind of interpretation. Jesus is reported to have referred to Peter's manner of life, but the writer interprets it as referring to his manner of death. Finally, 18 32 seems to be peculiarly inappropriate. There is no trace in 18 31, that the crucifixion was in the mind of Jesus.

The fourth case of misunderstanding is in 17 12, which is wrongly interpreted in 18 9. What Jesus means is that he has preserved his disciples from spiritual assaults. What the writer takes him to mean is that he had preserved them from physical enemies. Lock, in his criticism of Wendt, disputes this as being a misunderstanding, and says the disciple in his old age, looking back upon the life of his Lord, lovingly sees in the care of Jesus at the betrayal an example of his usual attitude. This rests upon a belief in a certain authorship of the Gospel which needs careful examination. It seems obvious also that the four examples cited must go together.

When we look back upon them, we see signs of similarity. (1) They are the only cases in the genuine part of the Gospel where the author presumes to say what Jesus meant. The general method is to make Jesus interpret himself. (2) They are all cases in which an utterance of Jesus referring to timeless spiritual facts has been interpreted so as to refer to temporal events. (3) All reveal the mind of the man or men responsible for the appendix, with the material interpretation of the Parousia, and the attitude to death. The conclusion therefore is that the author of 21 21-23, interpolated 12 33 18 9 2 21, 22 7 39 and 18 32 into the Gospel. We are thus delivered from a great deal of contradiction and an equal amount of subtle exegesis.

There is one more instance of conjectural interpolation that I would mention. That is 19 35, *καὶ ὁ ἑωρακὸς μεμαρτύρηκεν, καὶ ἀληθινὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία, κακεῖνος οἶδεν ὅτι ἀληθῆ λέγει, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς πιστεύσητε*. Upon the explanation of this passage, we must enter rather fully. The reference of course is to the water and blood coming out of the side of Jesus. Many

have tried to prove that this could happen, but they do not seem to have met with much success. Moreover, if we remember the meaning of water and blood in this Gospel, there is no reason why we should try to prove it. In three words, we have Christian theology symbolised: the life freely given up to God and the water of baptism. The really difficult point is not the fact, but the attestation of the fact. What is meant by *ὁ ἑωρακός*? Is the author identifying himself with the eyewitness or distinguishing himself from him and referring to him as the authority for the statement? Nothing can be got out of the meaning of *ἐκεῖνος*. Schmiedel, noted as a grammarian, says, "The elaborate investigations that have been made on the question whether anyone can designate himself by *ἐκεῖνος* or not are not only not decisive as regards any secure grammatical results: they do not touch the kernel of the question at all". (*Enc. Bib.*, 2543). I take *ἐκεῖνος* to refer to the glorified Christ. We are saved thereby from bringing into the discussion a third man C who testifies to the truth of an event witnessed by B which is recorded by A. In spite of all the discussion to prove that *ἐκεῖνος* can refer to the writer, I remain unconvinced, for (1) to judge by the attitude in 1:14, whatever any other author would have done, the author of the Fourth Gospel would have spoken of himself in the first, and not in the third person; (2) it raises unnecessary suspicion for any man to assert that he is trustworthy; we instinctively disbelieve anyone who asserts so strongly that he is speaking the truth; (3) it is not the style of the author, or indeed of any author, to add such confirmation to the facts he relates.

On the other hand, to take *ὁ ἑωρακός* to refer to someone other than the author is equally difficult, for if we do not believe a man whom we do know, it is absurd to refer to a second whom we do not know. There is no point at all in such a reference.

But if we take 19:35 as an interpolation, many things are made plain. (a) The connection between 34 and 36 is much better, and the prophecy is brought into close contact with the event. If 35 comes from the author, it would be more suitable after 37 than after 34. (b) The statement in 35 is of the same kind that we have in 21:24, which we have seen comes from a different hand than the one that is responsible for chapters 1—20. (c) The

symbolism of water and blood is easy to misinterpret. It is difficult to believe that a man should testify to his own trustworthiness. It is not nearly so difficult to believe that an editor should testify to the author's trustworthiness. The author probably did not believe the water and blood to be anything but symbolic. The difficulty is that the editor's grasp of historic fact was clearer than his grasp of symbolism. He has taken the author to speak the truth historically. But he has met sceptics. Thus we can say that 19 35 comes from the same hand as 21 24, and means, "The man who has seen these things and testified to them by recording them in his book is speaking the truth. We know he is speaking the truth. And above all, Christ knows he is speaking the truth".

Thus, we have as a tentative reconstruction of the Gospel; (1) the Gospel itself, chapters 1—20, depicting the life of Jesus in the light of the Prologue; (2) the appendix, written before the Gospel was published, by someone unknown; but this second man did not merely add the appendix. He saw fit to edit the Gospel; (3) the last two verses, 21 24, 25 and the attestation of 19 35 come from a body of men to authenticate the whole Gospel.