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The Case of the Purloined Apostle: Was the Beloved Disciple of the Fourth Gospel the Apostle Andrew?

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“The role of this disciple is too important to permit abandoning the search; the evidence is too baffling to permit a confident solution.”

Paul Minear, “The Beloved Disciple of the Gospel of John” (1977)¹

“He was a historical figure . . . [but] we must . . . be content with remaining in ignorance about the name of this beloved disciple.”

Oscar Cullman, *The Johannine Circle* (1976)²

“Perhaps it is the very simplicity of the thing which puts you at fault,” said my friend.

“What nonsense you do talk!” replied the Prefect, laughing heartily.

“Perhaps the mystery is a little too plain,” said Dupin.

“Oh, good heavens! who ever heard of such an idea?”

“A little too self-evident.”

“The Purloined Letter,” Edgar Allen Poe (1844)

Reopening the case

In the Fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John, there is a mysterious, anonymous disciple that Jesus loved (Jn 13:21-26; 19:25-27; 20:1-10; 21:1-24). Traditionally, this disciple has been thought to have been John the son of Zebedee, one of the twelve apostles. But the Gospel itself does not directly name the disciple Jesus loved, and there have been many theories concerning this figure’s identity. In this paper I give reasons for an identification of this figure which has received hardly any consideration in such discussions: the Apostle Andrew.

That was the argument of a paper I wrote in 1991 during my first semester as a graduate student in Near Eastern Studies at Cornell. The argument and references of this presentation are from that paper and in the same sequence, such that this is a shortened but faithful representation of

¹ Paul Minear, “The Beloved Disciple in the Gospel of John,” *NovT* 19 (1977): 105-123 at 105.

² Oscar Cullman, *The Johannine Circle* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1976), 77-78.

the argument of that 1991 paper. Other than a posting in April 1995 of an abstract of that paper on an electronic scholarly discussion list used by New Testament scholars, Ioudaios-L, this is my first public presentation of the paper or its argument.³⁴

In making this argument my first focus will be on the story of the Call of Peter of John 21.

The final chapter of the Gospel of John, chapter 21, offers a story of disciples fishing in Galilee. Some analyses of the beloved disciple discount this story. Scholars who argue that the beloved disciple was, for example, Lazarus, or a Jerusalem priest, typically disregard the portrayal of John 21 of the beloved disciple fishing with Peter in Galilee. Yet methodologically, even though John 21 came to its present position in the Fourth Gospel following a first ending of the Gospel at 20:31, it does not seem sound to consider John 21 of less bearing on the identity of the beloved disciple than any of the other beloved disciple passages.

The key point is that John 21 shows similarities to the story of the Call of Peter found in the synoptic gospels, so much so that the conclusion is these are *variant traditions of the same story*: Mark 1:16-20 (= Matthew 4:18-22), Luke 5:1-11, John 21:1-24, and John 1:40-42.⁵ That John 21 is a variant tradition of Peter's call of Mark 1 may be seen by attention to details. The setting is the same. This is

³ Gregory Doudna, "The Case of the Purloined Apostle: The Beloved Disciple of the Fourth Gospel Identified," Nov. 1, 1991, 50 pp., term paper submitted to Prof. Laurence Kant, Instructor, History of Early Christianity, Dept. of Near Eastern Studies, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

⁴ When I wrote the paper in 1991, argument for identification of the beloved disciple with the Apostle Andrew had been published only once in previous history, 151 years earlier in German: E. C. J. Lützelberger, *Die kirchliche Tradition über den Apostel Johannes und seine Schriften in ihrer Grundlosigkeit nachgewiesen* (Leipzig, F. A. Brockhaus, 1840), 183-209. That book was inaccessible to me at the time (the Cornell University Library did not have it) and it played no role in the formation of my argument. Throughout the twentieth century few scholarly studies mentioned the Apostle Andrew as an even hypothetical possibility for the beloved disciple's identity. For example, Andrew is not among eight possibilities examined by Joachim Kügler in *Der Jünger, den Jesus liebte* (1988), five possibilities examined by Joseph Grassi in *The Secret Identity of the Beloved Disciple* (1992), ten possibilities examined by R. Alan Culpepper in *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend* (1994), or nine possibilities noted by James Resseguie in *The Strange Gospel* (2001). Robert Barclay, *Introduction to John and the Acts of the Apostles* (Phila.: Westminster Press, 1976), after discussing a range of theories on the identity of the beloved disciple, listed the Apostle Andrew in a final category termed "a number of entirely unlikely candidates" without discussion, as if the suggestion was self-evidently far-fetched requiring no rebuttal (p. 106).

In April 1995 I posted an abstract of the argument of the Cornell paper on the electronic scholarly discussion list Ioudaios-L. The paper also received mention, though not by name, in an article in the July/August 1995 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* ("Did a Letter to BAR End a Cornell Graduate Student's Career?"), in which a university official is quoted characterizing the paper as speculative. Since then, two scholarly studies have been published arguing that the beloved disciple was the Apostle Andrew: Klaus Berger (no citation of the prior work of Lützelberger), *Im Anfang war Johannes: Datierung und Theologie des vierten Evangeliums* (Stuttgart: Quell, 1997), 96-106, and James Patrick (no citation of the prior work of Berger), *Andrew of Bethsaida and the Johannine Circle: The Muratorian Tradition and the Gospel Text* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013). Both of these studies echo the argument of my 1991 Cornell paper presented here.

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⁵ The suggestion that John 21:1-24 is a doublet of John 1:40-42 was an early insight and focus of my friend Russell Gmirkin (personal communication).

the one memorable incident of Peter fishing in either Gospel. When in Mark 1 Jesus promises Peter he will be a fisher of men, that correlates with Jesus's words in John 21 calling Peter to leave his fish. In both Mark 1 and John 21 Jesus calls Peter away from his fishing boat to go with Jesus. Jesus's command to Peter of Mark 1:17, "Follow me" (Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου), and of John 21:22, "Follow me!" (Ἀκολούθει μοι), are the same in each of the stories, as is the fact that Peter does so in each.

Rather than two originally independent stories in which Peter leaves his boat and nets to follow Jesus—the second omitted in Mark, the first omitted in John, both containing, by coincidence, identical features—these are variants of a single tradition, despite chronological displacement.

This is the important point: when at John 21:19-20 Peter and *the beloved disciple* are portrayed as following Jesus, this corresponds to Mark 1:18 in which Peter and Andrew follow Jesus. To summarize:

- Mark's and Matthew's Galilee fishing story features Peter, Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee.
- John 21's Galilee fishing story features Peter, the *beloved disciple*, the sons of Zebedee and others.
- The *beloved disciple* corresponds to Andrew, in the structure of the parallel.

Given that Mark and Matthew depict Andrew fishing with Peter, in John 21 the absence of Andrew by name among the disciples fishing with Peter is striking. Since John 21 repeats proper names of other characters introduced earlier in the Fourth Gospel—Peter, Thomas, and Nathanael—the absence of Andrew by name in John 21 is peculiar. In the Fourth Gospel Andrew is the *first* disciple of Jesus (Jn 1:35-40). Yet Andrew is not mentioned by name after the beloved disciple enters the text in chapter 13. That is not true of Peter, Thomas, Philip, or Nathanael. The reason Andrew does not appear by name after the beloved disciple enters the text may be because the beloved disciple is Andrew.

In the synoptic gospels, Andrew is overshadowed by his more famous brother Simon Peter. The synoptic gospels commonly speak of "Peter, James, and John"—leaving Andrew, the brother of Peter, out of the picture, in the background, in obscurity. By contrast, in the Fourth Gospel Andrew plays a much more significant role. There are three scenes in which Andrew appears by name in the Fourth Gospel, all occurring before the Last Supper.

John 1:35-42. Andrew the first disciple of Jesus

John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).⁶

⁶ New Testament quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV) throughout.

Andrew is the first disciple of Jesus in the Gospel of John. Andrew is the first disciple to believe Jesus is the Christ—which is the purpose of the writing of the Fourth Gospel according to John 20:31. Andrew is the agency by which Simon Peter comes to know this (1:40-42).

We reflect and begin to discern that Andrew's role in the Fourth Gospel may reflect a competitive relationship between the community of the Fourth Gospel, in Asia Minor, and the church at Rome claiming the authority of Peter, perhaps reflected in the narrative depictions of these two figures in the Fourth Gospel. This priority, in the Fourth Gospel, of *Andrew before Peter*, in belief that Jesus is the Christ—and Andrew's mediation between Peter and Jesus in John 1—is the *identical* role carried out later in the Fourth Gospel by the *beloved disciple* with respect to Peter and Jesus.

Interestingly, many scholars suppose the beloved disciple is present as a narrative character in this opening scene of John 1:35-40, based on an argument that the text later indicates the beloved disciple was with Jesus "from the beginning" (15:27). Based on that indirect argument or intuition much scholarly attention has focused on the unnamed disciple with Andrew in this scene. Who could the beloved disciple in this scene possibly be?

This calls to mind the famous short story, "The Purloined Letter," by the nineteenth-century American writer Edgar Allen Poe. In this classic story, set in nineteenth-century Paris, detectives thoroughly search every nook and cranny of an apartment seeking to find a particular incriminating document (a letter) that they believe is somewhere in that apartment. But despite all their efforts they are unable to find the letter. The letter had cleverly been hidden in open view in such a way that, even though it had been seen, it had not been recognized. Ever since, the "Purloined Letter" has entered the English language as a way of referring to the phenomenon of something invisible in perception even though in open view.

So, it may be with respect to the identity of the beloved disciple in the scene of John 1:35-40. The text never says the beloved disciple in this scene is a figure *other* than Andrew. That assumption is an artifact of scholarly interpretation, not the text itself. Like the detectives in "The Purloined Letter," countless exegetes, it may be suggested, have failed to appreciate that the text's figure of interest in this scene featuring Andrew is . . . *Andrew*. The identity of the beloved disciple in this scene may have gone unnoticed in the history of scholarship despite that disciple being visible and openly named, just as in the story of the Purloined Letter.

To be clear, this is not a suggestion that the authors intentionally concealed the beloved disciple's identity, any more than any other use of a term of endearment for a person is intended to conceal identity. In this reconstruction there was no mystery to the authors or first readers concerning the identity. The question is anachronistic brought about by later readers lacking knowledge of original context. The shift internal to the Fourth Gospel from use of proper name to description of endearment may reflect sources used in composition. The "Purloined Letter" image is intended as an ironic commentary on the way the beloved disciple figure's identity became a mystery in the later history of reader reception.

John 6:4-11. The feeding of the five thousand and Andrew

Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." One of his

disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.

This story can be read as the apostle Andrew being in contact with the women-and-children component of this gathering, or having some responsibility relative to them; compare the beloved disciple accompanies the women at the scene of the crucifixion at John 19:25-27.

John 12:20-22. Greeks' access to Jesus and Andrew

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

In this scene Andrew is in a mediating role between Greeks and Jesus. The Gospel may be suggesting a tradition of Greek-speakers' access to Jesus through Andrew rather than through Simon Peter.

After these scenes in the Fourth Gospel ending at 12:20-22, Andrew disappears by name. Just *disappears*. Starting in chapter 13 the disciple Jesus loved *appears*, by that designation. The timing of the disappearance of Andrew at the point of introduction of the beloved disciple—with both of these figures relating to Simon Peter in exactly the same way—is consistent with the beloved disciple being a continuation of Andrew by other language, in the narrative of the Fourth Gospel.

Now I will discuss the remaining beloved disciple passages.

John 13:21-26. The beloved disciple at the Last Supper

After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table in the bosom of Jesus, so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

Just as at John 1:40-42, in which Andrew is intermediary between his brother Peter and Jesus, so at the Last Supper the beloved disciple is intermediary between Peter and Jesus. The role of *Andrew* with Peter at 1:40-42 is comparable to the role of the *beloved disciple* with Peter at 13:21-26.

- Means of access to Jesus for Peter (John 1): *Andrew*
- Means of access to Jesus for Peter (John 13): *beloved disciple*
- *Andrew* = *beloved disciple*

The Fourth Gospel uses the Last Supper as a setting for dialogues between Jesus and the disciples present with him on that occasion in the story (Jn 13-16). At various points in these dialogues certain disciples are portrayed by name asking questions, which Jesus answers. These named disciples are Simon Peter (13:36), Thomas (14:5), Philip (14:8), and Judas not Iscariot (14:22). *Andrew* is *not named*. The simplest explanation for why Andrew is missing, after the beloved disciple appears in the

text, is because the beloved disciple is Andrew.

John 19:25-27. The beloved disciple takes Jesus's mother into his home

But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" ("Ἴδε ἡ μήτηρ σου) And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home (εἰς τὰ ἴδια).

Compare the passage above from the Gospel of John with these from the synoptic gospels below:

Mark 1:21, 29 (= Matt 8:14; Lk 4:31-38)

And they went into Capernaum . . . And immediately [Jesus] left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

Mark 3:31-35 (= Matt 12:46-50; Lk 8:19-21)

And his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to [Jesus], "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!" ("Ἴδε ἡ μήτηρ μου, καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί μου) For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

The words spoken by Jesus from the cross to the beloved disciple of John 19:26-27—"Behold, your mother!"—are the same in sense as the words of Jesus of the story in the synoptic gospels set in Capernaum, in Galilee, above in Mark 3. It may be that a version of the story of Mark 3:31-35 in Capernaum is reflected in the writing of the Fourth Gospel, set in the Fourth Gospel at the scene of the crucifixion.⁷

The story of Mark 3 reads as taking place at "the house of Simon and Andrew" (Mk 1:29). In this story Jesus is teaching disciples and hearers inside the house. Outside the house, Jesus's mother and brothers arrive and wish to see him. When Jesus is told his mother and brothers are outside, Jesus gestures to his hearers inside the house and says, "Here are my mother and my brothers!" Without too much imagination we may reconstruct what happened next in this Capernaum story, even if the Gospel of Mark does not complete the story: Peter and Andrew, in accord with Jesus's instruction, take Jesus's mother into their home as if she were their own mother, with an implication of inclusion economically in the household.

An editor of the Fourth Gospel had a version of this story told from the point of view of the beloved disciple—a story in which the beloved disciple took the mother of Jesus into his own home as if she were his own mother. The editor of the Fourth Gospel inserted an allusion to the beloved disciple version of that story and the memorable saying of Jesus of that story into the scene of the crucifixion at John 19:26-27, instead of at Capernaum in Galilee as in the Gospel of Mark. In other words, the identical saying of Jesus in these two Gospel accounts juxtaposed with allusions to the identical theme of Jesus's mother entering a disciple's household, at Mark 3:31-35 and John 19:26-27, reflect variant allusions to the same story.

⁷ Suggested by Russell Gmirkin (personal communication). Surprisingly, to the present day I am not aware of a published suggestion or discussion of this possibility in scholarly literature.

If this reconstruction is correct—that Mark 3:31-35 and John 19:26-27 allude to or reflect variant versions of the same story—the identity of the beloved disciple may be deduced through the following line of reasoning, by comparison of the variants of the story in the Gospel of Mark and in the Gospel of John. The disciple who took Jesus’s mother into his home, of the story allusion which appears in John 19, cannot be Simon Peter, since Peter is distinguished from the beloved disciple elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel. The disciple reflected in the beloved disciple passage of John 19, when analyzed in the light of Mark 3:31-35, therefore, is the *other* owner of the house of Peter and Andrew in Capernaum—*Andrew*—who, in the tradition fragment located at John 19:25-27, *took the mother of Jesus into his own home as if she were his own mother.*

Jesus’s mother → household of Andrew (Gospel of Mark)

Jesus’s mother → household of beloved disciple (Gospel of John)

Andrew = beloved disciple

Jn 20:1-10. The beloved disciple at the empty tomb

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.

Andrew would be a plausible identity of the disciple running with Peter to the empty tomb in this scene, given that they are brothers and elsewhere in the gospels are portrayed in physical proximity as brothers. However, the key point in this scene is that the beloved disciple is the first to believe (that Jesus is risen), before Peter. This again hearkens back to John 1:41 in which *Andrew* is the *first* disciple to believe that Jesus is the Christ, *before Peter*. Again, there is a parallelism: *Andrew* and *Peter* in John 1; the *beloved disciple* and *Peter* in John 20. Andrew corresponds to the beloved disciple, in the structure of the parallel.

First to believe, *before Peter* (John 1): Andrew

First to believe, *before Peter* (Jn 20): beloved disciple

Andrew = beloved disciple

In short, in every scene in which the beloved disciple appears in the Fourth Gospel, from the Last Supper onward, the beloved disciple reads very well and naturally as other language for the Apostle Andrew.

Now I am going to turn from this analysis internal to the Fourth Gospel to tradition in external history. I am going to show that the earliest claim of apostolic authority for the composition

of the Fourth Gospel in *external* tradition *also* was none other than the Apostle Andrew.

The Muratorian Fragment and the Purloined Apostle

“*purloin . . . [from] ME [Middle English] purloinen to put away, render ineffectual . . . to appropriate wrongfully and often by a breach of trust*”

Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1984)

The Muratorian Fragment—ca. 170-220 CE⁸—is an ancient list of writings used in early Christian churches. The longest section in this text—the section of interest here—is this text’s story of the origin of the Fourth Gospel. Here is the Muratorian Fragment:⁹

The fourth gospel is that of John, one of the disciples [*iohannis ex dicipolis*]. When his fellow-disciples and bishops [*condescipulis et eps*] entreated him, he said, “Fast ye now with me for the space of three days, and let us recount to each other whatever may be revealed to each of us.” On the same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the apostles [*andreae ex apostolis*], that John should narrate all things in his own name as they called them to mind (or, with the recognition of all) [*ut recogniscentibus cuntis iohannis suo nomine cuncta describeret*].

In this tradition Andrew is identified as an apostle. John, on the other hand, is not identified as an apostle. John in this story reads as identical to the figure known to the second-century CE writer Papias as “John the Elder” of Asia Minor.¹⁰ It is implied in the Muratorian Fragment that Andrew is both the apostolic authority for and a source for the Fourth Gospel, even though the Fourth Gospel is published in the name of John, who is not said to be an apostle.

Within New Testament scholarship I have found that the role of the Apostle Andrew in the production of the Fourth Gospel in this origin story of the Fourth Gospel—in the Muratorian Fragment—typically is considered to be a simple ancient curiosity without further significance, otherwise ignored. At the same time, many scholars believe that the Fourth Gospel drew upon a beloved disciple source, often despairing of ever being able to attach a name or identity to that source. It has not been considered that this ancient tradition in the Muratorian Fragment discloses the *name* of the beloved disciple source: *Andrew*.

Arnold Ehrhardt commented in a 1953 study entitled “The Gospels in the Muratorian Fragment”: “[I]t appears that the Muratorian Fragment gives no more than an allusion to an earlier and well-known anecdote.”¹¹ “What is certain is the fact that the Muratorian Fragment, a Roman document, gave prominence to St. Andrew who, in the Hierapolitan group of churches in Asia Minor, was exalted above the ‘Roman’ Apostle St. Peter.”¹² “Although the Muratorian Fragment is the only source which records this legend in detail, there are traces which show that it was widely circulated .

⁸ Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 191-201.

⁹ The translation is that of Roberts-Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Latin misspellings in the brackets are from the Muratorian Fragment.

¹⁰ See below for the citation from Papias.

¹¹ Arnold A.T. Ehrhardt, “The Gospels in the Muratorian Fragment,” in *Ostkirchliche Studien* 2 (1953), 121-38, republished in Arnold Ehrhardt, *The Framework of the New Testament Stories* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 11-36 at 20.

¹² Ehrhardt, “Gospels in the Muratorian Fragment,” 23.

. .¹³ According to Ehrhardt, the legend in the Muratorian Fragment derived from Papias of the early second century CE.¹⁴

Ehrhardt traced relations between the church at Rome and churches of the East and reconstructed that Andrew was *dropped* in the legend of the origin of the Fourth Gospel. For example, Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-225 CE), writing early in the third century CE, tells the same tradition in which the Fourth Gospel is written by John after consultation.

*John, last of all, conscious that the outward facts had been set forth in the [other] Gospels, was urged on by his disciples, and divinely moved by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel.*¹⁵

This story of Clement reflects the same tradition as that of the Muratorian Fragment—but *Andrew is missing!* The Apostle Andrew’s vision in which divine approval was conveyed through him for the writing of the Fourth Gospel is *now attributed to John*. The Apostle Andrew not only has lost his divine vision, he has been *disappeared altogether*—he is *gone* from the story. It is this *later* version—the version *without* Andrew—which became the received ecclesiastical tradition concerning the origin of the Fourth Gospel.

The weight of probability argues for the version in the Muratorian Fragment being earlier, and Clement’s version the later, development in these two versions of the story. The presence of Andrew is the anomaly, the detail not easily explained, and for that reason more likely earlier. Ehrhardt concluded that the Muratorian Fragment reflects an earlier time when the church at Rome needed to honor Asia Minor sympathies by including the Andrew story, but subsequently Andrew was dropped from the story as the Roman church increased in authority and no longer needed the non-Roman Andrew for legitimization of the Fourth Gospel.¹⁶ This was the conclusion of Ehrhardt: “The two stories [Muratorian Fragment’s and Clement’s] are not identical, but two separate branches of an established tradition, of which Clement’s is later.”¹⁷

The apostle claimed as the apostolic authority for the Fourth Gospel at the earliest stage accessible to historians therefore was not John the son of Zebedee, but rather Andrew. But the Apostle Andrew was dropped, and a *non*-apostle, John the Elder of Asia Minor, became retroactively promoted to apostle status and credited with being the apostolic authority for the Fourth Gospel, instead of Andrew.

This appears to be the surprising true sequence in the formation of the tradition. This is why I chose in the title of my Cornell paper long ago to refer with double-entendre to the Apostle Andrew as “the Purloined Apostle.” “Purloined” means stolen or wrongly appropriated. Andrew’s divine vision authorizing the Fourth Gospel—in the story in the Muratorian Fragment—was wrongly

¹³ Ehrhardt, “Gospels in the Muratorian Fragment,” 19.

¹⁴ Among other arguments in support of this conclusion, Ehrhardt saw use of Papias in the first surviving words of the Muratorian Fragment, which is a broken sentence about the Gospel of Mark reading *quibus tamen interfuit et ita posuit*. Ehrhardt compared the Latin *quibus interfuit* and *et ita posuit* to ὅσα ἐμνημόνευσεν and ἀκριβῶς ἔγραψεν, respectively, of a sentence of Papias which Ehrhardt argued not only carried the same sense in meaning but “the construction of the sentence too is identical, and thus the conclusion is at hand that we have here a trace of the use of Papias’ work” (Ehrhardt, “Gospels in the Muratorian Fragment,” 12-13).

¹⁵ Quoted in Eusebius, *H.E.* 6.14.7 (LCL [Oulton]).

¹⁶ Ehrhardt, “Gospels in the Muratorian Fragment,” 35-36.

¹⁷ Ehrhardt, “Gospels in the Muratorian Fragment,” 20.

appropriated, taken from him. The apostle Andrew's role in the Fourth Gospel—his identity as the disciple Jesus loved—was *purloined* (wrongly appropriated) anciently. Andrew's identity as this figure was forgotten, relegated to oblivion. Andrew became the *Purloined Apostle*. Like the purloined letter in the Poe story, Andrew in the Fourth Gospel is in open view. But, like the purloined letter of the Poe story, Andrew as the beloved disciple is not *recognized*.

Papias's list of apostles

Papias (ca. 60-130 CE) wrote in the first half of the second century CE, in Hierapolis in Asia Minor. In the synoptic gospels and Acts, all of the apostle lists begin with Simon Peter.¹⁸ But Papias's list begins with *Andrew* first. Peter is second. The apostle John, the son of Zebedee, is way down in number six position in Papias's list of seven. Here is Papias:

For unlike most I did not rejoice in them who say much, but in them who teach the truth, nor in them who recount the commandments of others, but in them who repeated those given to the faith by the Lord and derived from truth itself; but if ever anyone came who had followed the presbyters [elders], I inquired into the words of the presbyters [elders], what Andrew or Peter or Philip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples, had said, and what Aristion and the presbyter [elder] John, the Lord's disciples, were saying.¹⁹

With Andrew being first in Papias's list, and Andrew the first named disciple to believe that Jesus is the Christ encountered by the reader of the Fourth Gospel, this community's *apostle of special interest* appears to have been *Andrew*. The question then becomes: did these churches of Asia Minor originally claim John of Zebedee as a *second* apostle of special interest in *addition to Andrew*? The thesis of this paper is that there is no evidence of a *second* apostle of special interest embraced in the Fourth Gospel as an alternative to Peter. The *one* apostolic alternative to Peter, Andrew, accounts for all of the data relevant to the Fourth Gospel.

In short, the identity of the beloved disciple of the Fourth Gospel indicated on grounds *internal* to the text is the same as that indicated from the earliest *external* tradition, in both cases the Apostle Andrew.

The Eastern Church Purloined

In the extensive discussions of the identity of the beloved disciple of the Fourth Gospel in the history of scholarship, the possibility that this disciple might be the Apostle Andrew has hardly ever been considered. Why is that? There does not seem to be any obvious reason why scholars in modern times would rule out the possibility, nor is there any known bias among modern Christians or scholars against the figure of the apostle Andrew. Yet, Andrew's potential significance in the Fourth Gospel—as the identity of the beloved disciple—has remained invisible.

Andrew's invisibility is not new. The fifth-century writer Philip of Side, quoting Papias's list of apostles, omitted Andrew from his list.²⁰ There was no malevolence in this. Philip of Side seems to have left off Andrew, the first name on Papias's list, by simple mistake. And we have seen how an

¹⁸ Matt 10:2-4; Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:13-16; Acts 1:12-13.

¹⁹ Quoted in Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.39.1-4 (LCL [Lake]).

²⁰ Philip of Side, *Frg.* 4.6: "When making an enumeration of the apostles, [Papias] enrolled among the disciples of the Lord, together with Peter and John, Philip and Thomas and Matthew, also Aristion and another John whom he also called an Elder."

earlier legend of Andrew's role in the production of the Fourth Gospel, preserved in the Muratorian Fragment, was lost—replaced by a different version of the same story with no mention of Andrew, which became the received tradition concerning the origin of the Fourth Gospel.

But Andrew's invisibility is not simply a phenomenon posterior to the New Testament. Andrew's invisibility—a process of Andrew becoming invisible—can be seen in the synoptic gospels themselves. In the synoptic gospels it is nearly always the trio “Peter, James, and John”—three names spoken together as Jesus's inner circle—with Andrew, the fourth member of the two sets of brothers, inexplicably *missing*. (The Fourth Gospel has no parallel to this trio so central to the synoptic gospels.)

The Gospel of Luke, the latest of the synoptic gospels, has no mention of Andrew at Peter's call at Luke 5:1-11, compared to the earlier Mark 1:16-20 which does have Andrew at Peter's call. Traces of a vanishing Andrew can be seen within a progression in the synoptic gospels, when the earlier Gospel of Mark is compared with the later Gospel of Luke. The book of Acts, by the same author as the Gospel of Luke, has extensive stories of Simon Peter. But *Andrew*, Peter's brother, appears in passing only once in the book of Acts and then only in the most innocuous way, in a list of names of the twelve apostles in the first chapter at Acts 1:13. After that, Andrew is wholly missing in the book of Acts, in stark contrast to the prominence given to the many stories of Simon Peter.

And so there is this paradox: the Apostle Andrew is downplayed in the synoptic Gospels and Acts almost to the vanishing point. And yet there is nothing about the Apostle Andrew which would seem to account for bias against him.

Or is there? If Simon Peter was claimed by the church of Rome as its founding apostle and claim to authority, what did it mean that there were stories that Simon Peter had a brother who believed first and was responsible for bringing Peter to Christ? To this day, the Apostle Andrew is known as the patron saint of Eastern Orthodoxy (formally: patron saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople). Yet Eastern Orthodoxy has been “invisible” in a sense in the Western world. In my experience, growing up Protestant in the American Midwest, I learned that there were two kinds of Christians: Catholic and Protestant. One was either one or the other. Christians who were not Roman Catholic were Protestant by default. It is not that this great Eastern Church, this faith of hundreds of millions of people in the world neither Catholic nor Protestant for whom Andrew is patron saint, is *hidden* or *secret*, either today or in history. But in terms of *consciousness* Orthodox Christianity in a sense was *invisible* in the world in which I grew up—not included in everyday language of Christianity understood as consisting of “Catholics and Protestants.” I am not Orthodox. I am making a point about the Purloined Letter phenomenon. By a curious coincidence, the phenomenon of invisibility in public view which applies to the apostle Andrew in his role as the beloved disciple of the Fourth Gospel widens in application in western eyes to what might be called the Church of Andrew.

And so in the closing words of my 1991 Cornell paper I reflected on the figure of the Apostle Andrew of the Fourth Gospel as illustrative of a wider phenomenon of invisibilities in public view:

Why is Andrew invisible? . . . It is interesting that this invisible apostle—the Purloined Apostle, as I have termed him—is, by coincidence, the one apostle in the Gospels uniquely associated with both women and children—who have also tasted what it means to be marginalized, to exist, but be invisible. Thus not only is Andrew invisible, but by a curious coincidence, everything Andrew touches has also had experience with invisibility—the non-Peter half of Christianity which esteems Andrew; women; children—by this logic, the eminently reasonable logic of this paper, advocating, as it does, the visibility

of Andrew, may also remain invisible.

Andrew all the day long praised with his stories the teaching of the holy one

until now sleep came over him on the whale's road near Heaven's king.

Then the giver of life commanded his angels to carry him over the surging waves,

Bear him over the fathoms in the Father's care.

from "Andreas," a medieval Old English rendition of the "Acts of Andrew"²¹

²¹ Robert Boenig, trans., *The Acts of Andrew in the Country of the Cannibals. Translations from the Greek, Latin, and Old English* (New York: Garland, 1991), 94.