

DISLOCATIONS IN ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

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IT is probable that the various problems connected with the authorship and contents of the Fourth Gospel will never be completely solved in this world. But one thing about it is clear. Before it was issued in the only form in which it has come down to us, it passed through another hand, by which at least one addition was certainly made to it. The two concluding verses of the last chapter were clearly not written by the author of the Gospel himself, but are due to an independent editor. Whether he added any of the many comments and explanations which are scattered throughout the Gospel we have no means of knowing; and there is no valid ground for supposing that he did so. On the other hand, there are strong reasons for conjecturing that he arranged its various portions in their present order—an order differing in several respects from the sequence in which, according to their contents, they ought apparently to be placed. This dislocation has been pointed out by more than one student of the New Testament, and formed the subject of a small book entitled *Disarrangements in the Fourth Gospel*, by F. Warburton Lewis, of Mansfield College, Oxford, published by the Cambridge University Press in 1910. The most striking evidence of it is furnished by the relative positions of chaps. v. and vi.

At the end of chapter iv. our Lord is represented to be in Galilee. Chapter v. opens with the statement that He went up to Jerusalem to attend a Jewish festival. So far there is nothing inconsistent; but at the close of the chapter He is still arguing with the Jews in Jerusalem; and then at the beginning of chapter vi. it is abruptly asserted that He departed across the Sea of Galilee; and the events of that chapter take place on its two opposite shores. We can scarcely conceive of the Evangelist actually making this statement immediately after he had left our Lord still in Jerusalem; but it would be quite appropriate if it followed on the close of chapter iv., in which our Lord is stated to have come out of Judæa into Galilee. It was from thence that He must have departed across the lake. In chapter vii. 1, we read that after these things He was itinerating in Galilee, instead of in Judæa, because the Jews were

seeking to kill Him, a fact which is recorded in chapter v. 16. This statement follows much more naturally after an account of a visit by Him to Jerusalem than after the end of chapter vi., at which we find Him already actually in Galilee. The presumption is very strong that chapters v. and vi. ought to be transposed.

But the existence of one dislocation in the Gospel necessarily leads to the suspicion that there may be others. And one of these is connected with the chapters which we have been considering. It seems probable that chapter vii. 15-24 ought to be transferred to the end of chapter v. as forming part of the controversy recorded in that chapter. The marvel of the Jews and their question: "How knoweth this man letters (*γράμματα*)?" (ver. 15) have no particular point where they stand, but come most appositely after chapter v. 47, where our Lord refers to Moses and says: "If ye believe not his writings (*γράμματα*) how shall ye believe my words?" The allusions to Moses in verses 19, 22, 23, naturally follow after the reference to him at the end of chapter v.; and the mention in verse 23 of the healing of the man on the Sabbath day is entirely appropriate if it formed part of the discussion on the subject recorded in chapter v., but seems forced and out of place at a much later visit to Jerusalem, when many intervening events had taken place. Again, our Lord's assertion and the denial of His hearers that there was a plot to kill Him (verses 19, 20) are quite consistent with the contents of chapter v., but their insertion in chapter vii. renders the question in verse 25 of that chapter somewhat unmeaning. On the other hand, if verses 15-24 are eliminated from chapter vii., we can see that verse 25 and the following verses follow very naturally and appropriately on verse 14.

Mr. Warburton Lewis further suggests that chapter viii., verses 12-20, should be removed from their present position. In any rearrangement of the Gospel, we must, of course, omit all consideration of chapter vii. 53-viii. 11. This episode, though probably an authentic narrative of what actually took place, is admitted by all Biblical students to be a later addition to the Gospel and not to have formed part of its original contents. We have then to deal with chapter vii., ending with verse 52, and chapter viii., beginning with verse 12. With the exception of the opening words of verse 12, "Then spake Jesus again unto them saying," the whole passage, chapter viii. 12-20, forms a fitting completion of the discussion

recorded in chapter v. and chapter vii. 15-24. It continues the topic of the testimony of the Father, which is dwelt upon in chapter v. 31-37, and of our Lord's claim to judge, which is introduced in chapter v. 22, 27, 30, as contrasted with the judgment of His opponents to which allusion is made in chapter vii. 24 and viii. 15. And the opening words: "I am the light of the world," are in contrast to what our Lord had said of the Baptist in chapter v. 35. "He was the lamp that burneth and shineth and ye were willing to rejoice for a season in his light" (R.V.). The difficulty caused by the opening words of verse 12 will disappear if we realise that when once the dislocation of chapter viii. 12-20 had taken place, it was necessary to insert these words in order to connect the narrative with chapter vii. 52. It only remains to notice that the theory of that dislocation is further supported by the fact that in chapter viii. 21-59 the discussion proceeds upon quite different lines and follows very naturally upon chapter vii. 25-52. It is suggested, therefore, that the portion of the Gospel which we have been considering should be rearranged as follows: Chapter vi.; v.; vii. 15-24; viii. 12-20; vii. 1-14; 25-52; viii. 21-59.

But the dislocations in the Gospel apparently begin earlier than these chapters, for chapter iii. verses 22-30 seem to be out of place. The existing order makes the contents of chapter iii. verses 31-36 either a continuation of John the Baptist's testimony as to Christ, which we can scarcely imagine them to have been, or else a comment of the Evangelist on that testimony, which in that case seems rather out of place. If, however, we insert chapter iii. 22-30 between verses 12 and 13 of chapter ii. the whole sequence becomes consistent. In either case no incident of the short stay at Capernaum (chap. ii. 12) is recorded. But with the suggested amendment in the arrangement of the text, the journey of our Lord and His disciples into Judæa, and the episode respecting baptism (chap. iii. 22-30) is next mentioned, and then on the eve of the Passover He goes up to Jerusalem (chap. ii. 13) and remains there until after the visit of Nicodemus, on which some light is thrown by the current controversy about purifying and baptism.

Chapter iii. verses 31-36, then becomes a natural continuation of verses 18-21 of the same chapter, which seem to be the Evangelist's comment on our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus. It may be suggested, however, in the alternative, that chapter iii. 22-30

ought to be transferred to the end of chapter iii. In support of this alternative, though, upon the whole, less probable, it may be noticed that at the beginning of chapter iv. our Lord is represented as leaving Judæa, where the Evangelist located Him in chapter iii. 22; whereas according to Mr. Warburton Lewis's arrangement, He goes up to Jerusalem from the land of Judæa after chapter iii. 30, and is in that city and not in the rural parts of the land of Judæa at the opening of chapter iv. Moreover, according to verse 1 of that chapter our Lord is said to have resolved to leave Judæa on account of comparisons being drawn between Himself and John the Baptist as regards baptism and discipleship. This statement would naturally follow after chapter iii. 22-30. We observe, then, that, upon the hypothesis that this passage is at present out of place, the two alternative rearrangements would give us either chapter ii. 1-12; iii. 22-30; ii. 13-iii. 21; 31-36, or else, less probably, chapter ii. and iii. 1-21; 31-36; 22-30.

The next apparent disarrangement to be noted occurs in chapter x. As that chapter now stands the parable or simile of the sheep-fold follows abruptly upon the close of chapter ix., which is concerned with the subject of spiritual blindness, arising out of our Lord having given sight to the man born blind. Then at verse 19 a division among the Jews is recorded, arising again out of that miracle and having nothing to do with the parable of the sheep. But verse 22 introduces a new scene at the opening of which the Jews categorically demand of our Lord a direct answer to the question whether or not He is the Christ. He replies that He has already told them but they believe not, "because," He adds, "ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you" (verse 26). There is nothing in verses 1-18, which contain the parable of the sheep, about the Jews not being of His sheep; and the words must therefore refer to the discussion recorded in chapter viii. But having mentioned "sheep" in chapter x. 26, our Lord continues the idea in the next three verses, and if verses 1-18 are transferred to follow these verses they quite naturally still further develop and amplify the same idea. Verse 30 will follow verse 18 as appropriately as in our Gospel it at present follows verse 29. It would seem that chapter x. ought to be rearranged thus:—verses 19-29; 1-18; 30-42.

We now come to the last and perhaps the most interesting of the suggested rearrangements, namely, that in our Lord's final discourse

to His disciples. It is generally admitted that this, as it stands, has suffered from some displacement. Not only are the last words of chapter xiv., "Arise, let us go hence," inconsistent with the continuance of the discourse in chapters xv. and xvi., but the last seven verses of chapter xiv. (25-31) are clearly the winding up of the discourse. Verses 25, 26, 30, indicate that they are our Lord's last earthly words to His disciples. Verse 27 contains His parting legacy to them and verses 28, 29, 31, finally sum up His teaching to them about His imminent departure. There can be little doubt that chapter xiv. 25-31 should come at the end of the discourse. The openings of chapters xvii. and xviii. seem conclusive on this point. In the first we read, "These words spake Jesus and lifted up His eyes to heaven." What words? "Arise, let us go hence" (ch. xiv. 31). The whole company rose and then, before they left the room, our Lord offered His prayer standing. At its conclusion we are told (ch. xviii. 1) that He went forth with His disciples. But is the removal of chapter xiv. 25-31 to the close of the discourse the only change to be made in the present order? Mr. Warburton Lewis thinks not. He would arrange the discourse thus:—Chapter xiii. 1-32; xv.; xvi.; xiii. 33-38; xiv. He adduces several reasons for this rearrangement. There is, he says, an obvious gap between xiii. 32 and 33. On the other hand, chapter xiii. 33-38, can scarcely be disconnected from the opening verses of chapter xiv. The whole passage contains questionings as to whither our Lord is going. But in chapter xvi. 5, He says, "none of you asketh me whither goest thou?" These words can hardly have been spoken after the questionings narrated in that passage. Later on in the same chapter (verses 17, 18) we read that the disciples whispered among themselves as to what His prediction of His imminent departure meant. They did not venture to address Him openly on the subject until He made the explicit declaration contained in verse 28, which they could not mistake. Still they knew not how He would go to the Father, and did not inquire about it until as recorded in chapter xvi. 32, 33; xiii. 33, He had more clearly explained the coming situation. It was only then that the question "Whither goest Thou?" was really asked of Him (chapter xiii. 36). It seems, therefore, that, at any rate, the end of chapter xiii. ought to be placed after chapter xvi.

But then, which part of the discourse ought to follow chapter

xiii. 32? We notice that the whole discourse consists of eight distinct and more or less disconnected paragraphs, namely, the passages which in our Gospel comprise (a) the end of chapter xiii. ; (b) chapter xiv. 1-14 ; (c) 15-24 ; (d) 25-31 ; (e) chapter xv. 1-10 ; (f) 11-16 ; (g) 17-27 ; (h) chapter xvi. Of all these paragraphs, that which forms chapter xv. 1-10 appears most naturally and appropriately to follow verse 32 of chapter xiii. ; for it directly refers to the events recorded in that chapter. After washing the disciples' feet our Lord had declared that they were clean, but not all ; Judas being the exception. He has now gone and therefore our Lord could say, without any reservation : " Now ye are clean " (chap. xv. 4). Again, the casting forth of the unfaithful branch (ver. 6) may be regarded as having a distinct, though, of course, not an exclusive, reference to the falling away of Judas. Then, subject to what will be said later on about chapter xiv. 15-24, the rest of chapter xv. and the whole of chapter xvi. will run straight on, to be followed by chapter xiii. 33 to end and chapter xiv. This rearrangement has, among other recommendations, the advantage of placing our Lord's prediction of the scattering of the disciples (chapter xvi. 32) before His prediction of St. Peter's denials (chapter xiii. 38), which appears to be the more natural order, and is the order in which the two predictions are recorded in the first two Gospels (Matt. xxvi. 31, 34 ; Mark xiv. 27, 30).

It remains for us to consider how the references to the Paraclete in the discourse are affected by the proposed rearrangement. Do they contain any indication as to what is their proper order of priority? The references are as follows :—

(1) " I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter that He may be with you for ever ; even the Spirit of Truth ; whom the world cannot receive, for it beholdeth Him not neither knoweth Him ; but ye know Him ; for He abideth with you and shall be in you " (ch. xiv. 16, 17, R.V.).

(2) " But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you " (ch. xiv. 26, R.V.).

(3) " But when the Comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall bear witness of Me " (ch. xv. 26, R.V.).

(4) " It is expedient that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I go, I will send Him unto you. And He when He is come, will convict the world of sin and of righteousness, and of judgment. . . . Howbeit when He the Spirit of Truth is come, He shall guide you unto all the truth " . . . (ch. xvi. 7-13, R.V.).

Opinions will probably differ as to the order in which these sayings looked at by themselves, would seem likely to have been uttered. Certainly the first, in which our Lord speaks of the sending of "another Comforter" would seem naturally to have preceded the others in which "the Comforter" is spoken of. It is quite clear that the reference to Him in chapter xvi. must have followed one or more of the others. It could not have been the introductory mention of Him. But the same cannot be so positively asserted of the second passage in chapter xiv. and the passage in chapter xv. ; and Mr. Warburton Lewis argues that the reference in chapter xv. is the first, and that those in chapter xiv. are the two last. He regards the statement in chapter xv. 26 as a formal introduction of a Person hitherto unknown. On the other hand, he considers the statement in chapter xiv. 16, 17, to be part of Our Lord's final farewell. The Comforter is represented as filling the gap which will be left on His departure, as becoming, in fact, His substitute, to abide after He has gone.

The words, "He abideth with you and shall be in you," would, Mr. Lewis urges, be incomprehensible to the disciples if spoken before those in chapter xv. 1-8, where "abiding" is asserted and insisted on. Our Lord could not have spoken of His Substitute abiding with them and in them, before He had made clear the idea of His own abiding in them and their abiding in Him from the simile of the vine and the branches.

We may grant the cogency of this last argument, and yet hesitate in admitting that it outweighs the strong presumption that the mention of "another Comforter" must precede all the passages in which "the Comforter" is alluded to. Is there any way of reconciling the two conflicting probabilities? Apparently there is, if we bear in mind the distinct paragraphs into which the whole discourse is divided, and also the fact that in an earlier part of the Gospel good reason was found for taking ten verses out of the middle of a chapter (vii. 15-24) and transferring them to another context. If this can be justified in one case, the process may be legitimately repeated. If then we insert the paragraph, chapter xiv. 15-24, between verses 10 and 11 of chapter xv., we shall make the mention of another Comforter the first reference to the Paraclete, and at the same time place the idea of His abiding presence after, but in close connection with our Lord's own abiding with His

disciples. The whole of chapter xv. with this insertion in it will read quite as naturally as it does at present without the insertion ; and the first fourteen verses of chapter xiv. will fit on to the last seven quite suitably without the intermediate verses. Indeed, we may venture to think that they are an even more striking immediate preface to those concluding verses than is furnished by verses 15-24.

We have seen, then, that there are good reasons for believing in several distinct dislocations having taken place in the Fourth Gospel. The reasons in favour of each are, of course, different, and are not equally cogent ; but it is important to recognise that their weight is not merely independent as regards each separate dislocation, but is to a certain extent cumulative as regards them all. For the probability of any one of the dislocations having taken place enhances the probability of the others having also occurred.

It seems probable, then, that the Gospel should be rearranged in the following order, in which the possible alternatives are noted in brackets :—

Chapter i., [ii. 1-12, iii. 22-30 ; ii. 13-25, iii. 1-21, 31-36] or [ii., iii. 1-21, 31-36 ; 22-30], iv., vi., v., vii. 15-24, viii. 12-20, vii. 1-14, 25-52, viii. 21-59 ; ix., x. 19-29, 1-18, 30-42, xi., xii., xiii. 1-32, [xv., xvi., xiii. 33-38 ; xiv.] or [xv. 1-10 ; xiv. 15-24 ; xv. 11-27 ; xvi., xiii. 33-38, xiv. 1-14 ; 25-31], xvii., xviii., xix., xx., xxi.

It remains to inquire to what cause we can attribute the dislocations. This must, of course, always remain a matter of mere conjecture, but we seem to be practically reduced to choose between two hypotheses respecting them. As the present arrangement of our Gospel is the same in all the extant MSS. and versions, the disarrangement must almost certainly have occurred in the original MS. of the Gospel, and could only have happened in one of two ways. Either (a) the author wrote his MS. on separate sheets of paper, or whatever other material he used, and, as suggested at the beginning of this article, these were pieced together in a slightly mistaken order by the editor to whom we are indebted for chapter xxi. 24, 25, and perhaps for chapter xx. 30, 31 ; or (b) the Gospel, after it had been correctly compiled, fell to pieces by some accident, and was not quite correctly restored. The former alternative would certainly seem to be the more probable of the two.

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