The Phrase τὰῦτα εἰπὼν in the Gospel According to John

With the widespread interest that inspires the work of our colleague Schippers, embracing as it does New Testament studies, ethics, and the development of Calvinism past and present, the contributor to this Festschrift is faced with an embarrassment du choix. It would be tempting for me, for instance, to take up the topic of “Hervormd-Gereformeerd” [denominational issues in the Dutch Reformed churches] again, with which the master interviewer Dr. G. Puchinger confronted both of us six years ago and which we then tackled in the form of a monologue.Independently of each other, we then looked back on the path that lay behind us with the topic of that collection in mind. It would be attractive now to spin the thread a little further. But on closer consideration it seemed more appropriate to remain a little closer to our “refuge”, realizing that the honouree and I are linked not only in a general sense by our “profession” (and happily not as colleagues whose hallmark is that they are not “miteinander einverstanden”), but in particular through a close and cordial collaboration for many years in the context of the Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap [Netherlands Bible Society].

I think back with fondness on the many hours spent together with other colleagues looking for a fine-tuned Dutch translation of the Greek text, but then also on the enjoyable leadership which Schippers gave as the chair of the executive committee for translations in the discussion of the many problems of policy with regard to the work of translation with which the Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap was and is faced. And besides this I am not forgetting everything that he contributed as supervisor of various editions.

So it seems appropriate in gratitude for this collaboration to offer him a discussion of a small translation problem. And this essay is presented to the honouree with the wish that he will be given many more years to help in understanding the meaning of the Word.

In the Gospel of John we find eleven instances of the phrase τὰῦτα εἰπὼν in various forms, to which we may add τοῦτο εἰπὼν in 21:9. At first sight the translation would seem to present no difficulties. The demonstrative pronoun τὰῦτα

* Translated from the Dutch by David E. Orton.
refers to its antecedent and is often linked with “to say.” In the commentaries it is therefore unusual to draw attention to it. Schnackenburg alone indicates in passing that this phrase is quite common in John, but he does not present more than just a survey of the texts.

If one consults the translations a degree of variation may be observed, but this does not indicate more than the variation customary in the translation of a participle like this.

See for instance John 7:9:

Statenvertaling: “als Hij deze dingen tot hen gezegd had…” (when He had said these things to them)
Lutherse vertaling: “toen hij dit tot hen gezegd had…” (when he had said these things to them)
Leidse vertaling: “na dit gezegd te hebben” (after having said this)
Brouwer: “zo sprak Hij to hen” (thus he spoke to them)
Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap: “nadat Hij dit tot hen gezegd had” (after He had said this to them)
Willibrord: “ Zo sprak Hij tot hen” (thus He spoke to them)
Groot Nieuws voor U: “Dat was zijn antwoord” (that was his answer)
Moffatt: “so saying”
New English Bible: “with this answer”

John 9:6:

Statenvertaling: “Dit gezegd hebbende,” (having said this)
Lutherse vertaling, Leidse vertaling: as above
Brouwer: “toen hij dit gezegd had” (when he had said this)
Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap: “na dit gezegd te hebben” (after having said this)
Willibrord, Groot Nieuws voor U: “toen hij dit gezegd had” (when he had said this)
Moffatt, New English Bible: “with these words”

---

2 W. Bauer, Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur, Berlin 51958, 1183, 1b.