
The John, Jesus, and History Project—New Glimpses of Jesus and a Bi-Optic Hypothesis

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The John, Jesus, and History Project grew out of a concern that neither Johannine nor Jesus studies had dealt adequately with the question of history. Indeed, the Gospel of John is the most theological of the four canonical Gospels, but it also contains more archaeological and topographical detail than all the other Gospels combined. Further, it is the only Gospel containing explicit claims to having been rooted in first-hand encounters with Jesus and eyewitness memories of his ministry. These claims may be false, and the contents could be falsified, but how is this known with certainty? Given that negative certainty is even more difficult to establish than positive claims, are the bases upon which some critical scholars over the last two centuries have excluded nearly all Johannine content from the quest for the Jesus of history worthy? These are but a few of the issues the John, Jesus, and History Project has sought to address, and this essay outlines the interests, methods, and results of that inquiry.

First, however, an introduction to the Project is in order. In 2000, Tom Thatcher, Felix Just, and I met together with Eldon J. Epp at the national SBL meetings in Nashville, discussing the fact that aspects of John's historicity have been under-treated in recent years, contributing to its pervasive exclusion from Jesus studies. We recruited R. Alan Culpepper, Mary Coloe, D. Moody Smith, and Jaime Clark-Soles to join us on the steering committee, representing a variety of solid approaches to the Johannine tradition between us. Tom Thatcher then proposed a new Consultation to the SBL program committee, and it was granted official status a year later. It was awarded "Group" status three years after that, which meant we were allowed two sessions a year instead of one; the term "Project" includes our published works and other ventures in addition to our official sessions.

We worked on methodological issues our first three years (2002-2004), and we addressed aspects of historicity in the Fourth Gospel our second three years (2005-2007). We have now launched our final three years, as we explore glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine lens (2008-2010), which promises the final payoff from our Project. Our plan is to publish three major volumes of essays presented and discussed in our seminars (2007, 2009, 2011), drawing in leading Johannine and Jesus scholars internationally and engaging important issues along the way.¹ In addition, a variety of corollary projects and offshoots are anticipated, and some of these have already been published. Attendance at our sessions has been quite strong—between 100 and 300 on the average, and an international group of over 500 scholars on our e-list receives our papers. This is one of those ventures that could make a difference, and indeed the interest is strong.

¹ Our three volumes, published and anticipated, are as follows: *John, Jesus, and History, Vol. 1: Critical Appraisals of Critical Views* (2007); *John, Jesus, and History, Vol. 2: Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel* (anticipated in 2009); *John, Jesus, and History, Vol. 3: Glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine Lens* (anticipated in 2011); the first two volumes are edited by Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, S.J., and Tom Thatcher (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press; Leiden: E.J. Brill).

I. The Interests of this Project

The need for such a project has been felt by many scholars for some time, but the difficulty has been with knowing how to approach the questions involved. On one hand, because John is so different from the Synoptic Gospels, the tendency has been to side with the Markan Gospels, three-against-one, with the Fourth Gospel being the lone Gospel out—the historical loser. Jesus' teaching in parables about the Kingdom of God is an obvious case in which the Synoptic presentation of Jesus seems historically preferable to the highly theologized I-Am sayings of the Johannine Jesus. Further, the Synoptic Jesus casts out demons, but the Fourth Gospel has no exorcisms. Also problematic, while the Synoptic Jesus speaks in short, pithy aphorisms, the Johannine Jesus expands in long discourses upon a cluster of themes that clearly reflect the theological interests of the Evangelist. For these and other reasons, scholars have felt that the distinctive Johannine material reflects the theologizing interests of the Evangelist rather than the historical ministry of Jesus.

On the other hand, several features of the Johannine presentation of Jesus have long seemed to possess their own claims to historicity, even over and against the Synoptics. Jesus' traveling to and from Jerusalem in John seems more realistic than the single visit to Jerusalem of the Synoptics. Likewise, Jesus' ministry over a two- or three-year span seems more plausible than the Synoptic partial-year ministry, leading up to a singular Passover festival at which Jesus dies. Further, such topographical details as the ministry of John the Baptist taking place across the Jordan (Jn. 1:28; 3:26; 10:40) and in Aenon near Salim (Jn. 3:23), the five porticoes surrounding the two pools of Beth-zatha in Jerusalem (Jn. 5:2), the stone pavement supporting Pilate's judgment bench (Jn. 19:13), the Samaritan worship site upon Mt. Gerizim (Jn. 4:20) and the location of Jacob's well in Sychar (Jn. 4:6) all point with accuracy to first-hand familiarity with the Palestinian terrain before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.² In addition, political and religious features betray palpable historical realism within the Johannine memory. Jewish tensions with Samaritans (Jn. 4:9) and purity concerns about defilement before the Passover (Jn. 18:28; 19:31) suggest first-hand acquaintance with Palestine and its environs, despite their later delivery in a Hellenistic setting. And, more than a few features in John appear to be setting the record straight when compared to the Markan witness. These and other features of John have caused scholars to wonder about how to address aspects of historicity in the Johannine witness, especially given its similarities with and differences from the Synoptic presentations of Jesus.

Indeed, some differences cannot be harmonized between John and the Synoptics, such as the question of whether the Temple cleansing was at the end of Jesus' ministry, as in the Synoptics, or at the beginning of his ministry, as in John. This sort of feature has caused most scholars to favor the historicity of the Synoptic presentation over the Johannine. However, if Matthew and Luke built *upon* Mark, is it really a three-against-one dichotomy, or is it more pointedly a Mark-versus-John contrast? And, given the fact

² John's archaeological details were pointed out by William Foxwell Albright, "Recent Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of St John," in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology: In Honour of Charles Harold Dodd* (ed. by W. D. Davies and D. Daube; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 153-71), and noted by Raymond E. Brown, "The Problem of Historicity in John," *CBQ* 24 (1963): 1-14. See also the essays in *Jesus and Archaeology* (edited by James Charlesworth; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) by Paul N. Anderson ("Aspects of Historicity in John—Implications for the Investigations of Jesus and Archaeology," 587-618) and Urban von Wahlde ("Archaeology and John's Gospel," 523-86).

that Mark locates all of Jesus' controversies with religious leaders and judgment sayings at the end, after he arrives in Jerusalem, can it really be claimed that Mark's itinerary is ordered by strict chronological knowledge as opposed to a conjectural narrative climax? The problem of historicity in Mark is every bit as vexing as the problem of historicity in John, and if Mark got it wrong, so did Matthew and Luke.

Similar problems accompany the dating of the last supper; John presents it as occurring on the day before the Passover (Jn. 13:1; 19:31, 42), but Mark presents it as a Passover meal—filled with cultic significance (Mk. 14:12, 14, 16). While some scholars explain the Johannine dating of the meal as a factor of theological interest (the supper took place on the Day of Preparation, when the Paschal lambs were killed; mentioned in Mk. 14:12 and Lk. 22:7, but *not* mentioned in John), is it really likely that the Romans crucified Jesus and two others on a *Passover*? Why not assume that *Mark's* presentation is ordered by cultic interests, competing with Judaism in presenting the meal as the Lord's Supper as a form of Paschal observance, rather than strict historicity? The point is that Mark is also highly theological, not only John, so issues of history and theology cannot be said to afflict only one of the canonical traditions. Nonetheless, these are the sorts of issues that cause scholars to side with either the Johannine presentation or the Synoptics'.

The basic result of the last two centuries of scholarly discussion of these matters, however, is to effectively *dehistoricize* the Gospel of John and to thus *de-Johannify* the quest for Jesus. While much excellent scholarship has taken issue with such extreme moves, the triumphalist leveraging of “critical scholarship over traditional scholarship” has largely won the day within the guild. As a result, the original Quest for Jesus in the 19th century sided with David Strauss in his claim that Bretschneider was “the man of science” rather than Schleiermacher, despite the fact that the former softened his views on John's being a “concocted Gospel” later, and despite the failure of Strauss to appreciate Schleiermacher's astute (*and* scientific) literary-critical appraisals of the coherence and unity of the Johannine text, in contrast to the patch-work character of the Synoptics. Following Albert Schweitzer's summation of the first century of historical-Jesus research and his low appraisal of John's historicity, the “New Quest” for Jesus emerging in the 1950s, and the “Third Quest” more recently have likewise omitted the Fourth Gospel from the database of Jesus-research material.³ The Jesus Seminar even excluded nearly all of John's material from their canons of historicity, while accepting forty times more sayings material from the second-century Gospel of Thomas, despite its Gnostic proclivities.⁴ Therefore, critical scholars have made the following assumptions,⁵ although each of them is critically flawed.

³ Research reports on the subject may be found in Paul N. Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus; Modern Foundations Reconsidered*, LNTS 321 (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 8-37.

⁴ For instance, according to the voting of the Jesus Seminar, some forty sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas were awarded a pink or a red designation (likely or probably going back to Jesus), whereas the Gospel of John only received one (Robert W. Funk and Roy W. Hoover, eds., *The Five Gospels; What Did Jesus Really Say?* Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 1993). Further, in Robert Funk's description of the Seminar's operations,

The first step is to understand the diminished role the Gospel of John plays in the search for the Jesus of history. The two pictures painted by John and the synoptics cannot be both historically accurate.... The differences between the two portraits of Jesus show up in a dramatic way in the evaluation, by the Jesus Seminar, of the words attributed to Jesus in the Gospel of John. The Fellows of the Seminar were unable to find a single saying they could with certainty trace back to the historical Jesus. (p. 10)

- Because John is clearly theological, it cannot be historical. Wrong. Does the theological character of the Cross of Jesus prove that Jesus did not die on one?
- Inferences regarding a tradition's development imply knowledge of its origin. Not necessarily. Because a tradition shows signs of addressing later audiences, does that prove its origins lay in later rhetoric rather than earlier memory?
- The rhetorical crafting of a narrative implies a fictive origin of its material. Wait! *All* historical argument is rhetorical; assessing its veracity is another matter.
- Historiography is invariably objective and detached, rather than subjective and personally engaged. Nonsense! Objectivity may help the historian make sound judgments, but to deprive historical memory of its subjective investments is to exclude the memorable from historical memory.
- Differences in perspective, inclusion, and selection force a dichotomous selection of one tradition at the expense of another. Not so fast! Sometimes an alternative perspective also bears claims to historicity; a second rendering of a reported event often adds texture and perspective.
- The Synoptic Gospels are *not* theological in character, origin, or development; *only* John is theological. Wrong again! All four canonical Gospels are theological and historical; the question is how?
- Where the Synoptics agree against John, this implies a three-against-one decimation of John's veracity. No; most differences deserve analysis as a Johannine-Markan contrast.
- Two or more Gospel traditions would not have disagreed with each other if they indeed reflect primitive historical memories. Really? Could it be that an alternative memory was preached and recorded precisely because it presented a different angle on a given feature of Jesus' ministry?
- All authentic Jesus traditions must have agreed on all or most of the basics, as well as incidental matters; disagreement obviates either ahistoricity or error. Whose history? This may be the case, but not always; perspective is also a feature of historical memory.
- Alternative perspectives and reflections on the same event or subject cannot both be historical. What is meant by "history"? As in theology, so it is in history; one presentation of an event can never tell the whole story. Critical scholarship needs a dialectical approach to history, just as modern theology has required a dialectical approach to theology.
- One must therefore make a disjunctive choice between the Synoptics or John in searching for Jesus, because their presentations of Jesus are radically and extensively different. Yes and no; some issues call for a disjunctive choice, but John agrees with the Synoptics extensively, though never identically so.
- Because Mark was finalized earliest among the Gospels, its chronology and presentation are superior to later renderings. Possibly, but not necessarily. If Mark contains the record of the preaching of Peter and others (even privileging the traditional view), that makes it a second-order collection from the start.
- Because John was finalized latest among the Gospels, its chronology and presentation are inferior to earlier renderings. Possibly, but not necessarily. Given

⁵ The first sentences in these bullet points are taken from the introduction to *JJH Vol. 1* (2007), 4-5; expansions reflect further engagements in the rest of the volume.

- some Markan familiarity, might the Johannine witness imply a corrective and an augmentation?
- Because the Markan Gospels are more reliable historically, they provide the essential basis for investigating the Jesus of history. Okay, but what of the exceptions? What, then, should be made of apparently reliable material in John?
 - Nearly all other ancient Christian Gospel material is suitable for conducting Jesus research, including apocryphal and Gnostic writings, but not John. If inclusivity is the goal, why not include the Fourth Gospel? Excluding John programmatically is highly problematic critically, which is why this study is needed and why it is needed now.
 - Therefore, John is fundamentally off limits for historicity and Jesus studies. Right. This is the predominant critical view, which is why critical views must be assessed critically, in addition to traditional ones.

Given the fact that all of these problematic judgments have continued to be uttered by biblical scholars in recent decades, though few would embrace all of them, many critical scholars have themselves wondered whether a more nuanced approach to the issues might be found. Especially notable among those who would absent themselves from the above “consensus” are most of the leading Johannine scholars around the world, including Raymond Brown, Rudolf Schackenburg, D. Moody Smith, Martin Hengel, Barnabas Lindars, Craig Keener, Craig Koester, and many others. While there has been considerable movement over the last four decades toward a view of the Fourth Gospel that sees it as based upon an independent and coherent tradition, the Johannine world is still far from a consensus as to how to address the perplexing Johannine riddles.⁶ Could it be that this also accounts for the disparaging of the Fourth Gospel as a less certain resource in contrast to the Markan-priority approach to the Synoptics?

Time and again, scholars who privilege the Synoptics over the Gospel of John preface their remarks by claiming that Synoptic favoritism results from greater certainty as to how to approach the Markan traditions than the Johannine. This is understandable, as a good deal of disunity remains about how to approach many of the Johannine riddles. However, what if a solid and plausible theory of Johannine origin and development should emerge? Might that make a difference in terms of scholarly thinking about how to make use of its material? While the John, Jesus, and History Project cannot hope to answer even the leading Johannine questions, it will undoubtedly be the case that literary theories regarding John’s composition, tradition development, and authorship will play important roles in addressing historical and theological issues. In that sense, the work of the John, Jesus, and History Group stands somewhere between the Johannine Literature Section and the Historical Jesus Section of SBL. Because some of our work also shares some overlap with the claims of the Jesus Seminar, it deserves consideration alongside that venture, although its differences are also considerable. While the membership of the

⁶ In my own analysis of Rudolf Bultmann’s multiple-source theory (Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel; Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6*, WUNT 2:78, Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1996, 70-169), I applied all of his own criteria (stylistic, contextual, and theological evidence) for identifying John’s sources to John 6, where four of the five major ones should be present. Upon analysis, however, the distribution comes out random and non-indicative. We indeed have a narrator, but there is no compelling evidence to suggest that he was using alien material. Likewise, in considering all similarities between John and the Synoptics, *none* of them is identical or verbatim; thus, a Synoptic-dependence approach is likewise flimsy.

Jesus Seminar has been fixed, ours is open; while their methodologies are clearly spelled out, ours are exploratory; while their focus has been broader, ours is primarily on the Gospel of John; while their findings are clear-cut, ours are more suggestive. Most importantly, though, while their approach challenged critically everything traditional, our approach challenges critically critical approaches as well as traditional ones. In addition to challenging scholars to articulate why something in John might be historical, we require scholars to also articulate why something in John might not be historical.

Therefore, the primary interest of the John, Jesus, and History Project is to assess critically aspects of the Fourth Gospel's historicity, ascertaining also degrees of plausibility regarding particular judgments, seeking to discern what light it might cast upon the quest for Jesus. While papers are welcome from all sides of an issue, scholars must also declare why an argument is compelling, including some discussion of its strengths and weaknesses. In welcoming robust critiques of critical views, however, some scholars have objected that the thrust of the project is traditionalist or conservative. I reject that complaint for three reasons: first, we invite critiques of traditional views as well as critical views. Second, if so-called "critical views" cannot stand up to critical scrutiny—every bit as rigorous as has been levied at traditional views in the modern era—do they really deserve the mantle of "scientific and critical" scholarship, or have they simply been granted protection under an alternative umbrella of critical orthodoxy, calling for uncritical allegiance? Third, if aspects of John's historicity are found to be superior to those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, proving them wrong, are such results really likely to be motivated by conservative interests rather than critical ones? Such is highly doubtful. This Project is designed to be thoroughly critical and analytical, which is how we have designed our methods and approaches.

II. The Methods and Approaches of the John, Jesus, and History Project

As the John, Jesus, and History steering committee planned our first set of meetings, we sought to privilege the prevalent stance of critical scholars, which actually seemed to be two: the *dehistoricization of John*, resulting in the *de-Johannification of Jesus*. While such terms are a bit over-stated, we wanted to make the predominant critical positions clear, beyond ambiguity, as the foci of our critical analysis. If these two platforms are found to be solid and water-tight after rigorous scrutiny, fine. They will have withstood critique and will have deserved their ascribed status as the critically established views. If they do not, however, or if they are found to be partially confirmed but not entirely—on critical grounds—they deserve to be improved upon, and new critical opinions might yet emerge. This is not, therefore, a post-modern venture; it seeks to be as scientific and reasoned as possible.

The approach we took for the first session was to commission major literature reviews on the dehistoricization of John and the de-Johannification of Jesus, including also responses to the reviews and an analysis of 19th century revisionism and its overturning the traditional view in Germany and Britain. These state-of-the-art research reports were read or summarized by our presenters, contributed by leading scholars in the field (Robert Kysar, Marianne Meye Thompson, Mark Allan Powell, and Jack Verheyden), and they are included as Part III in *JJH Vol. 1* (2007), 165-245. Paula Fredriksen, a leading Jesus scholar who is also Jewish, presented a case study arguing that the presentation of Jesus' travels to and from Jerusalem in John is more compelling

historically than the single-visit itinerary of the Synoptics. Why would the Romans *not* have been threatened by a messianic figure riding into the holy city on a colt, leading to his immediate arrest? Answer: Jesus had been there before (as reported in the Fourth Gospel alone), and he thus posed no immediate threat. Mark Allan Powell responded to this essay, and the case study and response are included as Part IV in *JJH Vol. 1* (2007), 249-76, 277-82.

After some discussion, I sought to gather a “sense of the meeting” as an alternative to voting. As a Quaker biblical scholar, believing in consensus decision making, I had hoped that such a model might be applicable even within academic settings. Voting can divide groups into winners and losers; a consensus model makes winners of all involved if greater proximity to an understanding of the truth is somehow achieved. After two hours of presentations and fifteen minutes of discussion, however, it seemed to me that there would be no way to achieve any sort of consensus about our findings. It occurred to me, however, that we might at least agree upon the *questions* needing to be asked. Therefore, I summarized eight questions that had been raised up to that point. I then asked if there were any objection to those eight questions, or if there were better ways of putting them. As no changes were suggested, I asked if the group approved of these questions; heads nodded in affirmation. I then asked if there were other questions needing to be asked, and hands went up quickly. Without looking for a particular number, but simply needing to draw the session to a close because our time had run out, eight additional questions emerged from the discussion. After repeating these to the group and asking for approval, heads nodded again, and the meeting came to an end. So, at least *some* consensus about the way to proceed was achieved at our first meeting, and these questions have guided our inquiry as it progressed:

- How do we consider aspects of historicity when addressing the particular phenomenology of the Fourth Gospel?
- How do we consider interrelationships between historicity and spirituality—or between history and theology—when addressing particular and general aspects of Johannine interpretation?
- How do we retain appropriate levels of modesty in our claims—commensurate with varying degrees of certainty and appropriate to the character of the evidence in terms of implications?
- How do we consider relations between the Johannine and Synoptic traditions in ways that most adequately account for similarities and differences, and how do we make plausible inferences of potential connections and autonomies between them?
- How do we appreciate the relations between history and theology in all four (five, granting Q?) canonical Gospel traditions, seeking to account for tensions between earlier and developing histories of respective traditions?
- How do we consider the development of Johannine material in the light of plausible literary- and community-history theories, while at the same time not eclipsing plausible considerations of John’s originative history as well?
- How do we assess the veracity and validity of our premises and syllogisms before accepting or rejecting particular claims underlying general Johannine approaches and theories?

- How do we consider particular ways aspects of the Johannine witness contribute to—or detract from—an adequate portraiture of Jesus?
- How do we make explicit our own presuppositions and investments in conducting constructive and deconstructive research, affirming the fact that these *can and should affect our questions*, while at the same time insisting that these *ought not influence the results* of our investigations?
- How do we construct our investigations in ways that draw together interdisciplinary approaches, including literary, historical, and theological analyses and their interrelationships with each other, using the best disciplines for the tasks required?
- How do we grind new lenses for assessing the Johannine riddles without being sidetracked by tools especially useful to Synoptic studies and resultant critical approaches?
- Why is this investigation an important one, and what might be the result of such an inquiry in terms of producing a more nuanced and measured set of judgments?
- How does such an inquiry benefit from new historical methodologies and even fresh understandings of what history is and why historical narratives are written, especially with implications for interpreting Gospel narratives and discourses?
- What difference does it make that the Johannine memory of Jesus is interpreted from the perspective of the Christ events and the ongoing needs of first-century Christianity?
- How does the pervasive presence of Johannine symbolism and metaphor affect effective ways of investigating Johannine historiography, while at the same time not allowing inferences of symbolization to become overly speculative and imprecise?
- What implications do the originative and developing images of the Johannine narrative have for later generations in terms of evoking interpretations facilitative of liberating and meaningful applications?

These questions then guided our inquiry during the second and third years, as we saw the following developments. First, we decided to assign only four papers each session, to be distributed in advance by e-mail to our growing list of consultants, and then to be summarized so that we could benefit from extended times of discussion within the Group's sessions. Second, in response to Mark Allan Powell's question as to why Johannine and Jesus studies continue without making use of established information, we commissioned a research report by Donald Carson on how narrow disciplinary gospel research often fails to integrate the findings of other research, and what it might take to work in interdisciplinary ways more effectively. His literature review on *the balkanization of Johannine studies* was included as the fifth review essay in *JJH Vol. 1* (2007), Part II, 133-59. Third, we sought to draw in a varied set of methodological papers to explore the diverse ways scholars have thought about the historicity of the Fourth Gospel and implications for Jesus studies. Therefore, Moody Smith addressed the issue of *the Fourth Gospel as a source for Jesus research*, Andrew Lincoln addressed *the character of the Johannine witness*, Colleen Conway addressed "new historicism" as a way of envisioning the Johannine perspective, Gilbert van Belle (with Sydney Palmer) described *the Leuven School's approach to the Johannine-Synoptic question*, and John Painter developed an argument *on memory as the key to the history-theology question in*

John. These were gathered as the major methodological section in *JJH Vol.1*, Part III, 165-245.

As a means of launching the investigation, I was assigned the task of outlining a programmatic essay on *why* this study is needed, and why it is needed *now*.⁷ In approaching the task, I analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of six planks in each of the two prevalent critical platforms involving the *dehistoricization of John* and the *de-Johannification of Jesus*. Issues in the first platform include:

- 1) Differences between John and the Synoptics (3 Passovers / 4 visits to Jerusalem versus only 1 of each, etc.)
- 2) Synoptic omissions in John (parables, Kingdom sayings, exorcisms, etc.)
- 3) Johannine omissions in the Synoptics (I-Am sayings, five miracles, etc.)
- 4) Jesus in John speaks in Johannine language (Father/Son relationship, enlightenment, “life,” “witness,” belief,” etc.)
- 5) The Johannine narrative addresses the needs of the Johannine situation (dialogues with Jewish, Gentile, Roman, and Christian audiences)
- 6) The Johannine Evangelist crafts his story according to his theological purposes (“...that you might believe...”).

Issues in the second platform include:

- 1) John’s similarities with Mark might imply dependence (a spiritualization of Mark?)
- 2) John’s apparently diachronic composition calls into question a unitive tradition with an alternative perspective (evangelist, redactor, alien sources, multiple editions?)
- 3) Does John’s late finalization (around 100 C.E.) imply distance from Jesus and a divorce from historical memory?
- 4) Standard criteria for determining historicity discriminate against John (dissimilarity, multiple attestation, coherence, naturalism?)
- 5) Similarities between John’s material and that of comparative religions suggest borrowing from religious ideas (*theios anēr*, Redeemer-Myth?)
- 6) Emerging portraits of Jesus seem to also be confirmed by John (wisdom sage, prophet, cynic, Holy Man, apocalyptic figure).

Again, each of these topics reflects real problems, but the way forward requires more nuance than simply claiming that “nothing” in John is historical, and that John should be banned from historical Jesus research altogether. In each case, real problems are identified, but none of the planks is entirely solid on its own. Therefore, neither platform is solid and worthy of supporting much interpretive weight. More work is yet to be done.⁸

⁷ I also included this extensive treatment of the issues as Part II in Anderson, *Quest* (2006), 43-97.

⁸ While the John, Jesus, and History Project has not taken a stand on matters of Johannine composition or tradition history, I have not been shy about my own emerging set of theories regarding John’s *dialogical autonomy*. As an independent tradition, developing in at least two editions, with differing sorts of contact with different traditions, written by a dialectical thinker engaged dialogically with a variety of issues faced by his audiences, I see the Fourth Gospel as a theological development of an individuated set of reflections upon the ministry of Jesus. See Anderson, *Quest* (2006), 37-41.

As the Steering Committee approached our second three years, we recruited four papers each year for an invited session and issued a call for papers for an open session. We decided to focus on “aspects of historicity” in John, and Alan Culpepper suggested we divide the Fourth Gospel into three parts: the *beginning* (chs. 1-4), the *middle* (chs. 5-12) and the *end* (chs. 13-21). This provided a more concentrated focus for our sessions each of the middle three years. While we welcomed papers both for and against John’s historicity, we simply asked scholars to articulate *why* their judgments were critically compelling, and we also encouraged them to describe *degrees of plausibility* regarding various points within their approaches. Again, negative historical judgments are more difficult to demonstrate than positive ones, and if the Fourth Gospel represents an independent Jesus tradition, simply acknowledging a theological component or a distinctive presentation does not demonstrate its ahistoricity. What these essays pervasively demonstrate is that the programmatic dehistoricization of John is unsustainable when subjected to comprehensive critical analysis.

In preparing the second volume, we recruited responses to each of the three parts, and these were contributed by Craig Koester, myself, and Gail O’Day. Tom Thatcher and Felix Just also produced an introduction and an epilogue, respectively, just as they had done for the first volume, and I provided introductions to historical questions related to each of the three parts of John, as well as an analysis of consensus and convergences among the presenters. In addition to essays by the editors and responders, the contributors to this volume include: Mark Appold, Richard Bauckham, Helen K. Bond, Richard A. Burridge, James H. Charlesworth, Jaime Clark-Soles, Mary Coloe, R. Alan Culpepper, Craig A. Evans, Sean Freyne, Jeffrey Paul Garcia, Brian D. Johnson, Peter J. Judge, Craig S. Keener, Edward W. Klink, III, Michael Labahn, Mark A. Matson, James F. McGrath, Susan Miller, Derek M. H. Tovey, Bas van Os, Urban C. von Wahlde, and Ben Witherington, III. With some thirty essays in it, the second volume (scheduled for publication in early 2009) is over a hundred pages longer than the first, and both prepare the way for the third.

Volume 3 within the John, Jesus, and History Project promises to bring the results of previous study to bear on the most important question: the degree to which the Johannine Gospel contributes to scholarly quests for the historical Jesus. In approaching the next three years, the Steering Committee has crafted our investigation to begin with the strongest platform in terms of plausible historicity, the *Passion narrative* (2008), moving to the *works of Jesus* (2009), and concluding with the most speculative subject, the *words of Jesus* in John (2010). We also have described our goals in modest terms: seeking “glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine lens.” Therefore, it is doubtful that the first three Gospels will be displaced by the Fourth, even if considerable historical material in John is identified. As with our first two triennia, our goal the final three years is to draw in leading scholars internationally, inviting each to argue a case—in any direction one cares to—outlining the reasons one’s argument is compelling, including its degrees of plausibility. This will allow both agreement and disagreement alike to be rooted in a clearer understanding of *why* particular points are embraced or rejected. Whether addressing the de-Johannification of Jesus will fare as well as the dehistoricization of John, only time will tell. So far, though, the results of our Project have been impressive!

By the conclusion of the third phase of the John, Jesus, and History Project, we will have had as many as 100 leading scholars contributing to an international venture that could

make an impact upon the history of Johannine and Jesus studies alike. Most distinctive in our approach is that we refuse to grant “critical immunity” to the successors of traditional views. In our call for papers for the 2009 sessions I put it this way: “Successful proposals should include: a) some statement about gradations of certainty regarding the degree to which a particular presentation in John contributes to Jesus research (range including: certainly not, probably not, not likely, questionable, possible, plausible, probably, certainly), and b) an articulation of why one's assertion is tenable. All views are welcome, but critical substantiation will be expected of negative judgments as well as positive ones.” If these two endeavors are attempted by scholars we will likely come closer to a “sense of the meeting” regarding what we agree upon, and just as importantly, a clearer understanding of *why* we disagree, if and when we do. If that happens, whatever the outcome, this project will have contributed a service to all who seek the truth—for truth indeed is liberating (Jn. 8:32)!

Excursus: A Bi-Optic Hypothesis within the Work of the JJH Project

As co-chair of the John, Jesus, and History Group and co-editor of its three volumes, I feel cautious about arguing my own views, as I am only one of many Johannine and Jesus scholars within the larger venture. However, as the editors of *ZNT* have requested my outlining my own set of paradigms for the benefit of scholars in Europe and elsewhere, I am happy to oblige. I must clarify, though, that my approaches do *not* speak for the JJH Project, just as I do not agree with every aspect of the papers presented within our Group. Obviously, if we waited until we had full agreement on methodology before jumping into the inquiry, such a quest would never have gotten off the ground! Further, if we were to attempt to catalogue the many different attempts to address the Johannine riddles, I suppose (with Jn. 21:25) that all the libraries in the world would not be able to contain all the volumes!

Nonetheless, I do have my views, seeking to develop the most plausible paradigms based upon the strongest evidence available; and, I cannot help but feature them directly in my works. I will make references to where more extended discussions can be found, and my engagements with other scholars are found elsewhere in greater detail. Following, therefore, is a digest of my findings and suggested ways forward, following critiques of leading theories and organized in four categories: A) a theory of John's composition, B) a theory of John's relations to other traditions, C) a theory of John's situation-history, and D) a unified synthesis for meaningful interpretation. These will be followed by E) a brief sketching of how this paradigm serves historical inquiry with relation to particular subjects and texts, drawing also upon the findings of the John, Jesus, and History Project where suitable.

A) Johannine Composition: Synchronicity of Tradition, Diachronicity of Situation

As Ernst Haenchen described not more than two decades after the publication of Rudolf Bultmann's magisterial commentary, his paradigm was like a giant oak tree, blocking out

all new growth with its shade.⁹ With the commentaries of Raymond Brown, Rudolf Schnackenburg, Barnabas Lindars, and others, however, things began to change. Diachronic theories of the Johannine tradition's development came to be supplanted by more synchronic ones, and most Johannine scholars have come to see the Johannine tradition as an independent tradition that developed alongside other traditions, instead of an amalgam of disparate sources. It is thus questionable whether there is *any* non-Johannine tradition discernible within the Fourth Gospel, although the tradition did develop for a time in Palestine and later in a Hellenistic setting such as Asia Minor. We have in the composition of John, therefore, a synchronicity of tradition and a diachronicity of situation. My own analysis¹⁰ is thus as follows:

- First, when all of Bultmann's stylistic criteria for determining different sources underlying the Fourth Gospel (a *Sēmeia* Source, a Revelation-Sayings Source, a Passion Source, the Evangelist's work, and the Redactor's contributions), are applied to John 6 (where four of these five sources should be present), their distribution is random and non-indicative. Even on its own terms, Bultmann's source theory is stylistically non-compelling (Anderson, *Christology*, 1996, 72-89).
- Second, Bultmann's disordering/reordering theory falls flat when subjected to critical analysis. It wrongly assumes that edited material was lying together, side-by-side (as on an editor's desk), rather than composed and added later. Ancient texts more likely grew by accretion than shuffling fragments into experimental sequences, and a theory of disordering involving breaks only between sentences is theoretically problematic (Anderson, *ibid.*).
- Third, contextual oddities often betray the use of irony and rhetorical devices rather than a different editorial hand. Whereas Bultmann inferred multiple rough transitions, only to rearrange the material into what gained the appearance of an imposed poetic form, such intrusive operations violate ancient texts rather than elucidate them (Anderson, *Christology*, 1996, 90-109).
- Fourth, theological tension in John shows evidence of the Evangelist's being a dialectical thinker, thus reflecting dialogues internal to his thinking rather than external to it, forcing the invention of imaginary dialogues with hypothetical literary sources. Ironically, Bultmann believed that modern theologians thought dialectically, but he failed programmatically to allow the Fourth Evangelist to do so at all.¹¹
- Fifth, the most plausible means of addressing most of the textual aporias in John is to infer a first edition (with Barnabas Lindars), followed by a later edition. The Prologue (Jn. 1:1-18), chapters 6, 15-17, and 21, as well as eyewitness and

⁹ For a review of the Johannine literature over the last half century or so, see Paul N. Anderson, "Beyond the Shade of the Oak Tree: Recent Growth in Johannine Studies," *Expository Times* 119:8 (2008): 365-73.

¹⁰ The particulars of this analysis are spelled out in detail in Anderson, *Christology* (1996), pp. 1-69; and in Anderson, *Quest* (2006), 1-41.

¹¹ For the application of Cognitive-Critical analysis as to how the human sources of the Johannine and Markan traditions may have come to think dialectically, see Anderson, *Christology* (1996), 137-65. See also Paul N. Anderson, "The Cognitive Origins of John's Christological Unity and Disunity," in Vol. 3 of *Psychology and the Bible; A New Way to Read the Scriptures* (ed. by J. Harold Ellens and Wayne Rollins; Westport / London: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 127-49; first published in *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 17 (1995): 1-24.

Beloved Disciple references appear to have been added by the final compiler to an earlier text (Anderson, *Christology*, 1996, 44-46).

- Sixth, more likely than his source theories is Bultmann's inference that the author of the Johannine Epistles was the final Redactor of the Johannine Gospel (against Lindars, who thinks the final edition was completed by the same Evangelist); however, his work seems to be conservative (with Brown, not wanting to disrupt the work of the Evangelist) rather than intrusive. Therefore, the sources of theological tension in John lie elsewhere.

Based upon these and other foundations, a modest theory of Johannine composition is as follows:

*A Two-Edition Theory of Johannine Composition*¹²

- Following several decades of Johannine preaching (and perhaps some writing) a first edition of John was completed between 80 and 85 C.E., to some degree as a response to Mark. This "second" Gospel (chronologically) was not distributed widely, but it began with the ministry of John the Baptist (1:15, 19-42) and concluded with 20:31, declaring the evangelistic purpose of the Johannine Gospel.
- The teaching/preaching ministry of the Beloved Disciple (and possibly other Johannine leaders) continued over the next decade or two, and during this time (85–100 C.E.), the three Johannine epistles were written by the Elder (85, 90, 95 C.E.).
- After the death of the Beloved Disciple (around 100 C.E.) the Elder compiled the Gospel, adding to it the worship material of the Prologue (1:1-18), inserting the feeding and sea-crossing narrative (Jn. 6) between chs. 5 and 7, and inserting additional discourse material (Jn. 15-17) between Jesus' saying, "Let us depart," (Jn. 14:31) and his arrival with his disciples at the garden (Jn. 18:1). He also apparently attached additional appearance narratives (ch. 21) and eyewitness/Beloved Disciple passages, and crafted a second ending (21:24-5) in the pattern of the first. Then, he circulated the finalized witness of the Beloved Disciple, whose "testimony is true!" as an encouragement and challenge to the larger Christian movement.

B) Johannine-Synoptic Relations—Interfluent Rather than Derivative

Likewise flawed is the view that the Johannine narrative was derived from the Synoptic Gospels, as C.K. Barrett, Tom Brodie, and Franz Neyrinck have argued. None of the contacts between John and the Synoptics are identical, or verbatim; therefore, a basic Johannine independence (with P. Gardner-Smith and D. Moody Smith) is most

¹² This outline of a theory of composition is taken from Anderson, *Quest* (2006), 40. A fuller outline is presented in Appendix I, 193-95. While most of Lindars' insights are incorporated here, his view that the Lazarus narrative (Jn. 11) displaced a later Temple incident, causing the Evangelist to move it elsewhere (Jn. 2), is overly speculative.

arguable.¹³ However, autonomy need not imply isolation. While Johannine-Synoptic contact is likely, its features must be considered in particularity. When all of the Johannine-Synoptic contacts are considered in relation to each of Synoptic traditions, the following patterns emerge.

- First, when contacts between John 6 and its Markan parallels are considered, 24 similarities are found with relation to Mark 6, and 21 similarities are found with relation to Mark 8. None of them, however, are identical. Further, John's narrative seems the most complete among these three traditional accounts of the feeding, the sea crossing, the debate over the feeding, and the confession of Peter (Anderson, *Christology*, 1996, 97-108).
- Second, distinctive similarities between John and Mark include non-symbolic, illustrative details (green/much grass, 200 and 300 denarii)—precisely the sort of material omitted by Matthew and Luke. Therefore, rather than seeing these details as added to a narrative as a “historicized drama” (Bultmann's view), John and Mark more likely reflect distinctive *dramatized histories*. If the contact, however, was during the oral stages of their traditions, it is impossible to determine influence from one direction only. These contacts thus suggest “interfluence” during the oral stages of the pre-Markan and early Johannine traditions (Anderson, *Christology*, 1996, 170-93).
- Third, John's familiarity with written Mark, however, also seems likely (with Bauckham and Mackay). Such corrective echoes of the Markan text as reporting events *before* John was thrown into prison (Jn. 3:24; vs. Mk. 1:14) and the presenting of receptive Samaritans and Galileans in contrast to the Nazarenes of Jesus' hometown (Jn. 4:44; vs. Mk. 6:4) suggest a corrective relation to Mark. That being the case, the first two signs in Galilee (Jn. 2:11; 4:54) may have filled out the beginning of Jesus' ministry (before the signs mentioned in Mark 1) and the three Judean miracles in John appear to have filled out the southern ministry of Jesus in a complementary way. The first ending of John even appears to “explain” the fact that Mark's content was being omitted and complemented by the Johannine witness: “Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in *this* book, but these are written...” (Jn. 20:30-31)—so as to say, “I know Mark is out there; stop bugging me for leaving things out—I have my *own* story to tell!” The first edition of John (around 80-85 C.E.) was thus likely the *second* written Gospel.¹⁴
- Fourth, Luke departs from Mark and sides with John no fewer than six dozen times, which argues strongly for Lukan familiarity with, and dependence upon, the Johannine tradition—probably in its oral stages. The great catch of fish,

¹³ The particular engagements with these and other scholars are laid out in *Christology* (1996), 1-109, 170-93.

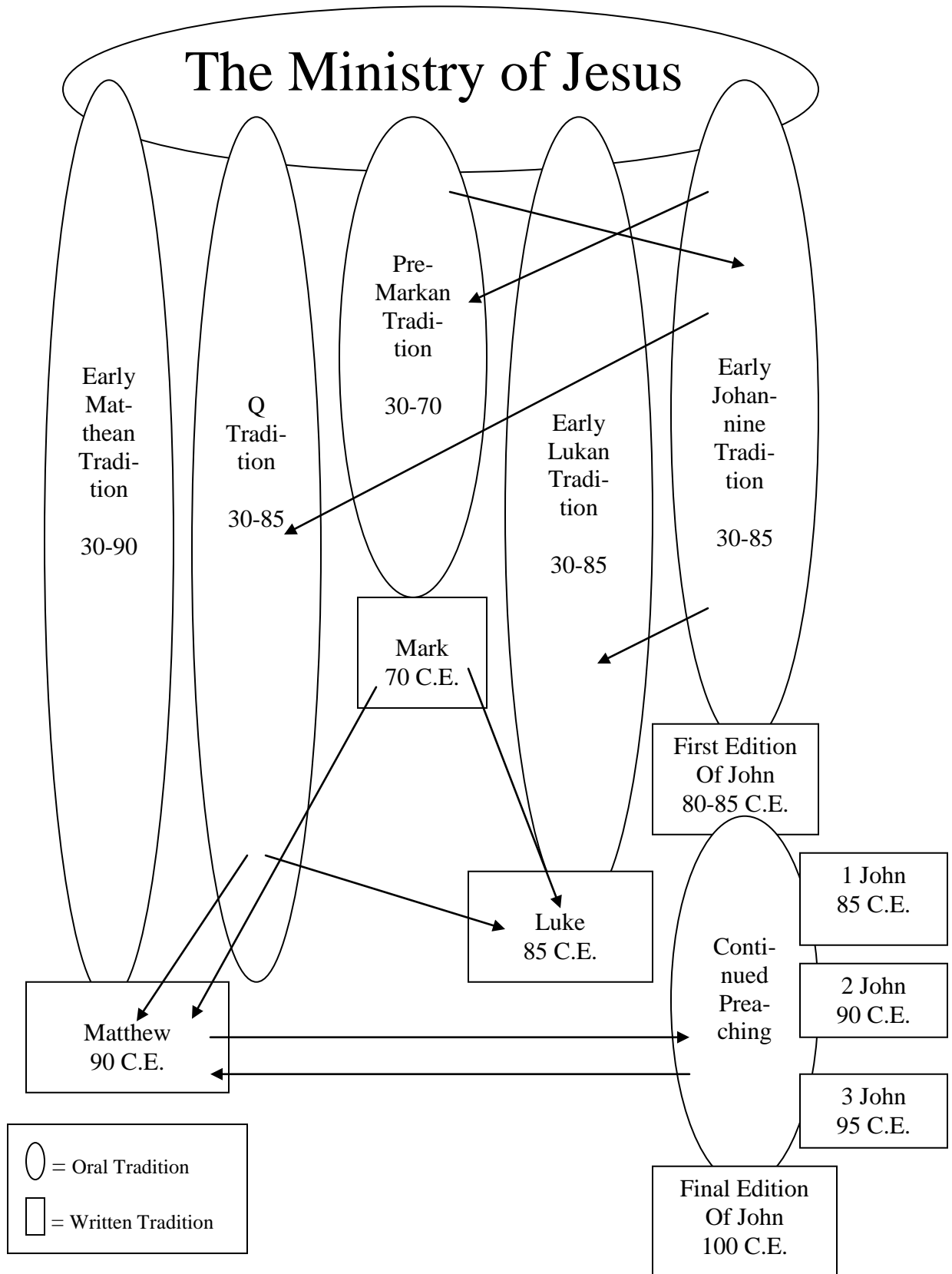
¹⁴ While my overall theory of Johannine-Synoptics relations is spelled out fully in Anderson, *Quest* (2006, adapted from the Hofrichter volume essay below), 101-26, other treatments include “Mark and John—the *Bi-Optic* Gospels,” in *Jesus and the Johannine Tradition* (ed. by Robert Fortna and Tom Thatcher; Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001), 175-88; “Interfluent, Formative, and Dialectical—A Theory of John's Relation to the Synoptics,” in *Für und Wider die Priorität des Johannesevangeliums* (ed. by Peter Hofrichter; Theologische Texte und Studien 9; Hildesheim / Zürich / New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2002), 19-58 (see also the discussion at the end of the book, 281-318); and “Aspects of Interfluency between John and the Synoptics: John 18-19 as a Case Study,” in Gilbert Van Belle, editor, *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*. Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense LIV, 2005; Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 200 (Leuven: University Press / Peeters, 2007), 711-28.

- women named Mary and Martha, Satan “entering” Judas, the “right ear” of Malchus being severed—all of these reflect Johannine details adopted by Luke. Further, Luke prefers Johannine presentations here and there: he moves the confession of Peter to the *other* feeding (the 5,000, as in John), he changes the anointing from Jesus’ head to his *feet* (as in John), and he conflates the confession of Peter to accommodate Mark’s and John’s renderings (“*the Christ*” + “the Holy One of God” = “*the Christ of God*”). Thus, the Johannine tradition served as a formative source for Luke, who also co-opted John’s presentation of women, Samaritans, and the Holy Spirit into his narrative.¹⁵
- Fifth, the Q tradition (assuming there was a Q tradition) appears to include at least some Johannine detail. In particular, what has long been considered “the bolt out of the Johannine blue” (Matt. 11:27; Lk. 10:22; cf. Jn. 3:35; 5:19-27; 6:27) contains several Johannine themes, not the other way around. Of course, these themes could go back to Jesus, but less conjectural is the likelihood that a standard Johannine theme was assimilated into the Q tradition, suggesting its primitivity (Anderson, *Quest*, 2006, 117-19).
 - Sixth, the supplementary material added to the first edition of John (the second Gospel to be written) reflects emphases upon egalitarian ecclesiology and Spirit-based leadership, in dialectical tension with the Matthean tradition. Therefore, interfluentiality between the Johannine and Matthean traditions seem a likely explanation for their particular similarities and differences.

Based upon these elements, and the traditional contacts between the Johannine and other traditions were obviously more complex than these suggestive relations, the following theory of John’s interfluential relationships with other traditions is plausible. Given that Mark and John may be called “the Bi-Optic Gospels,” this theory may also be called a Bi-Optic Hypothesis.

¹⁵ This was first laid out in Appendix VIII at the end of Anderson, *Christology* (1996), 274-77.

A Bi-Optic Hypothesis: A Charting of Johannine-Synoptic Interfluent Relations



C) *The Johannine Situation—Dialectical Rather than Sectarian*

Perhaps the most significant advance in Johannine studies over the last half century involves the sketching of the Johannine situation. Most significant among contributions is the thesis of J. Louis Martyn, developed further by Raymond Brown, that John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2 reflect a dialectical relationship between Johannine believers and the local Jewish Synagogue. While detractors have sought to overturn the Martyn-Brown hypothesis arguing that the *Birkat ha-Minim* (the “blessing” against the heretics—followers of “the Nazarene”—developed at the Jamnia Council in the late first century C.E.) was not a universal program of excommunication, tensions were still real. Even the argument that relations between Christians and Jews were quite close in the late first century C.E., far from disproving any conflict suggests conflict because of the closeness. Territoriality only exists between like members of the same species. However, the Jewish-Christian tensions were not the only ones in the Johannine situation. Tensions with Petrine-hierarchy-advocating Christians (with Käsemann) functioned to discipline docetizing believers (with Borgen), resulting as a factor of assimilating under Roman requirements for Emperor worship (with Cassidy). These three sets of tensions followed (though they were also somewhat overlapping with) the tensions with local Jewish leaders in Asia Minor. John’s situation, though, also shows evidence of location in pre-70 C.E. Palestine (with Brown), and appeals to followers of John the Baptist to believe in Jesus as the Christ accompany North-South tensions between Galileans and the Judeans (*Ioudaioi* = “Judeans,” not Semites—the author and his companions were indeed *Jewish*). That being the case, the following six dialogical relationships are likely (two within each of three phases) in largely sequential-but-overlapping ways.¹⁶

- First, North-South tensions can be inferred within the early Johannine situation, whereupon religious leaders of Jerusalem and Judea (the *Ioudaioi*) rejected not only the northern Prophet from Galilee, but also his followers. Jesus is rejected by the Jerusalem leaders because he does not come from David’s city (Bethlehem, Jn. 7:40-52), and his fulfilling the typologies of Moses and Elijah are argued in Galilean (parallel also to Samaritan views) paradigms.
- Second, and overlapping with the first crisis, the memory of John the Baptist is made to emphasize Jesus’ being the Messiah instead of himself. This would have functioned to redirect Baptist adherents to Jesus, both in Palestine and in Asia Minor. In Palestine, the emphasis was on Jesus’ being the Messiah/Christ; in Asia Minor, the emphasis was upon the baptism of Jesus (with the Holy Spirit; Jn. 3:5) versus that of John (as advocated by followers of Apollos; Acts 18:24-19:7).

¹⁶ While the basic elements of this theory are outlined in Anderson, *Christology* (1996), 110-36 and 194-250, and *Quest* (2006), 195-99, other sources include “The *Sitz im Leben* of the Johannine Bread of Life Discourse and its Evolving Context,” in *Critical Readings of John 6*, BIS 22 (ed. by Alan Culpepper; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 1-59; “‘You Have the Words of Eternal Life!’ Is Peter Presented as *Returning* the Keys of the Kingdom to Jesus in John 6:68?” *Neotestamentica* 41:1 (2007), 6-41; “Antichristic Errors—Flawed Interpretations Regarding the Johannine Antichrists,” and “Antichristic Crises: Proselytization Back into Jewish Religious Certainty—The Threat of Schismatic Abandonment,” in Vol. 1 of *Text and Community: Essays in Commemoration of Bruce M. Metzger* (ed. by J. Harold Ellens; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 196-216 and 217-40; and “Bakhtin’s Dialogism and the Corrective Rhetoric of the Johannine Misunderstanding Dialogue: Exposing Seven Crises in the Johannine Situation,” in *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies*; *Semeia Studies* 63 (ed. by Roland Boer, Atlanta: SBL Press, 2007): 133-59.

- Third, after a move to Asia Minor, likely around the time that the Romans destroyed Jerusalem (67-70 C.E.), the Johannine Evangelist moved to one of the mission churches, and there is no site more conducive than Ephesus and its environs. There, the Johannine “community” was formed on the strength of the Pauline mission and other Jesus-adherents in the area. With the new influx of Jesus followers, however, and witnessing that his prediction that the Temple would be destroyed had come true (proving him to be the messianic Prophet like Moses from Deuteronomy 18:15-22), this created a backlash among Jewish leaders resulting in the threat of Synagogue expulsion if Jesus-adherence should transgress definitions of Jewish monotheism. While the goal of the ultimatum was to discipline the proto-ditheists, at least some believers who confessed Jesus openly as the Messiah/Christ were likely disowned by their Jewish family and friends (Jn. 9:22). As they joined worship communities of other Jesus-adherents, including Jewish and Gentile believers, some of them, however, felt the cost was too steep and rejoined the Synagogue, clinging to the Father at the expense of the Son (1 Jn. 2:18-25). To offset further schisms and to appeal for their return, the Johannine Elder labels defectors “Antichrists” and argues that to deny the Son is to lose the Father (as he represents the Father authentically, Jn. 5-10), but to remain in the Son is to secure the Father’s pleasure.¹⁷
- Fourth, and overlapping with the other four crises in the second and third phases of the Johannine situation (70-100 C.E.), the rise of expected Emperor worship under the reign of Domitian (81-96 C.E.) reared its ugly head. While more extensively portrayed as the second Beast in the Johannine Apocalypse (esp. Rev. 13), the expectation that Roman subjects in Asia Minor would demonstrate publicly their support for the Empire and its patronage (confessing “Caesar is Lord,” offering incense to Caesar’s statue, participating in festivals honoring Roman rulers and deities, and other markers of Emperor laud) grew significantly. Jewish Synagogue members were given a dispensation if they were willing to pay a Temple-tax equivalent to Rome (two drachmas), but once they were denied Synagogue association, they were on their own. Therefore, Thomas’ confession of Jesus as “My Lord and my God!” (Jn. 20:29) punctuated the anti-Domitian stance of the Johannine corpus. Despite Domitian’s requiring his lieutenants to call him “Lord and God” (Suetonius, *Lives*, Domitian 13.2), the Johannine leadership reserved that title for Christ alone (Anderson, *Christology*, 1996, 110-36).
- Within the third phase in the Johannine situation, marking the move from a local cluster of communities to engagement with other emerging Christian groups, a fifth crisis emerged—with Gentile-Christian Docetists. As Christian Jews transitioned to the status of becoming Jewish Christians, most of them were probably willing to suffer and even die for their faith, but Gentile believers probably were more reluctant. They might have seen Emperor Laud as innocuous, or not a big deal, especially if they regarded it as an external act only. The writer of 1 John, however, saw it as a major concern and put his point bluntly at the very end of his letter: “stay away from idols!” (1 Jn. 5:21). That being the case, traveling Christian ministers advocating assimilation, legitimated by teachings of a non-suffering Lord, were labeled a second antichristic threat by the Elder (1 Jn.

¹⁷ In addition to Anderson, *Christology* (1996), 194-220; see “*Sitz im Leben*” (1997), 32-40; and “Antichristic Crises” (2007), 218-25.

- 4:1-3; 2 Jn. 7)—not as schismatics, but as invasionists and false teachers. As they were distanced from Johannine believers, they later developed into second-century Gnostics, taking the Johannine Gospel with them.¹⁸
- A sixth crisis, then, followed as attempts to ward off false teachers by means of bolstering institutional leadership among the churches in Asia Minor. After the death of Peter, his legacy became the basis for structured apostolic leadership in the form of churchly offices (Matt. 16:17-19), and Diotrephes who “loves to be first” (3 Jn. 9-10) appears to have been one of these proto-Ignatian leaders. Not only had he excluded Johannine Christians from his community, but he expelled those from his own church who welcomed them. The Johannine Elder follows the prescriptions of Matthew 18:15-17, by dealing with Diotrephes directly and then writing to “the church,” whence he derived his authority. After the death of the Beloved Disciple, however, the Elder finalizes the Johannine Gospel and adds passages that emphasize a suffering Lord, a chastened Peter, an example of faithfulness in the Beloved Disciple, and an emphasis on universal access to Christ’s leadership through the presence of the Spirit (Jn. 1:1-18; 19:34-35 and chs. 6, 15-7, and 21).¹⁹
 - A seventh set of dialogues is less of a crisis and more of a running engagement with parallel Christian traditions as represented in the Synoptics and beyond. This running inter-traditional set of interactions combined with intra-traditional dialogues within the Johannine tradition to contribute to point-and-counterpoint presentations within the Johannine writings on many levels. From challenges to Peter’s mistaken memory of Jesus’ promise of the *parousia* (Jn. 21:23), to challenges to the meaning of the feeding (they ate and were satisfied (Jn. 6:26), to a less formal ecclesiology and sacramentology, the Johannine witness engages dialectically other Christian memories of Jesus and his ministry.

*An Outline of the Johannine Situation in Longitudinal Perspective*²⁰

- Period I: The Palestinian period (ca. 30–70 C.E.)
 - Crisis A – Dealing with north/south tensions (Galileans/Judeans)
 - Crisis B – Reaching followers of John the Baptist
 - (The oral Johannine tradition develops.)*
- Period II: The Asia Minor period I, the forging of community (ca. 70–85 C.E.)
 - Crisis A – Engaging local Jewish family and friends
 - Crisis B – Dealing with the local Roman presence
 - (The first edition of the Johannine Gospel is prepared.)*
- Period III: The Asia Minor period II, dialogues between communities (ca. 85–100 C.E.)

¹⁸ See Anderson, *Christology* (1996), 194-220; “*Sitz im Leben*” (1997), 41-50; and “Antichristic Crises” (2007), 225-40.

¹⁹ In addition to Anderson, *Christology* (1996), 221-50, and *Quest* (2006), 119-25; see “*Sitz im Leben*” (1997), 50-57; and “*Returning the Keys*” (2007).

²⁰ This outline of seven crises in the Johannine situation is taken from Anderson, *Quest* (2006), 64; a fuller outline may be found in Appendix II, 197-99.

- Crisis A – Engaging docetizing Gentile Christians and their teachings
 Crisis B – Engaging Christian institutionalizing tendencies (Diotrephes and his kin)
 Crisis C – Engaging dialectically Christian presentations of Jesus and his ministry (actually reflecting a running dialogue over *all three* periods)
 (*The Epistles are written by the Johannine Elder, who then finalizes and circulates the testimony of the Beloved Disciple after his death.*)

D) *The Dialogical Autonomy of the Fourth Gospel—An Interpretive Paradigm*

One of the major flaws of some recent approaches to John is that they focus on one dimension only, instead of dealing with literary, historical, and theological issues. Attractive features of the present paradigm are several. First, it builds on the most compelling of recent studies and attempts a comprehensive overview of the Johannine tradition—its development, context, and meaning—over seven decades. As an independent tradition, the Fourth Gospel reflects an autonomous memory of Jesus and his ministry that demonstrates engagement with emerging issues within the Johannine situation, as well as engagement with parallel traditions and their presentations of Jesus. Second, it combines theories of Johannine composition, situational history, and Synoptic dialogue into a meaningful whole. Third, it provides a basis for understanding both John’s historical memory with relation to Jesus in conjunction with John’s theological developments and rhetorical presentation of Jesus as the Christ. Fourth, it shows how both the apologetic features of the first edition (calling for belief as coming to faith for the first time) may be appreciated alongside the later pastoral material (calling for belief as abiding in Jesus and the community). Fifth, it makes sense of the Johannine Gospel and Epistles, dealing with the bulk of the major aporias in a relatively efficient and straightforward way.

That being the case, John’s *dialogical* character shows several features.²¹ First, we have a dialectical thinker, who refuses to be trapped by either/or approaches to issues. As a conjunctive thinker (operating on Stage Five of James Fowler’s *Stages of Faith*) the Fourth Evangelist works in both/and ways. Therefore, apparent contradictions among John’s themes must be interpreted dialectically rather than monologically; the Evangelist was not dogmatic, and should not be interpreted as such. Second, the dialectical character of the Johannine situation helps one to appreciate ways the Evangelist addresses issues faced by his audience. Thus, when his content is appreciated in its emerging contexts, it is more fully understood. Third, regarding content, the agency of the Son represents the human-divine dialogue of revelation; Jesus conveys the will of the Father to the world, inviting a response of faith to the divine initiative. That is *why* he and the Father are one; Jesus is the means of drawing all humanity to God, also operative through the work of the Holy Spirit, to all who will attend and believe.²² A final dialogical mode involves the

²¹ These four dialogical aspects of John’s theological tensions are developed in the conclusion to Anderson, *Christology* (1996), 252-65; see also Paul N. Anderson, “On Guessing Points and Naming Stars—The Epistemological Origins of John’s Christological Tensions,” in *The Gospel of St. John and Christian Theology* (ed. by Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 311-45.

²² The Johannine agency motif is Jewish rather than Gnostic. Rather than drawing from Hellenistic religions, the Father-Son relationship in John is rooted in the Prophet-like-Moses agency schema of

literary work of the narrator—engaging readers in an imaginary dialogue with Jesus by means of such literary devices as irony, misunderstanding, and repetitions/variations. The text of John progresses like a forward-moving spiral, repeating familiar themes within new settings and emerging textures. It has emerged from encounter, and that is what it is designed to effect.

The Johannine narrative, however, also displays several features of *autonomy*. Rather than being dependent on alien sources or the Synoptics for its story of Jesus, John's narrative proceeds with its own voice and defies familiar conventions with a bold presentation of Jesus as the Christ. Refusing also to be confined to Jewish or Hellenistic conventions, it co-opts typologies of redemption figures without being bound by them, presenting historical memory in evocative packaging. Rather than being confined to narration alone, the Johannine witness evokes a hymnic response of confessional faith (Jn. 1:1-18), which then comes to serve as an engaging introduction to the story of Jesus. Rather than be confined to Synoptic presentations of Jesus' teachings and deeds, the Johannine witness presents intentionally an alternative memory of Jesus, at times with contravening presentations. Messianic secrecy? No—Messianic disclosure! Puzzling parables? How about a more direct-speaking Jesus? Awkward exorcisms and leper stories? The uneasiness of the son of Zebedee (Mk. 9:39; Lk. 9:49) is here displayed by the narrator's selectivity (Jn. 21:25). A programmatic calling of the Twelve? How about a more realistic and emergent presentation of disciples' being involved in calling one another to follow the Lord (Jn. 1:35-51)? The Lord's Supper as a Paschal ritual? How about a less formalized occasion for serving one another to be emphasized? One visit only to Jerusalem, whereupon Jesus was arrested and killed? A multiple-visit and multi-year ministry seems more realistic, with plausibly the Temple incident as an inaugural event rather than a culminative one. Jesus' disciples being exclusively males, with Jesus' affirming Peter's authority among the Twelve? How about confessions made by Martha and Nathanael, and how about posing a more Spirit-based presentation of Jesus' teaching and ministry as an insight to his work? In these and many other ways, the Johannine witness presents with boldness its own story of Jesus. It *is* highly theological, but theology alone does not imply ahistoricity. Rather, John presents an alternative impression of Jesus, designed to both augment the Synoptic presentations and to fulfill them.

While the above paradigms are valid and serviceable regardless of who might have been involved in the writing and editing of the Fourth Gospel, a detail surfaced in my research that I had not found engaged anywhere in the literature.²³ Because of John's anonymity and dearth of clear attribution of authorship until Irenaeus, around 180 C.E., many scholars have assumed that the author is unknown, or at least not John the son of Zebedee or one of the Twelve. The Johannine critique of the Twelve and juxtaposition of Peter and the Beloved Disciple also gave such scholars as Brown and Schnackenburg reason to discount the Apostle John as the author. However, an incidental detail from Acts 4:19-20 introduces new evidence that has been totally missed from all sides of the

Deuteronomy 18:15-22, and each of the Septuagintal elements of the representative Prophet can be found clearly in John. See Paul N. Anderson, "The Having-Sent-Me Father—Aspects of Agency, Encounter, and Irony in the Johannine Father-Son Relationship," *Semeia* 85 (ed. by Adele Reinhartz, 1999): 33-57.

²³ This detail was first laid out in Appendix VIII at the end of *Christology* (1996), 274-77. The monograph holds together without any particular suggestion of authorship, but if the Johannine tradition originated, at least to some degree, in first-hand knowledge of Jesus' ministry, this might be a clue as to how that might have occurred.

debate. In particular, this is the only time the Apostle John is mentioned as speaking in Acts, but we have here two statements. The first, “we must obey God rather than man,” is echoed by Peter elsewhere in Acts 5:29 and 11:17—the sort of thing Peter is thought by Luke to have said. The next statement could not have been uttered in a more Johannine way: “we cannot help but speak about what we have *seen and heard*.” The closest parallel grammatically is 1 John 1:3, not passages found elsewhere in Luke/Acts, and this connecting of the son of Zebedee with a Johannine saying is performed a full century before Irenaeus’ linking of the two. This might not prove Johannine authorship, but it challenges severely the view that John the Apostle was not associated with the Johannine tradition until Irenaeus, around 180 C.E. Acts 4:19-20 locates the explicit connection a full century earlier! Luke could have been wrong, or even misguided, but his connecting of the two approximates a fact.

E) Three Case Studies as Textual Ways Forward

Given that the standard criteria for determining historicity have often been designed to exclude Johannine features (distinctive, theological, elevated material), new criteria for determining Johannine historicity must be devised. If John’s is an independent tradition, multiple attestation cannot play a determinative role; neither can the fact of John’s theological inclinations. Because the cross is a highly theological motif in Mark, for instance, does this prove that Jesus did not die on one? Hardly. Therefore, the theological character of John’s tradition must be acknowledged as a part of the way the Fourth Evangelist writes history, although that is no guarantee of its historical reliability, either. Adding to the criteria of dissimilarity, coherence, and plausibility, an approach to John’s historicity involving critical realism, primitivity, and literary integrity provides a way forward.²⁴ Consider, now, three aspects of Johannine historicity with significant implications for Jesus research: Jesus’ itinerary, the presentation of women, and the integrity of John 6.

1) *Jesus’ itinerary* comes across as far more believable in John than it is in the Markan Gospels. In Mark, only one Passover is mentioned—the final one. Jesus travels to Jerusalem only once—when he is arrested and killed, and the Temple incident provides an explanation for his arrest and death—an easily conjectured inference. In John, however, Jesus travels to Jerusalem at least four times—attending festivals (Passover, an unnamed feast, Tabernacles, Dedication) as any observant Jew would have done, three Passovers are mentioned—giving his ministry an opportunity to gather support, and the reason for his death is reported to be the scandalization of the religious leaders due to Jesus’ raising of Lazarus—an unlikely motive to have been concocted. In terms of critical realism, where subjects are engaged dialogically with events, reporting them in later settings to developing audiences, the Johannine rendering seems far more plausible than the Markan.

Paula Fredriksen, in her essay in *JJH Vol. 1*, (2007), 249-76, addresses the question of why the Romans did not arrest Jesus immediately when he entered the city (in

²⁴ For other treatments of John’s historicity see Paul N. Anderson, “Aspects of Historicity in John” (2006); also see eight elements of Johannine historical merit, providing a bi-optic perspective on Jesus, in *Quest* (2006), 154-73.

any of the four Gospels). One would have thought that a messianic leader, riding into the Jerusalem on a donkey's colt with people strewing garments and palm branches on the ground and chanting "Hosanna" and blessing the King of Israel, would have raised the consternation of the Romans. Fredriksen asks why Jesus was not arrested immediately as a political threat. Answer: he had been there before—as presented distinctively in John—and his presence was not perceived as dangerous because they'd seen him in Jerusalem before. This reasoning not only seems plausible; it seems probable. The Johannine rendering of the multiple visits to Jerusalem, and thus a ministry lasting more than a part of one year (as presented in the Markan Gospels) thus favors John's historicity.

This finding lays the groundwork for a further point of contention: the dating of the Temple incident. If Mark grouped the bulk of Jesus' judgment parables (Mk. 12), his apocalyptic sayings (Mk. 13) and all of Jesus' Jerusalem events into one culminative visit to Jerusalem, he probably did so *not* for chronological reasons, but for climactic and conjectural ones. As Luke and Matthew followed Mark, the tally is thus not three against one, but the Johannine rendering versus the Markan. While it is common to infer that John's early Temple incident was placed there for theological reasons, a close reading of the Johannine text shows that this inference is hollow. First, the narrator declares that many believed on behalf of Jesus' first Jerusalem visit (Jn. 2:23), and that despite this "success" Jesus was cautious (vss. 24-25). Second, the narrator mentions Jesus' having been in Jerusalem at the feast in John 4:45, so the early visit to Jerusalem is referenced as an *event*, not a theological motif. Third, the Jewish leaders already want to kill Jesus in John 5:18; an unlikely response to a "first offense" if he had not already made a stir in Jerusalem.

In the second volume of *John, Jesus, and History* (2009), 35-43, James McGrath argues compellingly for the earliness of Jesus' declaration at the Temple cleansing as referenced in John—"Destroy this Temple, and in three days I shall raise it up." (Jn. 2:19), which is cited (but *not* narrated) in Mark 14:58 and 15:29. Building on the work of Mark Matson and J.A.T. Robinson, McGrath demonstrates with an assist from Paul the plausibility of the early Temple incident, depriving Johannine ahistoricity its standard place as the "default setting" among Gospel studies. In my view, it only is the order of the Johannine Temple cleansing a strong plausibility, but it may even be alluded to in early second century in the Johannine Elder's opinion, cited by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccles.* 3:39). Here, Papias cites the Elder as declaring that Mark took down Peter's preaching correctly, but *in the wrong order*. Might this explain *why* the Johannine narrative places the Temple incident early? Plausibly, the Johannine Evangelist sought not only to augment Mark's content, but he sought to amend its conjectured itinerary of Jesus with a more adequate one.

2) Regarding *primitivity of traditional themes, including John's presentation of women and informal modes of worship and ministry*, the Johannine tradition also seems more historically plausible than parallel renderings in the Synoptics. If indeed we see in the Pastoral Epistles and Ignatius a movement toward male leadership, and in the *Didache* and Ignatius a movement toward more formalized structures of ministry and worship, it is fascinating that the Gospel of John reflects more primitive and less developed presentations of these themes, despite being the latest of the canonical Gospels to be finalized. In addition, while John is highly theological in its presentation of Jesus as the Christ, it is strikingly mundane and common with regard to these themes—likely

suggesting proximity to Jesus rather than developing trends in the early Christian movement.

In particular, while the Synoptic traditions show Jesus healing women and being anointed by one, John's presentation of women places them in far more elevated roles. The mother of Jesus signals the beginning and the closing of his ministry (Jn. 2:1-11; 19:25-27); the Samaritan woman at the well not only believes but becomes an apostle to the Samaritans—who come to believe on her account (Jn. 4:5-42); Martha makes a Christological confession (Jn. 11:27), and her sister Mary is named as the anointer of Jesus' feet (Jn. 11:2; 12:3)—Jesus' love for these sisters and their brother is declared explicitly (Jn. 11:5); women at the crucifixion are located close to Jesus in contrast to the Markan distanced stance (Jn. 19:25-27); Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, who then becomes an apostle to the Apostles—signaling the resurrection of the Lord (Jn. 20:1-18). Given that women in leadership were being displaced by men within some sectors of the third-generation Christianity, John's prominent presentation of women in leadership around Jesus cannot be taken as an innovative move. It must be seen as an appeal to an earlier and more primitive memory—perhaps even representing a more plausible rendering of the associations and workings of the historical Jesus.

Regarding structures of ministry, the addition of the Keys-to-the-Kingdom passage in Matthew 16:17-19 clearly shows the development of structural leadership in the final third of the first century C.E., after the memory of Peter and the Twelve. However, did all apostolic leaders agree with this innovation, especially if Diotrephes (who loves to be first—i.e. loves primacy, 3 John 9-10) has been wielding ecclesial authority in jarring ways? No fewer than seven parallels to Matthew 16:17-19 can be found in John, but all of them are different. Disciples who were not members of the Twelve make striking confessions, apostolic leadership is commissioned in plural forms, the Holy Spirit is said to be accessible to every believer, images for the church (flock, vine) are more fluid and dynamic than more “petrified” alternatives, and Peter in John 6 is presented as affirming Jesus' sole authority in his confession (Jn. 6:68-69). Does Peter's declaration of Jesus' alone having the words of eternal life present him as “returning” the Keys to Jesus? Stranger inferences have been made. The point is that the more fluid and dynamic presentations of church organization and how the post-resurrection Lord seeks to lead his followers shows a more primitive and undeveloped portraiture than the more structured Synoptic ones (Anderson, *Christology*, 1996, 221-50). While finalized latest among the Gospels, John's ecclesiology is the most primitive among them.

The same is true regarding sacramental forms of worship. Whereas Jesus' baptism by John is featured prominently as the beginning of his ministry in the Synoptics, it is only mentioned in passing by the Baptist in John. Further, the Johannine narrator asserts that Jesus himself did not baptize, only his disciples did (Jn. 4:2), apparently as a clarification of John 3:22. Does this reflect an interest in diminishing water baptism, or does it simply point to a historical opinion that the development of baptizing activity lay with the works of Jesus' *disciples* rather than his own ministry? The absence of the words of the Institution of the Eucharist at the last supper in John 13 is even more striking. If the report of the meal was indeed produced by someone leaning against the breast of Jesus, how could he have missed the main purpose of the meal, which in Synoptic terms was to institute a cultic meal of remembrance? While John 6 presents a parallel invitation to ingest the flesh and blood of Jesus after the feeding of the 5,000, the content is clearly one of calling for martyrdom-willingness rather than cultic involvement. The “bread”

Jesus offers is his flesh, given for the life of the world (Jn. 6:51), and an invitation to “the Way of the Cross” is precisely what scandalized the disciples and made Jesus’ words hard to swallow. The meaning here, though, is parallel to Jesus’ invitation to James and John to drink his cup and to share in his baptism (Mk. 10:38)—also a clear associating of “the cup” and the baptism of Jesus with martyrdom-willingness.

The last supper in John is located the day before the Passover, but in the Synoptics it is a Passover meal, which would mean that Jesus’ crucifixion was held on the Passover—a highly unlikely eventuality. A common explanation for the Johannine rendering is that John has placed the last supper on the day of preparation for theological reasons as that was the day the Passover lambs were killed, but that detail is not in John; it is only in Mark (Mk. 14:12). Rather, Mark probably ordered the event as a Passover meal in order to make the Institution of the Eucharist a cultic rite parallel to the Jewish meal of remembrance. Luke even steps up the cultic significance, replacing the *contents* of the New Covenant (Jesus’ blood, Mk. 14:24) with the *container* (the cup, Lk. 22:20), as Marxsen has pointed out. John’s presentation of the last supper, however, is far more innocent from a cultic perspective, and is thus more likely to be historical.

Thus, on the basis of the criterion of dissimilarity, the Johannine rendering of women in leadership and non-formal ecclesiology and sacramentology is arguably more primitive and plausible historically.

3) *The textual integrity of John 6* comes across as a far more unified and coherent text than the two feedings in Mark 6 and 8, the sea crossings of Mark 4 and 6, and the ensuing discussions and confession of Peter. While there could have been a second feeding if there was indeed a first feeding, the two feeding narratives in Mark show 17 similarities with each other, suggesting parallel developments of a common set of events. And, if Jesus calmed the sea once, he could have calmed it a second time, but note that the Markan presentations feature the attestation of the disciples as a common response to the wonder. Due to the number of baskets involved in the gathering of the scraps after the feeding of the 4,000 (seven), it is conjectured by some that Mark 8 represents a rendering of events in Jesus’ ministry among the Gentile churches (hence connecting with the seven deacons of Acts 6:3 and the seven churches of Asia Minor, Rev. 1:4). Therefore, elements which are dispersed and replicated variously in Mark are presented in a far more unified and coherent way in John 6, suggesting greater traditional integrity. Luke even follows John’s lead in moving the confession of Peter to follow the *other* feeding (that of the 5,000, as in John 6), and Luke conflates Peter’s confessions in Mark and John to read, “the Christ of God”.

A second feature of John 6 is that it presents a greater degree of realism than the Synoptic counterparts. First, the feeding is located on the other side of the sea, so that boats coming from Tiberias crossed over to the other side, and the distance the disciples had rowed (around 5 kilometers) actually marks the middle of the lake, which is around ten kilometers across. It would have been unlikely to have located the feeding across the lake for theological or rhetorical reasons, but it might explain why finding food for people in less familiar territory was an issue. Second, the temptation of Jesus by the crowd (involving a bread-producing miracle, calls to display his authority, and an attempted inauguration of Jesus as a “Prophet-King like Moses”) seems more realistic than the more spiritualized account of being tempted by Satan in the wilderness in the Q narratives of Matthew and Luke, not that such could not have happened as well. The tempters in John 6 even cite Scripture, as does Jesus, and while he endures the testing,

some of his disciples did not. They departed and walked with him no longer (Jn. 6:66). Third, the political realism in John 6 seems palpable. The Passover was near (Jn. 6:4), and typological signs after the patterns of Moses and Elijah would have borne deliverance associations. Even Mark has them seated in “companies” of fifty and one hundred (Mk. 6:40) and connects the feeding with a sea-crossing wonder (Mk. 6:45-52). The nationalistic overtones of the feeding scenario in Mark and John corroborate each other. Fourth, the manna rhetoric used by Jesus’ discussants in John 6 is entirely commensurate with the ways Philo and the ancient Jewish midrashim employed manna as a rhetorical trump card, taking all other cards in the deck.²⁵ Jesus overturns their rhetorical ploy, and for the first time in the history of Jewish manna discourse refers to manna as death producing in contrast to the bread he offers. That seems unlikely to have been concocted. Finally, Peter’s confession in Mark represents the more Hellenized “the Christ” (Mk. 8:29) versus the more Jewish “the Holy One of God” in John (Jn. 6:69). Therefore, not only is the ministry of the historical Jesus more clearly laid out in John 6, but so is the confession of the historical Peter.²⁶

Most compelling about John 6, however, in terms of its historicity is the ways it sketches the revelatory ministry of Jesus and the Way of the Cross for his followers. While the Jewish authorities are presented as touting the “bread of angels” to eat (cf. Exod. 16:4; Ps. 78:23-25), Jesus counters exegesis with eschatology. “It is not Moses who gave...but my Father who gives...” (Jn. 6:32). The only way to be drawn to the Father is by means of the divine initiative—which Jesus embodies and effects (Jn. 6:44); and, the yearning of Moses is not simply to be reminded that “man shall not live by bread alone” (Deut. 8:3), but by fulfilling his yearning in Numbers 11:29, that “all the Lord’s people would be prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them.” Therefore, Jesus’ quoting of Isaiah 54:13, that all the Lord’s children “would be taught of God,” coheres with the spiritual mission of the prophetic Jesus, rendered distinctively in John 6. For his followers, however, the cost of discipleship would be clear, explaining why some of his disciples abandoned him and walked with him no longer (Jn. 6:66). Jesus’ “bread” as existential nourishment is the example of giving his flesh and blood on the cross for the life of the world, and his followers are invited to be willing to do the same (Jn. 6:51-54). Like parallel calls to costly discipleship in the Synoptics and Paul, if Jesus’ followers deny him before men, so shall they be denied before the father; and, if they expect to be raised with the Lord on the last day, they must be willing to go to the cross with him in the here and now. The Eucharistic association is only incidental; the central meaning is an invitation to drink the cup of Jesus, and to share in his baptism—both more primitive meanings than later cultic ones (Anderson, *Christology*, 1996, 110-36, 194-220). The disciples objected precisely because they understood his call to martyrdom-willingness; the abandonment by his disciples is hardly a detail to have been fabricated for pietistic reasons. Of course, these echoes of martyrdom would have been relevant when facing emperor worship expectations under Domitian (81-96 C.E.), but an invitation to the Way of the Cross was likely a primitive emphasis distinctively rendered in the Johannine and Markan traditions alike.

In these and other ways, John 6 shows itself to possess remarkable historical integrity, despite its having been added to an earlier edition by the final editor.

²⁵ See Anderson, *Christology* (1996), 52-61, 194-220, 272-73; see also “*Sitz im Leben*” (1997), 11-17.

²⁶ These and other points above are argued extensively in Anderson, *Christology* (1996), 167-251.

While the above movements reflect my approaches to the Johannine tradition and its development, seeking to improve upon the works of others, let me clarify one point. Bultmann did believe there was historical tradition in the Fourth Gospel; he simply was not interested in its presence. His interest was in the theological and literary features of the Fourth Gospel, and on these scores his work is of monumental value. In identifying tensions and nuances, in lifting up the existential meanings of a passage, in making connections with ancient religious literature and engaging insights of leading modern interpreter, the New Testament works of Rudolf Bultmann are of unprecedented importance. If he were to have written his commentary a decade or two after the discovery of the Qumran writings, however, some of his judgments might have been different. Still, it is in great indebtedness to the works of Bultmann, Brown, Schnackenburg, Barrett, Lindars, Borgen, and others that the present set of paradigms is advanced.

III. The Results of the John, Jesus, and History Project

As plans to publish our work were accepted by the Society of Biblical Literature Press in their prestigious Symposium Series, edited by Victor Matthews, our three volumes will also be published in hardback in Europe by E. J. Brill as well as being published in paperback in America. Felix Just, Tom Thatcher, and I have served as co-editors of the first two volumes, and the third volume is intended to feature the essays presented in the third triennium. Therefore, the subtitles of the three *John, Jesus, and History* volumes are as follows: *Vol. 1, Critical Appraisals of Critical Views* (2007); *Vol. 2, Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel* (2009); and *Vol. 3, Glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine Lens* (scheduled for 2011).

Following the publication of the first volume, favorable judgments by scholars have been impressive. In particular, appreciation has been expressed in the *Review of Biblical Literature* for the comprehensive, interdisciplinary, international, bold, and creative ways the project has been conceived. In reviewing the essays and responses in *JJH Vol. 1*, my analysis of the results of our first phase of investigation is as follows:²⁷

- 1) John's particular *type of memory, witness, and historiographic project* deserves to be analyzed in its own right instead of being a stepsister to the Synoptics.
- 2) *Ways of conceiving what "history" is* with reference to the Johannine witness is an important task, both in its originative and developing ways.
- 3) A notable fact in the above approaches is the *apparent departure from source-critical analysis* in the addressing of the Johannine riddles by the present selection of interpreters.
- 4) *John's relation to the Synoptics* continues to feature strongly as an issue that has a significant bearing on any discussion of John, Jesus, and history.
- 5) Fresh considerations of the *history-theology relationship* in new perspective also emerge from the above investigations.

²⁷ These points summarize the seven points outlined in my analysis of a "sense of the meeting" among our contributors (*JJH Vol. 1*, 2007), 285-89.

- 6) A call for *interdisciplinary investigation* comes through clearly from several of the above essays, and this is a challenge for Johannine and Jesus scholars alike.
- 7) A *more nuanced approach to Jesus studies* is called for by nearly all of our contributors.

As *JJH Vol. 2* came together, it was evident that some of the advances argued in *Vol. 1* were already being put into practice by some of the authors. In general, most of the essays took the Johannine tradition seriously, as an independent and coherent tradition in its own right, and evaluated its contents accordingly. While theological elements were noted, they were not taken programmatically as bases for historical exclusion; rather, in the trajectory of James D.G. Dunn's counsel to "let John be John,"²⁸ allowing the Johannine tradition to speak for itself has provided a strong basis upon which to build. In particular, several essays took up profitably two of the arguments put forward in *Vol. 1* and elsewhere. First, Johannine-Synoptic differences were considered in bi-optic perspective, interpreting differences as a Johannine-Markan dialogue.²⁹ This has great advantages because it builds on the most likely of inferences regarding Johannine-Synoptic dialectical relationships. Second, the laying out of degrees of plausibility (featured especially clearly in the papers by Mark Matson and Jaime Clark-Soles) provide a far more nuanced approach to general issues and individual points along the way. As a result, scholars will be able to decide, with far greater precision, which points are strongest, and which are not. A third advance involves the historic analysis of archaeological discoveries in Jerusalem since 2004. In an especially important essay by Urban von Wahlde on the recently discovered second Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem, it is seen to be a *miqvah*, a Jewish pool for ritual cleansing, which accounts for Jesus' instructing the blind man to wash in that pool (Jn. 9:7), whereby he becomes purified as well as healed—"sent" as an apostolic witness to Jesus' authentic ministry. Therefore, a detail that had once been thought of as only theological (the name of the pool, "*Siloam*" means "sent") is seen to have socio-religious historical meanings as well.

While the only general consensus among the scholars contributing to *JJH Vol. 2* is that assessing aspects of historicity in John is a venture worth pursuing, the following ten points suggest convergences in scholarship on the matter:³⁰

- 1) The first aspect of Johannine historicity involves an appreciation of John's *traditional historicity as an exercise in theological reflection*.
- 2) John's *originative history* deserves consideration in addition to its delivered history.
- 3) A good quantity of the *distinctive material in John makes particular historical contributions* to our understanding of Jesus and his mission that other Gospels fail to include.

²⁸ James, D.G. Dunn, "Let John Be John; A Gospel for its Time," in *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien* (ed. by Peter Stuhlmacher. WUNT 28; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1983), 309-39.

²⁹ If John and Mark may rightly be viewed as the Bi-Optic Gospels, each presenting an alternative rendering of Jesus' ministry, this may offer a more serviceable basis for analysis than privileging one tradition at the expense of the other. My own approach to the matter outlines eight ways in which John and the Synoptics basically agree about Jesus' ministry, eight ways in which the Synoptic presentations of Jesus are preferable, and eight ways in which the Johannine witness is preferable (Anderson, *Quest*, 2006, 127-73; also summarized in *JJH Vol. 1*, 2007, 69-70).

³⁰ These ten points pose the framework of my concluding essay at the end of *JJH Vol. 2* (2009), 379-86.

- 4) A closer look at the Johannine narrative exposes *a good deal of primitive, undeveloped material* over and against later and more developed features in the Synoptics and Paul's writings.
- 5) Johannine *archaeological and topographical details* not only cast valuable light upon the historicity of the Fourth Gospel, but they also illumine features of the ministry of Jesus that would be otherwise unknown.
- 6) Johannine *chronological plausibility* deserves a fresh look, especially with regard to ways the Johannine itinerary of Jesus varies from that of the Synoptic Jesus.
- 7) *Johannine-Synoptic similarities and differences* inform Johannine historicity in a variety of ways.
- 8) Johannine *presentations of Jesus as a northern prophet engaged dialectically with Judean religious leaders* contribute greatly to an understanding of the historical ministry and reception of Jesus in ways rife with religious and social realism.
- 9) Approaches to *Johannine composition and authorship* impact one's understandings of John's historicity and the character of its presentation; this is still a lively issue.
- 10) *Nuanced appraisals of John's historicity* are indeed possible, and even profitable, when assessing aspects of history in John.

As our second volume is scheduled to appear in the summer of 2009, our third volume is scheduled to appear the fall of 2011. Under the working subtitle, *Glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine Lens*, our final volume promises to evoke the greatest interest, as Johannine contributions to the historical quest for Jesus are put forward in critical form. The way we have arranged our sessions for the third phase of the JJH Group is to work from the strongest basis—the Johannine *Passion Narrative*, moving to *the Works of Jesus* in John, concluding with the most speculative subject—the *Words of Jesus* in John. While it is doubtful that the reintroduction of the Fourth Gospel into the fray of historical-Jesus studies will displace the Synoptic Jesus historically, it is likely the quest for Jesus will be different as a result. If one feature held in common among the first three critical quests for Jesus includes the exclusion of the Fourth Gospel from the venture, perhaps what is needed is a *fourth quest for Jesus* with John's Gospel squarely in the mix. This may create new challenges, but the present problems resulting from John's programmatic omission from Jesus research are no longer critically tenable.

Additional Ventures

In addition to our two 150-minute sessions at the annual Society of Biblical Literature meetings in North America since becoming a "Group" in 2005, the John, Jesus, and History Project has sponsored several other special sessions, and we may yet conceive of others. First, in celebration of the 60th anniversary of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, our Group was invited to sponsor a special session in 2007 on John and the Dead Sea Scrolls. In response to this invitation, Tom Thatcher and I recruited ten of the leading Qumran scholars around the world to present papers on the subject. These will be gathered in a separate volume to be edited by Mary Coloe of Australia, for publication in

the near future by Peeters of Leuven. A second extra venture at the 2007 meetings featured three extra sessions celebrating the book edited by Tom Thatcher, *What We Have Heard From the Beginning; The Past, Present and Future of Johannine Studies* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007). This book was drawn together by Tom Thatcher as a means of inviting eighteen of the leading Johannine scholars from around the world to present a paper on what they felt was the most important contribution their work made to Johannine studies. These papers were then responded to by less senior scholars (many of them are weighty enough to not deserve the description, “junior” although they are younger than the senior scholars in every case), and over three major sessions the highlights of the last half century or so of Johannine scholarship were presented and engaged. These three sessions were held as joint sessions with the Johannine Literature Section of SBL, and they made for an abundance of rich Johannine discussion at the 2007 SBL meetings indeed!

In addition to our two sessions of invited and proposed papers in November 2008, we organized a special review session featuring three books of direct relevance to the Project. In chronological order, my book, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus: Modern Foundations Reconsidered* (LNTS 321, London: T&T Clark, 2006 hardback; 2007 paperback), Richard Bauckham’s book, *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), and D. Moody Smith’s book, *The Fourth Gospel in Four Dimensions* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008) were reviewed by an international panel of first-rate biblical scholars. Judith Lieu (of Cambridge University) discussed each of the books’ contributions to Johannine studies, A.-J. Levine (of Vanderbilt University) discussed each of the books’ contributions to Jesus studies, and Andreas Koestenberger (of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary) discussed each of the books’ contributions to historical studies. Each of the authors then responded briefly to the reviews, which led to a lively general discussion.

In 2009 two special sessions are also being planned. The first will involve a special focus on historiographic methodology and how to devise effective criteria for determining Johannine historicity. As the Fourth Gospel has often been excluded by criteria for determining Synoptic historicity, and as understandings of “history” itself have been changing—involving subjective and perspectival features—such a disciplinary exploration is long overdue. A second session will be gathered on Johannine archaeology, and a session on the same subject will be organized the following year, as well. As the Gospel of John features more archaeological references than all the other canonical gospels combined, this is an important area of investigation. Plans are also underway for a joint session with the Historical Jesus Section of SBL in 2010, so that venue promises to broaden the discussions further.

While no one can predict what will happen within the history of New Testament research as a result of the John, Jesus, and History Project, one thing is certain. By asking direct questions and by challenging critically all sides of the issue—critical sides as well as traditional ones—the quest for truth is furthered, and important subjects are engaged collectively. Additional topics will also need to be addressed, including such literary issues as John’s authorship and composition, relation to other traditions, and rhetorical design and function. At some point we will also need to explore John’s connections with non-canonical traditions, such as the Gospel of Philip, the Gospel of Thomas, and the Apocryphon of John, and also John’s theological issues, such as its high Christology, embellished view of miracles, and dynamic presentation of the Spirit. For now, though, our exploration of John includes the Jesus of history as well as the Christ of faith, even if

the two might not be identical *within* the Johannine tradition. Whatever is discovered in the process, however, the truth will *always* be liberating!

Conclusion

In closing, I should say that any who would like to receive the papers of the JJH Group electronically may e-mail Tom Thatcher (.thatcher@ccuniversity.edu). All interested scholars are welcome to attend the sessions at the national SBL meetings (in New Orleans, Nov. 20-24, 2009; and in Atlanta, Nov. 19-23, 2010), and critical input is welcome from all sides and perspectives. In the overall scheme of things, what impact might the John, Jesus, and History Project and the new paradigms being advanced have upon biblical studies and our knowledge of Jesus? Only time will tell. At the very least, though, critical appraisals of critical views will have improved our methodologies and our approaches to these important issues; aspects of John's historicity will receive a greater appreciation in addition to aspects of John's theological interests; and, glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine lens will lend a clearer and more textured understanding of who he was and what he came to do. In that sense, being *honest to Jesus* will receive an assist by being more fully *honest to John!*³¹

³¹ I used this title in responding to an engaging set of reviews of *Quest* (2006) in *The Journal for Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 5 (2008): 125-64 (online—http://www.jgrchj.net/volume5/JGRChJ5-7_Anderson.pdf).