

Who Wrote the Fourth Gospel?

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IN perusing the Fourth Gospel, any attentive reader will be struck by the curious phenomenon that the name of John the Apostle does not occur once in that Gospel, whereas the other apostles figure in it more or less prominently. That there was an Apostle John cannot be questioned, since his existence and even prominence in the circle of Jesus' disciples is too well attested by the other evangelists (e.g. Mk 1¹⁹ 9². 38, Mt 4²¹ 10², Lk 5¹⁰, 6¹⁴; also Ac 1¹³ 3^{1f.} 4¹³, Gal 2⁶. 9). How is it then that John is never mentioned in the Fourth Gospel? Is it perhaps because its author had some grudge against the said apostle, and so maliciously ignored him? But in that case, who is the anonymous disciple occasionally introduced in the narrative (1³⁵⁻⁴¹ 13²³⁻²⁵ 18¹⁵ 19³⁵ 20^{2ff.}; also in the appendix 21². 22^{f.}), and why is that individual represented as standing in a friendly and close connexion with Jesus: as 'one (not *the* one) whom Jesus loved' (13²³ 19²⁶ 21⁷. 20)? Could the writer represent his own enemy as enjoying Jesus' favour? Or is that anonymous disciple a self-designation for the writer himself? The latter alternative appears the more rational and probable; it has also been the traditional view ever since ancient times. This interpretation, however, has met, within the last eighty years, with serious objections, especially in recent times, and the opposition has grown to such dimensions as to give rise to what is now known as the great Johannine problem. The opponents to the traditional view contend that external testimony as to John the Apostle's identity with John the Evangelist is partly conflicting and partly legendary; that we have no internal evidence as to the real author of the Gospel, and that this Gospel is so unhistorical that it cannot be the work of John the Apostle nor any other apostle. The line of argument and the verdict of this rational criticism are thus summarized in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, vol. ii. (1901), p. 2542, by Professor Schmiedel, the writer of the articles 'Gospels' and 'John, son of Zebedee' (there is no separate entry for the Apostle John in the said *Encyclopædia*):—

'But we have said enough and more than

enough. A book which begins by declaring Jesus to be the *logos* of God and ends by representing a cohort of Roman soldiers as falling to the ground at the majesty of his appearance (18⁶), and by representing 100 pounds of ointment as having been used at his embalming (19³⁹), ought by these facts alone to be spared such a misunderstanding of its true character, as would be implied in supposing that it meant to be a historical work.'

It is not my purpose here to defend the historicity of the Fourth Gospel, but I must own that a special and prolonged study of that Gospel makes me pause before accepting such a sweeping verdict as the above. I do not refer to the ill-concealed feeling of the learned professor, but cannot help dissenting from his summary charges. In the first place, 'the *logos*' (ὁ λόγος) in the exordium of the Gospel (1¹) does not mean Jesus. As many readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES are aware, here ὁ λόγος refers to the oracular word which (according to Gn 1^{1ff.}) God uttered and created the world; it refers to God's creative λόγος by which all things whatsoever were created; to God's λόγος as defined and adumbrated in the said exordium. Here the evangelist himself says that God's well-known λόγος was meant to be the *life* and the *light* of men, and that, having been not understood by them, it was embodied or incarnated in Christ and became man or flesh. The opening λόγος therefore alludes not to Jesus in the flesh, but to God's word *before* it was incarnated in Christ; *before* it ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος, *before* this λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο.

Still less founded appears to me the second charge, which represents 'a cohort of Roman soldiers as falling to the ground at the majesty of his appearance (18⁶).' Here the evangelist does not speak of a battalion of proud Roman soldiers as falling to the ground; he does not even speak of *Roman soldiers* at all. The words of the evangelist are: ὁ οὖν Ἰουδας λαβὼν τὴν σπείραν, καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ (ἐκ) τῶν Φαρισαίων ὑπηρέτας, ἔρχεται κτλ. Here τὴν σπείραν obviously refers to *the* (local) band of the Jews who formed

the police or guard of the temple; hence the meaning of the evangelist is; 'So Judas, having taken with him the band, namely, attendants from among those of the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh,' etc.¹ These Jewish attendants, then, are represented as falling to the ground out of awe before Christ's tragic majesty.

As regards the amount of a *hundred* pounds of ointment which Nicodemus is represented as having used at Jesus' embalming (19³⁹), the statement certainly appears incredible. Nor can we assume here a rhetorical exaggeration on the part of the writer, since in that case he would have probably said not 'about a hundred pounds,' but 'over a hundred pounds.' However, a closer examination of the passage (φέρων μίγμα σμύρνης καὶ ἀλόης ὡς λίτρας ἑκατόν, 'bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes about a hundred pound weight') makes it highly probable that the true reading is not ἑκατόν but ἕκαστον, some scribe having misread or altered ἕκαστον to ἑκατόν out of excessive Christian zeal. In that case the evangelist apparently wrote ὡς λίτρας ἕκαστον, 'about a pound each,' so that the whole mixture of myrrh and aloes amounted to *two* pounds only.

As I said, I do not purpose to refute all the charges or arguments brought against the historicity of the Fourth Gospel. But when I examine them closely and one by one, I hesitate to accept such a crushing verdict as the above and ask myself, Are all these strictures really founded, or do they largely rest on scribal editorial and exegetic misconception? This is a very wide question. But it is sufficient for our purpose here to have suggested that many of the charges brought against the historicity of our Fourth Gospel are cases of misreading. Moreover, many a critic will decline to accept the soundness of the chief argument that historicity and genuineness necessarily go together.

Limiting ourselves here to the question of genuineness or authorship apart from historicity, we have to investigate whether we can produce some conclusive *internal* evidence, since tradition

¹ This is also the sense in the subsequent v.¹²: ἡ οὖν σπεῖρα, καὶ ὁ χιλιάρχος καὶ οἱ ἰππῆται τῶν Ἰουδαίων, συνέλαβον τὸν Ἰησοῦν κτλ. 'So the band, namely, the commander (χιλιάρχος) and the attendants of the Jews, seized Jesus,' etc.—[Since writing the above (in October last) I heard that my interpretation is confirmed by *Syr. Sin.* as translated by A. Merx (p. 223).]

or external testimony offers no safe ground of discussion. On this point the present writer believes he has found some valuable evidence in the Gospel itself, but before adducing it, he must be allowed to premise a few remarks on certain meanings and usages of the familiar words ἐκείνος οὗτος and ἴνα, usages hitherto overlooked.

The term ἐκείνος need not detain us long. Classical students know that this pronoun, like Latin *ille*, often stands for the name of some absent personality of great repute or notoriety: 'that great or notorious man,' 'the man.' Examples of this usage are met everywhere in classical and later texts, and the Fourth Gospel contains several passages with ἐκείνος in this sense. Thus 7¹¹ and 9¹² ποῦ ἐστὶν ἐκείνος; 'where is that notorious man?' 16¹³ ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ἐκείνος, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας κτλ., 'but when that One is come, the Spirit of truth,' etc.

Conversely, οὗτος often implies contempt: 'this fellow,' as 3²⁶ 6^{42, 52} 7^{15, 25, 36, 49} 9²⁴ 11⁴⁷ 21²⁴, Lk 6⁵² 7¹¹ 9^{12, 15, 28}, etc. At the same time this οὗτος is also used, like classical ὄδε, in place of the personal pronoun ἐγώ. As is well known to Greek students, a speaker, instead of using ἐγώ, could point to himself and say ὄδες, meaning 'this self of mine,' *I*. In process of time the gesticulation was dispensed with, and ὄδε alone came to be used colloquially for ἐγώ, just as Latin *hic* often stands for *ego*. Now, when in the course of post-classical antiquity, ὄδε began to be superseded by οὗτος, this substitute and successor appropriated also the meaning of ἐγώ, *I*. In other terms, post-classical parlance uses οὗτος for ἐγώ, just as Latin uses *hic* for *ego*. This phenomenon, hitherto overlooked, should be well understood and borne in mind, because it explains many a perplexing phenomenon. Thus, to limit ourselves to the Fourth Gospel, 2¹⁹ λύσατε τὸν ναὸν τούτων καὶ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις ἐγερῶ αὐτόν was said by Jesus in the sense of 'destroy this sanctuary of mine (*i.e.* this body of mine), and in three days I will raise it up (*i.e.* I will raise up mine own self).' But His hearers mistook the meaning of οὗτος at the time, and realized it only when He had risen from the dead: then His disciples remembered that He had spoken of His body, that is, of His own self.—Again, in 6^{50f.}, Jesus says οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἄρτος κτλ. 'this is' οὗτος ἐστὶν (*i.e.* 'I am') the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die:

I am (ἐγὼ εἰμι) the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat from *this* bread (ἐκ τούτου τοῦ ἄρτου, *i.e.* from mine own self), he shall live for ever.'—So, further, in v.⁵⁸ 'this is (οὗτός ἐστιν, *i.e.* I am) the bread which came down from heaven.'

And now let us come to chap. 19^{35ff.} and read that text in the light of the above observations. The writer says:—

καὶ ὁ ἑωρακὼς μεμαρτύρηκεν, καὶ ἀληθινὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία· καὶ ἐκεῖνος οἶδεν ὅτι ἀληθῆ λέγει, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς πιστεύσητε· ἐγένετο γὰρ ταῦτα. ἵνα¹ ἡ γραφὴ πληρωθῇ· ὅσπου οὐ συντριβήσεται αὐτοῦ· καὶ πάλιν ἑτέρα γραφὴ <ἡ> λέγει· ὀψονται εἰς ὃν ἐξεκέντησαν.

'Now it is he who hath seen (the above things) that hath borne testimony: and true (indeed) is his testimony; even **He** (the Lord) knoweth that he (the reporter) saith true, so that ye also may believe; for these things did happen. Would that the Scripture should be fulfilled, Not a bone of His shall be crushed! and again another Scripture <which> saith, They shall account unto Him whom they stabbed!'

The above text shows beyond all reasonable doubt: (1) that the reporter or writer claims to be an eye-witness; (2) that he asseverates his words by invoking Christ the Lord (ἐκεῖνος) as witness to the truth of his statements; (3) that he urges his addressees to believe him; (4) that he ends with a prayer that Christ's bones (which, in the writer's mind, appear as still undecayed, or intact) may not be desecrated, then with an imprecation that Jesus' murderers may answer in judgment for their crime (ὀψονται, *cf.* 3³⁶; Mt 27^{4, 24}, Ac 18¹⁵).

Equally suggestive are the closing two verses of appendix (21^{24f.}):—

οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ μαθητὴς ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ τούτων, καὶ ὁ γράψας ταῦτα. καὶ οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀληθῆς αὐτοῦ ἡ μαρτυρία ἐστίν. ἐστὶν δὲ καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ ἃ ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἅτινα ἐὰν γράφηται καθ' ἓν, οὐδ' αὐτὸν οἶμαι τὸν κόσμον χωρήσειν τὰ γραφόμενα βιβλία.

¹ Here *ἵνα* does not express the purpose of the previous clause, but stands adverbially like *elbe*. In the post-classical and subsequent history of Greek, we find that the infinitive, the optative, and the future indicative retreat, leaving their functions to *ἵνα* with the subjunctive. Accordingly, the colloquial speech of those times uses *ἵνα* before assertions, commands, and wishes as a strengthening adverb, corresponding* to classical *ὅπως, ἄγε* or *φέρε, εἰθε*: *do, let; would that!* This phenomenon is fully discussed in the *Expositor* of 1899, pp. 296–310, besides in my *Historical Greek Grammar* (where see *ἵνα* in the Index).

'I am the disciple who beareth testimony of these things, namely, he who hath written these things. And I do know (*i.e.* God knoweth) that my testimony is true. Now there are many other things besides which Jesus did, the which, if they are being written one by one, I think that not even the world will hold the books that can be written.'

In the first of these two verses we again recognize our anonymous disciple, who, however, now speaks in the indirect *first person*: 'my own self is (= *I am*) the writer of these things.' That *οὗτος* here stands for *ἐγὼ* appears unmistakably from the succeeding *οἶδαμεν* and *οἶμαι*, the former of which is a unipersonal plural equivalent to *οἶδα*,² and expresses the writer's customary asseveration, like the previous *ἐκεῖνος οἶδεν*. Nor can it be objected that this *οἶδαμεν* is a genuine plural referring to a congregated audience, and thus showing that the two verses in question form an addition or appendix on the part of the congregation intended to express their assent (like the responsive *amen*). Such an objection is refuted by the succeeding *οἶμαι*: **I deem, I suppose**, which is not parenthetical, since it governs the infinitive *χωρήσειν*.

Equally important is the closing part, in particular the words (*ἅτινα*) ἐὰν γράφηται, an expression misrendered in our versions by: 'if they should be written.' Had the writer such a meaning in his mind, he would have said: (*ἅτινα*) εἰ ἐγράφετο. But by writing (*ἅτινα*) ἐὰν γράφηται he meant: (which things) 'if they are actually in process of being written,' 'if people are busied with writing these things.' This incidental remark is very suggestive of the time when our Gospel, or rather its appendix, was composed. For it points to a time when people busied themselves with writing Gospels, or, to use Luke's introductory words, when 'many took in hand to rearrange a narrative of their own concerning those matters,' etc.

Up to this point we have seen that our anonymous disciple claims to be the writer of the Gospel, and that as such he speaks in the *first person*: *οὗτος* (= *ἐγὼ*), *οἶδαμεν οἶμαι*. This manner of self-designation meets us even in the prologue. Here in two passages, the genuineness of which

² As is well known, this unipersonal plural of modesty (*pluralis modestiæ*, often misnamed *pluralis maiestaticus*) is very common in Greek, especially in the speech of Græco-Roman times.

cannot be questioned, we read (1¹⁴): 'and *we* beheld (*ἑθεασάμεθα*) His glory'; then (1¹⁶): 'and of His fulness *we* all received' (*ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν*), where the writer includes himself among those who beheld and received. That the *we* here is *not* a unipersonal plural (for *I*) appears clearly from the second example, where the writer says: '*we* all (*all of us*) received.' So the writer speaks in the *first* person: *ἡμεῖς* and *οὗτος: we* and *I*: Now, who is this *We*? Who is this *I*? A short digression will lift up the veil.

All three Synoptists describe a grand scene in Jesus' life which we know as His 'Transfiguration,' a misrepresentation, by the way, of the Greek *μεταμόρφωσις* due to the Latin Vulgate, which mistranslates *μετεμορφώθη* by *transfiguratus est*. In that scene of the Transfiguration, which marks 'the culminating point in Jesus' life,' the Synoptists (Mk 9²⁻⁷, Mt 17¹⁻⁷, Lk 9²⁸⁻³⁵; also 2 P 1¹⁶⁻¹⁸) record that Jesus took Peter and James and John up on a high mountain, and there He was transformed before them (*μετεμορφώθη*, Lk *ἐγένετο ἕτερον τὸ εἶδος τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ*), His garments having become glistering (*στίλβοντα, λευκὰ ὡς τὸ φῶς*, Lk *λευκός ἐξαστράπτων*). And there appeared unto them (*ᾤφθη αὐτοῖς, ἰδοὺ ὀφθέντες ἐν δόξῃ*) Elijah and Moses, talking with Him. Peter then asked Jesus to allow him to make three tents or tabernacles (*σκηνὰς ποιῆσαι*). Then a call or voice (*φωνή*) came from the clouds: 'This is My beloved Son (*ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός*): Listen ye unto Him!'

Now, is it likely that this grand scene, this 'culminating point in Jesus' life,' should have been overlooked or ignored by the fourth evangelist? Surely this evangelist, whose object is to represent Jesus as the Son of God, could find no better evidence of Jesus' Divinity than His transformation, with God's direct behest: 'This is My beloved Son; listen ye unto Him.' A parallel examination of the Transfiguration scene, as narrated by the Synoptists, with some weighty and significant passages in the prologue, will throw the desired light.

After telling us in 1⁵ that, having been not comprehended by men, the *λόγος* of God 'became man' (*ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος*),¹ the writer further down (1¹⁴) proceeds by restating—

JOHN I. 14.

SYNOPTISTS.

καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο (so *μετεμορφώθη, ἐγένετο ἕτερος*. God's *logos* was made flesh, was transformed to flesh),

¹ See THE EXPOSITORY TIMES of last July, pp. 477 ff.

JOHN I. 14.

SYNOPTISTS.

καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῶν (and tented with us), καὶ ἑθεασάμεθα (and we beheld), τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ (His glory), δόξαν (splendour), ὡς μονογενοῦς (as of an only begotten), παρὰ πατρὸς¹ (and σκηνὰς ποιῆσαι. ᾤφθη αὐτοῖς, εἶδαν. τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, ἐλαμψε, τὸ φῶς. ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός (a μονογενῆς is naturally an ἀγαπητός υἱός). (πατήρ is implied in the υἱός μου²).

In this connexion we must also refer to the opening verses of the First Johannine Epistle: 'That which was from the beginning (*i.e.* God's *logos*: ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος), that which we heard (*ὁ ἀκηκόαμεν, i.e.* God's voice or behest: This is My beloved Son; listen ye unto Him), that which we saw (*ὁ ἐώρακαμεν, i.e.* Jesus' Transfiguration) with our own eyes, that which we beheld (*ὁ ἑθεασάμεθα, i.e.* His glory) and our own hands handled (*ἐψηλάφησαν, cf. Mt ἀψάμενος αὐτῶν*),³ concerning the word, the life (*περὶ τοῦ λόγου, τῆς ζωῆς*): yea, the life was *manifested* (*ἐφανερώθη, like μετεμορφώθη*), and we saw (*ἐώρακαμεν*), and we testify (*μαρτυροῦμεν*) and declare unto you the eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested (*ἐφανερώθη*) unto us; that which we saw and heard (*ὁ ἐώρακαμεν καὶ ἀκηκόαμεν*), declare we unto you also,' etc.; cf. also God's further testimony in Jn 3³³ 5^{32, 37} 8¹⁸, and 1 Jn 4¹⁴ 5⁹⁻¹⁰.

The above coincidences between the Synoptic narrative and the two Johannine prologues speak for themselves. Their striking agreement, both material and verbal, leaves hardly any doubt that they all refer to the same event: to Jesus' Transfiguration. Luke's statement alone that the three apostle's *εἶδαν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ*, when compared with the Johannine words *ἑθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ*, renders the identity absolutely certain. It is by recognizing this fact that we are now enabled to realize or recover the true meaning of the two Johannine prologues, especially the meaning of the hitherto mysterious though weighty statement: 'and the Word was made flesh and tabernacled (or tented) with us, and we beheld His glory, such a glory as of an only begotten son.'

² The correspondence or relationship between the two expressions is brought out more clearly if we adopt the reading *ὡς μόνος ἔχει ὁ υἱός παρὰ πατρός* as proposed in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES of April 1901, pp. 333 f.

³ Compare also the 'palpable' proofs given by Him at Thomas' demand in 20²⁴⁻²⁹, then Lk 24³⁹.

We are now further enabled to answer our main question, Who is the Fourth Evangelist or anonymous writer of whom we saw that he speaks of himself in the first person, now as *ὄντος* or *I*, and now as *ἡμεῖς* or *we*? The Synoptists reveal the mystery. They tell us that those who witnessed Jesus' Transfiguration were *three*: Peter and James and John. Our evangelist tells us: '*We* beheld His glory' or Transfiguration; in other terms, '*I* am one of the three disciples who beheld

the Transfiguration.' Well, who is this *I*? Is it Peter or James or *John*? The reply is self-evident; it is also authoritative, all three Synoptists vouching for it.

And now one more closing word: As the name *Ἰωάννης* or *Johanan* means 'one whom God favours,' can it not be that our evangelist's self-designation as *ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς*, 'whom Jesus loved,' is a mere translation of *Ἰωάννης* or *John*?

The Descent into Hell.

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THERE is probably no passage in the Western Creed so difficult of interpretation as that which affirms that Christ 'descended into Hell.' That there is some reference to a passage in Scripture is to be assumed; what that passage can be is not so easily perceived. The casual observer will probably dismiss the matter as of very minor interest; one, however, who has spared even a very small degree of interest for mediæval literature, will be aware that no item of Christian teaching received so large an amount of attention in the Middle Ages as did that; he may well suspect that there is more conveyed than at first appears; that there is, in fact, a very important problem of doctrinal evolution underlying the surface.

The usual modern explanation is that the 'Hell' intended is Hades, a place where the souls of the dead await the final judgment. So popular has this theory become, in the Church of England at any rate, that it is difficult to find one who will give even a hearing to any other view. Laying aside any idea of what is orthodox, or believed to be so at the present day, it may be of interest to inquire into the historic evolution of this interpretation. This 'Hades' view is generally rested on hermeneutic exposition. It is especially contended that the Paradise of which Christ spoke was this place of waiting. Such an interpretation is not of very ancient standing; the early writers seem to have used the word 'Paradise' as synonymous with 'Heaven': as, for example, Cyprian (*de exhort. Mart.*), Ambrose (on the death of

Valentinian), and others. In fact, the teaching of a waiting-place was the peculiar view of Origen, Tertullian, and possibly of Augustine, so far as one can get an understanding of his confused and contradictory teaching on the subject.

The ideas of the mediæval Church were widely different. There it was commonly supposed that this 'Hell' of the Creed was Limbus, the place where souls, whether of the just or unjust, waited for the death of Christ, and that He then descending thither led out with Him the souls of the righteous and took them to Heaven or Paradise, for mediæval theology made the two identical. Such is the only logical meaning of the words in the *Te Deum*: 'Tu devicto mortis aculeo: aperuisti credentibus regnum cœlorum.' The whole incident is described at length in the Gospel of Nicodemus, the most popular life of Christ known to the Middle Ages, and it formed the favourite subject of the miracle plays and of art. Now, granted that the Gospel of Nicodemus is not very ancient, of the fifth century, as Renan suggests (*Études d'Histoire Relig.*), or the end of the third, as Dr. Lipsius says (article 'Gospels, Apocryphal,' in Smith's *Dict. Chr. Biogr.*), it is older than the Apostles' Creed in its present form.

A closer examination of the Western Creeds will give some interesting results. The Aquileian form of 341 A.D. is the first which contains the passage 'descendit in inferna,' which thence passed into the modern Roman Creed, and into that which popularly goes by the name of Athanasius. It is entirely absent from the Formularies given