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## 'WE KNOW THAT HIS TESTIMONY IS TRUE'

THESE words, which occur in the last verse but one of the Gospel of St John, have been explained in various ways, which may be summarized under three heads :

1. The view of many modern commentators, that the words are an attestation added to the Gospel by 'the Presbyters of Ephesus'.
2. The mediaeval view, that 'we know' is said by the writer himself in the plural so as to include others who attest his witness.
3. The view of the Greek Fathers and of the average reader, that 'we' means 'I'.

It would not be worth while to discriminate between these three interpretations, which have been held by critics of the highest reputation, were it not that careful study makes it quite clear that the first two are untenable and the third is certainly right.

### I.

Were the verses added by certain 'Presbyters'? For this view it may suffice to refer to Westcott, Calmes, Lagrange, and Streeter as representative adherents, though they differ in detail. Westcott thought the author was certainly still alive when the last two verses of the Gospel were added : 'they appear to be separate notes attached to the Gospel before its publication' by Ephesian elders, but the last verse, with its *οἶμαι*, may have been taken down from St John's own mouth. Père Calmes (1905) conversely teaches that c. xxi was a loose sheet by the author of the Gospel, and that it was tacked on, together with two additional verses, after his death.

One thing is, however, certain, that there is no MS evidence for the existence of the Gospel without c. xxi. It was therefore added before publication, including verse 24, with which we are dealing.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The weak evidence of v. 25 having been added after publication will be dealt with presently. I take it that we must consider it as absolutely certain that the Gospel was never circulated without c. xxi. Textual evidence is very sensitive to changes and additions in the case of works which had a large circulation at once. Even had ancient criticism suggested that the chapter was an addition, notes to that effect would have come down to us, as in the case of the last verse. A good parallel is the Rule of St Benedict where internal evidence shews that the end was originally intended to be after c. 66 ; but none of the MSS of the two widely differing recensions or of the later texts shew any trace of an omission of cc. 67-73 : therefore the first published edition from which all our varieties are derived included those chapters.

The verse is either by the author of the rest, or else it is an exact imitation of his style and vocabulary :

xxi 24: οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ μαθητὴς ὁ [καὶ] μαρτυρῶν περὶ τούτων καὶ [ὁ] γράψας ταῦτα, καὶ οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀληθὴς αὐτοῦ ἢ μαρτυρία ἐστίν.

+ καὶ B solms; ὁ γράψας N\*ACX etc. f. g vs, δ καὶ γράψας N<sup>a</sup> 4 33 69 122 122 c al; καὶ ὁ γρ. BD b q.

In this Gospel ἀπόστολος does not occur for 'apostle', and μαθητὴς is used either for 'apostle' or 'disciple'. It is the word used throughout for 'the beloved disciple', who is undoubtedly meant here. I shewed in this JOURNAL (Oct. 1928, pp. 16-23) that John, the son of Zebedee, is intended.

That ἐστιν occurs twice is unimportant; yet it is interesting to note how fond St John is of the copula: Matt. about 120, Mark 65, Luke over 100, John 168. It is therefore more than twice as frequent in John as in the Synoptists. In Romans we find about 39, in the short 1 John about 72!

For the important words a diagram will be helpful :

	Mt.	Mk.	Lk.	Acts.	Jo.	Epp. Jo.	Apoc.	Paul.	Hebr.
μαρτυρέω	1		1	11	33	10	4	8	8
μαρτύρομαι				1				3	
μαρτυρία		3	1	1	14	6	9	2	
μαρτύριον		3	3	2			1	5	1
ὁ μαρτυρῶν				1	3	2	1		
μάρτυς	2	2	1	13			5	9	2
οἶδα	24	22	24	20	81	16	12	103	3
οἶδαμεν	2	2	1	1	19	7		9	1
ἀληθής	1	1		1	14	3		4	
ἀληθινός			1		9	4	10	1	4

Note that the Gospel and Epistles do not use μαρτύρομαι or μαρτύριον or even μάρτυς. The 97 for οἶδα is remarkable, but the 26 for οἶδαμεν is more noticeable still. St Paul is very chary of using ἀληθής (but ἀλήθεια 43, against John 20, Epp. 19).

There are many partially parallel passages. I note merely that John uses μαρτυρέω περί 19 times; he uses μαρτυρία with ἀληθής ἐστιν 6 times in the Gospel and once in an Epistle. These expressions occur nowhere else in the N.T.

The striking parallels are these :

(a) John xix 35: καὶ ὁ ἑωρακὼς μεμαρτύρηκεν, καὶ ἀληθινὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία: καὶ ἐκεῖνος οἶδεν ὅτι ἀληθὴ λέγει, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς πιστεύητε.

(b) 1 John i 2, 4: καὶ ἑωράκαμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν . . . καὶ ταῦτα γράφομεν ὑμῖν.

(c) 1 John v 6: καὶ τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ μαρτυροῦν, ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια. ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες . . . εἰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαμβάνομεν, ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Θεοῦ μείζων ἐστίν . . .

(*d*) 3 John 11: Δημητρίω μεμαρτύρηται ὑπὸ πάντων καὶ ὑπὸ αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας· καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ μαρτυροῦμεν, καὶ οἶδας ὅτι ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν ἀληθὴς ἐστίν.

In (*b*) we have μαρτυροῦμεν with γράφομεν, and in (*c*) we have τὸ μαρτυροῦν and ἡ ἀλήθεια. But the real parallels are (*a*) and (*d*). In (*a*) we find not only the οἶδεν, but also the third person. In (*d*) we have οἶδας and the first person plural, and the end is word for word.

There are several possible explanations :

1. The elders of Ephesus imitated (*a*), and accidentally got close to (*b*). This is unlikely.
2. The elders of Ephesus consulted the Third Epistle and imitated it. This is equally unlikely.
3. The author wrote the words himself in the name of the elders of Ephesus. As St John has the habit of repeating his clichés again and again, it is scarcely reasonable to assume any other author for the verse.

If any of these three possibilities were accepted as a hypothesis, we should be assuming that the subject of οἶδαμεν is 'the elders of Ephesus', a supposition for which no proof or indication has been put forward in any commentary I have seen.

If we take the third possibility, it will appear that the elders refused to sign, after the author had written an attestation in their name. But in that case, would not the verse have been omitted when the book was published?

If, on the other hand, the elders composed the verse, they do not tell us the name of the writer, ὁ γράψας, and in fact the name John was obviously at the head of the book. They certainly identify ὁ γράψας with 'the disciple', 'the other disciple', 'the beloved disciple'. But then what conceivable reason can they have for adding 'we know that his testimony is true'?

1. For a disciple who had stood at the foot of the Cross had no need of recommendation in his own adopted home of Ephesus. Did the elders think fit to assure readers in other countries that the memoirs were genuine? If so, they might have said: 'We, the Ephesian presbyters, bear witness that this book was really written by the disciple John whose name it bears', signing their names :

Διοτρέφης ὑπέγραψα.  
Γάϊος ὑπέγραψα  
Δημήτριος ὑπέγραψα, κτλ.

or whatever their names were. But if they left the verse unsigned as we find it, we retort: 'John I know, but who are ye?' Anonymous testimony is useless.

2. And further, the elders could not sign, for the verse does not say

'we know the writer is a truthful man', but 'we know that his witness is true'. This they could not know. They presumably knew the writer to be the man he claimed to be, and they believed him to be veracious and not dependent on trance or 'creative memory' for his facts; but it is impossible they could vouch for the facts themselves from personal experience; they could not have been with the Baptist and Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria, or at Bethany and the Upper Room and Calvary and the tomb. If we should limit (with some moderns) their testimony to c. xxi, we gain nothing, unless these elders were actually some of the seven disciples who went a-fishing.

3. If more reasons are needed, it is obvious that if this verse is an addition, the Gospel ended with the words of v. 23:

οὐκ εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι Οὐκ ἀποθνήσκει, ἀλλ' Ἐὰν αὐτὸν θέλω μένειν ἕως ἔρχομαι, τί πρὸς σε;

It would be unkind to any writer to suppose his final *clausula* was a quoted question ending with an enclitic. The Gospel is very simple almost babyish in language, but it is always very neat.

## II.

The second hypothesis is that the author himself wrote the verse, using *οἶδαμεν* in the plural to include others besides himself. We have one Greek commentator for this view, Euthymius Zigabenus in the twelfth century. There are even greater names to cite for this explanation than for the first: Albertus Magnus, St Thomas Aquinas, Maldonatus, Cornelius a Lapide, not to speak of Toletus, Ribera, and moderns like Corluy, Schegg, Schanz, Fillion and the overwhelming Knabenbauer. Zahn's view is much the same: he appeals to the possibility of Philip and Aristion, perhaps even Andrew, being included in the plural verb. Like Knabenbauer, he refers to the rather mythical account in the Muratorian Canon (modernized here): 'Cohortantibus condiscipulis et episcopis suis . . . Eadem nocte reuelatum Andreae ex apostolis ut recognoscentibus cunctis Iohannes suo nomine cuncta describeret.'

All this rests upon one word, *οἶδαμεν*. Zahn notes the difficulty of *οἶμαι*, singular, in the next verse; but he explains it (in this followed by Lagrange) as a sort of interjection. I hope presently to shew that *οἶδαμεν* here cannot have a plural sense; but assuming that it means 'I and you', let us see whither it leads us.

1. The inclusion of unnamed persons is quite valueless; and it is rather an insult to the evangelist to suppose he meant to include any such.

2. The writer has twice broken out into *ὁμοίως*, first in xix 35: *οἶδεν ὅτι ἀληθῆ λέγει, ἵνα καὶ ὁμοίως πιστεύητε*. This shews that *ὁ ἑωρακώς* is the

writer ; it also shews that he is addressing those who were not witnesses, that they also may believe (and he lays stress on the same proof in 1 John v 6-10). Again in xx 31 : ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται ἵνα πιστεύσητε ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστός, where again the writer addresses the readers as not knowing for themselves. They cannot be included in οἶδαμεν : he is telling them.

3. Then it is not 'I and you', but 'I and others, who shall be nameless'. But the idea that the author could wish for corroboration implies a complete misunderstanding of his position. All through his book he has been at pains to point out his credentials (though his name was certainly at the head of the book, and it was the name of one of the three closest disciples): he was a disciple of the Baptist and heard his witness, and was sent by him to Christ; he was at the Transfiguration (i 14-18), was present with the rest at the miracles and discourses, he leaned back on his Master's Breast at the Supper, he entered the hall of the High Priest, he saw the Blood and Water, he ran to the empty tomb, he was with Peter on the lake when the Lord appeared. It is enough for him to declare in xix 35: 'He himself knoweth that his testimony is true.' He asks no corroboration from unknown 'elders'. We turn to the first four verses of his First Epistle, and he again affirms his personal experience with strange repetition, *and in the first person plural*—but the singular is meant, for γράφομεν cannot there have a plural sense. The notion that this ὁ γράψας wished for support from others is paradoxical and unacceptable.

### III.

The third view is the obvious one, that οἶδαμεν means 'I know' (like 'he knoweth' in xix 35).

The only possible reason against this interpretation is that the plural is odd after the (necessarily) singular third person, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ μαθητής κτλ. The answer to this is an examination of the writer's own usage. I assume that the three Epistles are by the same author. Detailed proof that the First Epistle presumes acquaintance with the Gospel, and is an *επιλοιπὸν* to the Gospel, would be easy but tiresome. The resemblances of style are not merely obvious and glaring, but also latent and infinitesimal. An imitator, who pretended to be the author of the Gospel and an eye-witness, could not have written such wonderful doctrine. A disciple who imitated would not be an eye-witness. But one would not argue with any critic who denied the common authorship of the four.

(a) In the Gospel, as has been said, we find the author in the third person only, until this verse xxi 24, but ὑμεῖς twice creeps in.

(b) In 2 John, the writer uses only the first person singular.

(c) In 3 John we find :

- 1 ὁ πρεσβύτερος ὃν ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ  
 2 εὐχομαι  
 3 ἐχάρην  
 4 ἐχάρην ἀκούω  
 8 [ἡμεῖς οὖν ὀφείλομεν = 'you and I']  
 9 ἔγραψά τι τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ . . . οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς  
 10 ἐὰν ἔλθω, ὑπομνήσω . . . φλυαρῶν ἡμᾶς  
 12 καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ μαρτυροῦμεν . . . ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν  
 13 εἶχον οὐ θέλω  
 14 ἐλπίζω

Here we have 11 singular verbs and one plural verb; ἐγὼ once, ἡμεῖς 4 times, meaning 'I' or 'me'. In two verses, 9 and 10, the singular and plural are mixed. The usage is plain: private business is singular, but when the writer speaks as a superior or as an apostolic witness he uses ἡμεῖς.

(d) In the First Epistle the first person plural frequently means 'we Christians', but it also means the writer, as we saw in the case of γράφομεν (i 4):

i 1-5: ἀκηκόαμεν, ἐωράκαμεν, ἐθεασάμεθα, ἐψηλάφησαμεν, — ἐωράκαμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ ἀπαγγέλλομεν . . . ἐφανερῶθη ἡμῖν . . . ἐωράκαμεν καὶ ἀκηκόαμεν, ἀπαγγέλλομεν καὶ ὑμῖν . . . κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ' ἡμῶν . . . καὶ ταῦτα γράφομεν . . . ἀκηκόαμεν . . . ἀναγγέλλομεν. All these have a singular meaning.

- ii i ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν  
 7 γράφω ὑμῖν  
 8 γράφω  
 12-14 γράφω ὑμῖν . . . γράφω ὑμῖν . . . γράφω ὑμῖν . . . ἔγραψα ὑμῖν . . .  
 ἔγραψα ὑμῖν . . . ἔγραψα ὑμῖν .  
 21 ἔγραψα ὑμῖν  
 26 ἔγραψα ὑμῖν  
 iv 14 καὶ ἡμεῖς τεθεάμεθα καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν  
 v 13 ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν

As in the Third Epistle, when speaking solemnly of μαρτυρία, the writer assumes the plural of majesty. The statistics here are 16 plural verbs, 12 singular verbs, 3 ἡμεῖς.

Let us turn to the Gospel: in iii 2 Nicodemus says οἶδαμεν. In xx 2 Mary Magdalen says οἶδαμεν. But iii 11 is more important, for the words are Christ's, and the plural is certainly a 'plural of majesty', equivalent to a singular:

ὁ οἶδαμεν λαλοῦμεν, καὶ ὁ ἑώρακαμεν μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἡμῶν οὐ λαμβάνετε. εἰ τὰ ἐπίγεια εἶπον ὑμῖν, καὶ οὐ πιστεύετε, πῶς ἂν εἶπω ὑμῖν τὰ ἐπουράνια πιστεύσετε ;

This is closely parallel to xix 35 (quoted above). The change from the plural (μαρτυροῦμεν, ἡμῶν, εἶπον, εἶπω) to the singular corresponds with the usage in the Epistles.

We have now obtained accurate data :

1. The writer uses ἡμεῖς and plural verbs for the sake of solemnity, and always does so when referring to his μαρτυρία. He even represents our Lord as doing so, when He refers to His μαρτυρία.

2. He does not mind using singular and plural verbs with the same reference in successive verses and even in the same verse.

Our inference is quite certain : xxi 24 means 'This person<sup>1</sup> is the Apostle who is the witness (ὁ μαρτυρῶν for ὁ μάρτυς) of these things and is the writer of this book, and I even I (whose high place among the Apostles has been described in it) know that it is all perfectly accurate ; I have no doubt about my memory, else I should not have written this down at my advanced age.'

Why have so many eminent theologians and scholars taken οἶδαμεν as a real plural? The parallels in the Gospel and the Epistles were plain enough, had any one chosen to study the matter minutely as it surely deserved. Doubtless it seems an excellent piece of apologetics to claim that the Fourth Gospel was attested by the Presbyters of Ephesus, the same presumably as the Presbyters of Papias. But apparently the real explanation is simply that the plural of authorship had ceased to be familiar. In the Middle Ages Euthymius Zigabenus did not suspect it ; the theologians of the thirteenth century and the commentators of the seventeenth were off their guard. The moderns are accustomed to ridicule 'the editorial "we" '.

But in ancient times the plural of authorship was common enough. The Greek Fathers were so familiar with it that it never struck them to treat οἶδαμεν as a real plural. Ancient writers were irregular, as St John was, in their usage. He sometimes, indeed most often, speaks of himself in the third person, sometimes in the first person singular, sometimes in the first person plural. Much earlier, Thucydides used either the third person or the first singular ; whereas Xenophon opened the *Cyropaedia* with the first person plural. Plutarch used the singular in St John's day, but Strabo the plural. Appian has the singular, but Polybius had preferred the plural. So with others. In the sixth

<sup>1</sup> In the Chinese sense, 'This person' = I.



century Procopius begins his histories solemnly in the first person plural, though where he describes his own part in the wars he gives his name in the third person, as Thucydides did. A dedication, like that of St Luke, takes the modest singular.

## IV.

It has been urged that the last verse of the Gospel, xxi 25, is an addition by an editor. It was omitted perhaps by the first hand of  $\aleph$ , but by no other MS. In the commonest Greek commentary, of which von Soden enumerates more than 100 MSS,<sup>1</sup> there is a remark on this verse, that 'another' (or 'others') 'says it is an addition'. The reason must be that some unknown writer, earlier than the eighth century, disliked the exaggeration of the verse. There seems to be no other evidence, whereas its meaning here is plain enough.

The Gospel originally ended with xx; but before publication the author adds another chapter. Now the whole of chapter xxi is connected with, and leads up to the prophecy of the death of Peter and the refusal to reply as to that of John. A report was current that 'that Apostle'  $\delta \mu\alpha\theta\eta\tau\iota\varsigma \epsilon\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\omicron\varsigma$  would never die, because Christ had refused to prophesy his death. He takes this opportunity to contradict the report: Christ said 'if'; and though the great age of this only surviving Apostle gives colour to the idea that he is to live until the Second Coming, he denies that there was any promise. He is obviously not certain—how could he be? But he rather expects to die.

This contradiction was insufficient. As early as the middle of the second century, Leucius represents St John as descending alive into his grave, where he makes a long prayer and goes to sleep. In St Augustine's time visitors to Ephesus were told that the dust danced about his tomb, because he was breathing underneath. The legend of Leucius was popular in the Middle Ages. The story is in Jacobus de Voragine, and was painted and sculptured in Gothic cathedrals. St Gertrude in the fourteenth century has a vision of the unfortunate Apostle hung between earth and heaven in his coffin, like Mahomet.

The story ends, as we saw, with a quoted question. So it has to be rounded off in the same way that c. xx had previously been concluded. The parallel is close between the first and the second ending:

<sup>1</sup> See H. von Soden's N.T. vol. i, p. 249; the scholia are usually written round the margins of the text, as is usual in *catenae* or in the Latin *Glossa ordinaria*. According to von Soden the explanations are based on Chrysostom for Matt. and John. The compiler is unknown. The oldest MS is  $\Xi$ , an eighth century palimpsest (Bible Society 24). See also Hort's note.

xx. 30: πολλὰ μὲν καὶ ἄλλα σημεῖα  
ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐνώπιον τῶν μα-  
θητῶν, ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ  
βιβλίῳ τούτῳ· ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται  
ἵνα πιστεύητε ὅτι Ἰησοῦς, κτλ.

xxi 25: ἔστιν δὲ καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ  
ἃ ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ἅτινα ἐὰν γρά-  
φηται καθ' ἓν, οὐδ' αὐτὸν οἶμαι τὸν  
κόσμον χωρῆσειν τὰ γραφόμενα  
βιβλία.

Evidently xx 30 means: 'I could have written at greater length, but *this is all that is needed* for your faith.' The writer is then persuaded to add just one more chapter; but he concludes it: 'I WILL NOT write any more, however much you ask: why, the world would not contain all I could write, so one must stop somewhere.' I do not see any other reasonable explanation. The playful manner is characteristic of the Fourth Gospel, not of an interpolator. What is characteristic of a scholiast is the notion that an evangelist must never speak lightly and playfully.

It seems therefore quite inconceivable that any interpolator should have composed this very Johannine and only half serious verse, xxi 25, as an imitation of xx 30. But if it is genuine, or rather, since it is genuine, it follows that the *μαρτυρία* of the preceding verse refers to the whole Gospel, and not to c. xxi only. For ὁ *γράφας ταῦτα* evidently refers to the whole Gospel, on account of the parallel with xx 30; and the refusal to write more is also paralleled there; verses 24 and 25 are intended to close the whole book, just as xx 30-31 had done at first.

Those who are convinced, as I am, by the detailed examination we have gone through, will see how important it is to distrust romantic criticism. The whole *cortège* of Papias's presbyters with Philip and Aristion and Andrew, however attractive, must make their bow and retire. I confess that I feel rather sorry.

JOHN CHAPMAN.

## THE METRE AND TEXT OF PSALM XXVII

### I.

THE difficulties in Psalm xxvii have led Briggs<sup>1</sup> to cut down its first section to two strophes of six pentameters and its second section to three strophes of four trimeters. He arrives at this arrangement after a series of violent cuts and emendations of which I would mention the following:—

<sup>1</sup> Cf. C. A. Briggs *The Book of Psalms*, I. C. C., vol. i, Edinburgh 1906, p. 236 f.