"Glimpses of Jesus Through the Johannine Lens—An Introduction and Overview *of John, Jesus, and History, Volume 3*"

This essay is a slightly expanded version of Paul Anderson, Felix Just, Tom Thatcher. eds. John, Jesus, and History, Vol. 3: Glimpses of Jesus Through the Johannine Lens, scheduled for publication early in 2016 by SBL Press.

See Also: The John, Jesus, and History Project-New Glimpses of Jesus and a Bi-Optic Hypothesis

By Paul N. Anderson[1]
George Fox University
https://georgefox.academia.edu/PaulAnderson

By Jaime Clark-Soles
Associate Professor of New Testament
Southern Methodist University
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[The John, Jesus, and History Project was conceived in 2000 by Tom Thatcher, Felix Just SJ, and Paul Anderson, who then recruited Jaime Clark-Soles, D. Moody Smith, R. Alan Culpepper, and Mary Coloe PBVM to serve on the Steering Committee from 2002-2010. As we entered our fourth and fifth triennia (2011-2016) with some members cycling off, others joining the Steering Committee include Craig Koester, Catrin Williams, Helen Bond, and Chris Keith. Appreciation is here also expressed to them, to the many scholars who have contributed to the discussions on many levels, and to the more than 500 scholars around the world who have asked to receive papers before they are presented in the sessions of the John, Jesus, and History Group at the SBL meetings. Attendance at our sessions has continued to be strong (ranging between 50 and 300 at the annual meetings), and we also appreciate the privilege of holding joint sessions with the Johannine Literature, Historical Jesus, and Synoptic Gospels Sections of the SBL,

[1] Jaime Clark-Soles and Paul N. Anderson served as Co-Chairs of the John, Jesus, and History Project from 2008 to 2010; others who have served as chairs and co-chairs of the John, Jesus, and History Project include Tom Thatcher (chair, 2002-2004), Tom Thatcher and Paul Anderson (co-chairs, 2005-2007), Jaime Clark-Soles and Craig Koester (co-chairs, 2011-2013), and Craig Koester and Catrin Williams (co-chairs, 2014-2016).

as well as the Bible in Ancient and Modern Media Group. Since this is a highly interdisciplinary venture, dialogic exchange between scholars who are experts in differing subjects is profitable on many levels. This essay is a slightly expanded version of *John, Jesus, and History, Vol. 3: Glimpses of Jesus Through the Johannine Lens,* scheduled for publication early in 2016 by SBL Press.]

In November 2010, Professor Gregory Sterling opened the joint session between the John, Jesus, and History Group and the Historical Jesus Section of the Society of Biblical Literature by correctly acknowledging that the two disjunctions levied by David F. Strauss of Tübingen a century and a half ago were largely accepted by Jesus researchers and New Testament scholars in the 19th and 20th centuries. First, Strauss argued that the Jesus of history must be divorced from the Christ of faith. Second, given some irreconcilable differences between the Synoptics and John, and the three-against-one reality, one must choose between the Synoptics and John. While John may serve theological purposes, so critical scholars have since assumed, the Synoptics have been held to trump the Johannine presentation of Jesus on nearly all historical accounts—at least the important ones.

These either/or dichotomies, furthering the earlier stance of F. C. Baur, provided momentous critical bases for the dehistoricization of John and the de-Johannification of Jesus in the modern era. Given John's highly theological presentation of Jesus and extensive differences with the Synoptics, these judgments are certainly understandable. After all, the subjective investment of an author invariably jeopardizes the objectivity of that report. And, given that John's narrative is introduced by a worship hymn to Christ as the pre-existent *Logos*, such a cosmic perspective may seem to eclipse the mundane character of John's earth-bound features. One can thus appreciate why the historical quests for Jesus over the last century and a half have largely excluded the Fourth Gospel from the database of worthy sources.

Then again, problems with such totalizing disjunctions are real. For one thing, Strauss's move to radically divorce history and theology creates new problems. While John is theological, so are the Synoptics. Mark's content is highly theological in its calls to discipleship and the way of the cross, and its narrative is clearly crafted climactically in its design. All roads lead to Jerusalem in Mark, and it has rightly been called (by Martin Kahler and others) "a passion narrative with an extended introduction." Likewise, Matthew and Luke also have their own pronounced theological interests, so the Synoptics are every bit as rhetorical as John is. Further, while John is highly spiritualized, it also features a great deal of distinctive mundane and theologically innocent material, requiring critical

consideration. As historicity itself is a highly subjective interest, "totally objective history" is a myth that may be as misleading as it is prized among modern audiences. There is no such thing as non-rhetorical history, since every historical claim, or challenge, is itself a rhetorical assertion. The problem, of course, is that Strauss's first point is critically flawed from the start. Therefore, while the dialectic between history and theology is worth noting, its programmatic role in disparaging the one Gospel that explicitly claims first-hand contact with its subject is problematic within the historical quest for Jesus of Nazareth.[2]

Strauss's second dichotomy also suffers critical inadequacy when plied unreflectively against John. Given that Matthew and Luke used Mark extensively, we have here not a three-against-one contest (the Synoptics versus John), but largely a one-to-one contrast, a Johannine-Markan set of issues to be assessed critically, although distinctive material in Matthew and Luke also differs with John, as well. Further, if some sort of familiarity or intertraditional engagement may have characterized the Johannine tradition's relation to Mark's (or to other traditions), differences of inclusion and slant may be direct factors of historical interests and knowledge rather than indicators of ahistorical theologization, proper. As other Jesus narratives are acknowledged by the author(s) of John 20:30-31 and 21:24-25, claiming a desire *not* to duplicate other accounts, might this explain *why* over 85% of John is not found in the Synoptics? What if John is different from Mark and the other Gospels on purpose, for historical reasons, rather than accidentally, or for theological reasons? Or, what if John was written first, or in isolation from the other Gospels? Might John's autonomy and independence from the Synoptics thus explain its differences? These are the sorts of issues that must be engaged critically, since even one's views on John's character and development affect one's criteria for determining Johannine historicity or ahistoricity.[3]

Then again, what is to be made of Johannine-Synoptic similarities? It could be that they reflect John's use of Synoptic material, although none of the similarities are word-for-word identical for more than a two- or three-word string of agreements.

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[2] Interestingly, Strauss claims that the last chain in the harbor blocking Christian theology from "the open sea of rational science" is the linking of the full humanity of Jesus with his transcendent nature. Therefore, to "break this chain is the purpose of the present work, as it has been in all of my theological writings" (Strauss 1865, 5), so he claims. Therefore, if Strauss is right that theology displaces historicity, then his life's work is historically untenable, as he declares his life-long interest to be theological. Of course, Strauss is wrong in that first assertion, and a more nuanced reading of the Gospels, and Strauss, is called for among reasoned scholars (for a fuller critique of Strauss, cf. Anderson 2013).

[3] Note the works of Robinson 1985, Hofrichter 1976, and Berger 1997, which argue Johannine priority, and even Mark's dependence on John (Hofrichter and Berger); note the works of Mackay 2004, Bauckham 1998, and Anderson 2013, which see John as written for readers of Mark, as something of an augmentation, or even a corrective, of Mark.

Even so, the setting or function of a similar phrase is invariably different. If there were some sort of intertraditional influence, however, why is it assumed that it happened only at one time or manner, or that it happened only in one direction? Echoes of stories and details might also have flowed back and forth between traditions during the oral and written stages of their development. Thus John's formative tradition might have influenced some Synoptic accounts, even if it was finalized last. Might Johannine-Synoptic similarities and differences suggest some sort of intertraditional contact, or are such features actually independent corroborations of the ministry and message of the Gospels' subject: Jesus?

Whatever the case, simply considering the Synoptics "historical" and John "ahistorical" is naïve and overly simplistic. It does not account for the many dozens of exceptions to its speculative assumptions when the component elements of such a view are assessed critically. Admittedly, including John in the quest for Jesus also brings with it new sets of problems for traditional and critical scholars alike—especially if some of its contributions are found to be historical, not simply theological. Pointedly, if John's presentation on a certain matter is judged historically superior to the Synoptics, and assuming that harmonization is elusive, would that imply that one or more of the Synoptics is historically flawed when compared against John? Along those lines, sidelining the Johannine witness as merely theological has made things easier for both traditional and critical scholars; but ease is not the goal of critical studies—including the John, Jesus, and History Project. If anything, discerning aspects of historicity in the Johannine account of Jesus and his ministry adds new problems as well as alleviating some others. In whatever directions the critical evidence may lead, interpreters will have to deal with the most compelling results and with their implications.

Given that the first three quests for Jesus have largely followed the ground rules laid down by Strauss and others, it implies that if Strauss and his companions were wrong, so are those who have followed in their wake.[4] The implications here are extensive. Just as it is wrong to put the Synoptics or John in a history-only straightjacket, it is wrong to put John or the Synoptics in a theology-only straightjacket. One must recognize that the Synoptics are both historical and theological, and that John is both theological and historical. Thus, many of the bases for determining reliable data for understanding Jesus of Nazareth are called into question—including methodologies for determining Johannine historicity, assumptions regarding the origin and development of the Johannine tradition,

[4] For an overview of the history of the quests for the historical Jesus, cf. Jaime Clark-Soles 2010, 103-126.

inferences made regarding John's relation to the Synoptics, and views on the relation between history and theology among the gospel traditions.

Recent quests for Jesus have sought to make use of apocryphal texts and Gnostic Gospels, while excluding the one gospel claiming first-hand memory of Jesus and his ministry. But is the programmatic exclusion of John from Jesus studies, while including everything else, a sound critical move? Certainly not.[5] Further, while a good deal of material in John is highly theological, much or most of it is not—neither implicitly nor explicitly.[6] Perhaps we need a *fourth* quest for Jesus: one that includes John critically rather than excluding it programmatically. Such an inclusive quest has already begun in the new millennium, with the John, Jesus, and History Project playing a key role within that development. The question, of course, is how to approach John's historicity and how to make sense of its content in seeking to learn more about the Jesus of history, not necessarily the Christ of faith. Such is what this third collection of essays within that venture aspires to advance.

The John, Jesus, and History Project—Its Third Triennium

Since its beginning at the turn of the new millennium, the overall mission of the John, Jesus, and History Project has been to assess critically the relationships between the Gospel of John, Jesus of Nazareth, and the nature of historiography itself. As an overview, our first triennium (2002-2004) posed *critical appraisals of critical views*, critiquing two dominant trajectories in the modern era: the *dehistoricization of John* and the *de-Johannification of Jesus*. Literature reviews, an evaluation of critical platforms, methodological essays, and a case study set the larger inquiry into motion. The results of those inquiries were published in *JJH 1* (Anderson *et al* 2007), and following studies carried this inquiry further.

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[5] Such is the overall judgment of *JJH 1* (Anderson *et al* 2007). See in particular the critical reviews of the literature in that volume regarding Johannine studies and the quests for Jesus by Robert Kysar, Jack Verheyden, Mark Allan Powell, and Donald Carson. Between these four targeted literature reviews and Anderson's analysis of twelve planks in the platforms of the dehistoricization of John and the de-Johannification of Jesus the central aspects of the fields involved are effectively engaged.

[6] See the many ways in which aspects of historicity are abundantly evident in John's Gospel; such is the overall conclusion of the essays in *JJH 2* (Anderson *et al* 2009). Consider, for instance, this analysis of gradations of symbolization in John 18-19 (the section in John, along with John 6, that contains the most similarities with the Synoptics), where we find 15 instances of explicitly symbolic or theological detail, 17 instances of implicitly symbolic or associative detail, 16 instances of possibly symbolic or correlative detail, and 18 instances of unlikely symbolic or theologically innocent detail (Anderson 2006b).

Our second triennium (2005-2007) explored *aspects of historicity in the Fourth Gospel*, examining relevant historical features in John 1-4, 5-12, and 13-21, respectively. *JJH 2* (Anderson *et al* 2009) features the results of that endeavor. Significant within this collection is the way that it directly challenges the dehistoricization of John as a critically engaged collection. While it is obvious that not everything in John is historically crafted, at least some of it appears to be—in critical perspective. Thus, a more measured approach to the issues serves well all sides of the debate.

Our third triennium (2008-2010) has therefore sought to yield *glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine lens*; scholars worked through the passion narratives, the works of Jesus, and the words of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. Like our previous two triennia, we did not prescribe particular approaches or outcomes; we simply sought to connect first-rate biblical scholars with important subjects and asked contributors to substantiate critically any judgments they made. The results are included in this volume, and significant is the way these essays challenge the de-Johannification of Jesus.

Special Sessions and Related Projects

In addition to hosting two main sessions on glimpses of Jesus in John each of the three years from 2008 to 2010, we organized several ancillary sessions and projects that focused on important related subjects. Some of these special sessions or celebrated anniversaries have addressed what was needed at the time. For instance, leading up to the 60th anniversary of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Society of Biblical Literature organizers encouraged the John, Jesus, and History Group to organize a special session on the subject at the 2007 SBL Meeting in San Diego, which led to a state-of-the-art analysis of the issue and the publication of an important collection of essays, edited by Tom Thatcher and Mary Coloe (2011). The SBL meetings that year also included a set of joint sessions with the Johannine Literature Section that featured essays by senior and junior Johannine scholars worldwide, which were gathered and edited by Tom Thatcher (2007a). While these sessions and book-length projects did not deal directly with our main foci, they did bolster explorations of aspects of historicity in John and implications for Jesus research.

Leading up to the 2008 SBL meeting in Boston, it was becoming apparent that aspects of Johannine historicity and quests for Jesus in Johannine perspective were emerging in scholarly literature, so we organized a major book-review session engaging three books: *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus*, by Paul

Anderson (2006); *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple,* by Richard Bauckham (2007); and *The Fourth Gospel in Four Dimensions,* by D. Moody Smith (2008). Engaging each of these books, Judith M. Lieu addressed "Implications for the Study of John," Amy-Jill Levine commented upon "Implications for the Study of Jesus," and Andreas J. Koestenberger explored "Implications for the Study of History." The discussion revealed that understandings of gospel traditions and their developments deserved a new look—perhaps even a reconsideration of the critical exclusion of eyewitness testimony from gospel traditions, especially Mark and John. Discerning the trajectory and development of the Johannine tradition is itself a monumental task, but all three of these works argued for some form of autonomous Jesus tradition underlying the Johannine narrative rather than its being derivative from the Synoptics or from hypothetical sources. Such inferences, of course, have implications for understanding the historical subject of John's narrative—Jesus—despite its being a stylized and theologically laden rendering of his ministry.

Given that many criteria for determining historicity in the modern quest for Jesus have been designed to privilege Synoptic presentations of Jesus over and against the Johannine witness, we organized a special session on "Methodologies for Determining Johannine Historicity" for the 2009 SBL Meeting held in New Orleans; a second session was organized for the 2014 SBL Meeting in San Diego. These presentations and discussions explored considerations of ancient historiography as well as developments within understandings of historicity and ahistoricity in the modern era. A third set of papers will likely lead to a self-standing volume on that subject, as criteria for determining historicity within gospel studies are themselves coming under review by scholars internationally.

Following on Urban C. von Wahlde's paper presented in 2005 (cf. von Wahlde 2009), which featured the archaeological discovery in Jerusalem the previous year of the second Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem, it became apparent to the JJH steering committee that we needed to host a sustained set of presentations on John and archaeology. Therefore, an additional session was organized for the 2009 meetings, as the first of three sessions (2009-2011) on "Archaeology and the Fourth Gospel." Papers were thus solicited from top archaeologists in the world, commenting on particular features in the Gospel of John that demonstrate a striking correlation with recent archaeological discoveries. Attendance at these sessions was very strong, and despite a diversity of approaches and outcomes, it became clear that the extensive presence of archaeologically relevant references in John calls for a reassessment of its "otherworldly" orientation. These and other essays will be

published in a collection entitled *Archaeology and the Fourth Gospel*, bolstering the other work being furthered by the Project.[7]

While the JJH Group had co-sponsored several joint sessions with the SBL's Johannine Literature Section over the years, we had yet to feature a joint session with the SBL's Historical Jesus Section. So in 2010 we organized such a session devoted to *The Use/Disuse of the Fourth Gospel in Historical Jesus Research*.[8] Impressive among the papers and the subsequent discussions is that each scholar posed a way forward in making use of John in Jesus research, albeit with different approaches to the venture. Worth reconsidering are several issues: an independent eyewitness tradition as a plausible source of the distinctive Johannine presentation of Jesus, John's awareness of archaeological and topographical features of pre-70 CE Palestine, the Johannine and Markan perspectives as two individuated renderings of Jesus' ministry, and ways of assessing the early-and-late character of John's presentation of Jesus—extending even into the second-century non-canonical texts.

Our Present Triennia: 2011-2016

Given that the second and third triennia of the John, Jesus, and History Project addressed the questions of the first triennium, posing "aspects of historicity" in John and "glimpses of Jesus" through the Johannine lens, larger sets of issues called for further consideration. First, how did the Johannine tradition develop, and what was the relation between earlier memories of Jesus and their later developments? Within John's intra-traditional developments, can there be seen a dialectic between perception, experience, and reflection—either reflected by a composition process or simply as a factor of evolving perspective? Second, what might the relation have been between John's developing tradition and parallel traditions, such as the Synoptics? Third, how might the emergence of crises and contexts within the evolving Johannine tradition have contributed to authentic or distorted memories of Jesus and his ministry—requiring a distinguishing of first and second levels of history?

[7] Publication by Eerdmans is anticipated in its Studying the Historical Jesus Series; such a collection on this subject has never before been gathered.

[8] The session was chaired by Greg Sterling, and presentations were made by the following: James H. Charlesworth on "Using the Witness of John in Jesus Research"; Paul N. Anderson on "The Dialogical Autonomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Theologically Engaged Jesus Tradition and Implications for Jesus Studies"; Ismo Dunderberg on "How Far Can You Go? Jesus, John, the Synoptics, and Other Texts;" and Richard A. Horsley on "Rethinking How We Understand the Gospels as Historical Sources for Jesus-in-Context."

As a means of addressing these inescapable questions, the John, Jesus, and History steering committee proposed fourth and fifth triennia, developing along these lines. Co-opting the softer-history language of James D. G. Dunn, "Jesus remembered" allowed us to explore plausible ways forward regarding gospel-tradition studies and Johannine-situation studies. Our approach to Jesus Remembered in the Johannine Tradition (2011-2016) includes foci upon: a) orality and literacy in the early Johannine tradition, b) John and Mark, c) John and Luke, d) John and Matthew, e) John and Q, and f) John and extracanonical gospels. Our approach to Jesus Remembered in the Johannine Situation (2014-2017—perhaps requiring an extra year) includes foci upon: a) the Galilean-Judean phase (roughly 30-70 CE), b) an early diaspora phase (70-85 CE), and a later diaspora phase (roughly 85-100 CE). Those papers will be included in future John, Jesus, and History volumes (see below).

In addition to the three sessions on Archaeology and the Fourth Gospel (2009-2011) and the special sessions on methodologies for determining Johannine historicity (2009, 2014; anticipating a third), a third set of extra sessions seemed to be called for, developing various portraitures of Jesus emerging from analyses of the Gospel of John and the other Gospels. Given that portraitures of Jesus advanced by historical-Jesus scholars—often operating to the exclusion of John—nonetheless are echoed by John's presentation of Jesus, we organized sessions exploring portraitures of Jesus emerging from the Gospel of John (2013, 2015; anticipating a third), with Craig Koester taking the lead in that venture. Given that one of the planks in the platform of the de-Johannification of Jesus has been the demonstration that leading Jesus scholars' portraitures of Jesus as a prophet, cynic, sage, holy man, or apocalyptist have been constructed without John in the mix, it is instructive to note that each of these and other portraitures can be constructed even more lucidly when using John as a primary source instead of a disparaged one.[9] Plans are in the works for each of these projects to also be edited into full-length books in the next two or three years.[10]

We also engaged several really important works and reviewed them in our sessions. Organizing a joint session with the Bible in Ancient and Modern Media Group in 2011, we reviewed *The Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture*

[9] Note Marcus Borg's (1994) outlining of four of these portraitures in late-20th-century Jesus scholarship, and note Anderson's demonstration that each of these portraitures can be seen even more clearly in the Gospel of John, making its neglect in Jesus studies a puzzling phenomenon (Anderson *et al*, 2007, 62-66).

[10] Publication plans for these volumes include: *Archaeology and the Fourth Gospel,* Paul N. Anderson, ed. (Eerdmans); *Methodologies for Determining Johannine Historicity*, Paul N. Anderson, ed.; *Portraits of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, Craig Koester, ed.

(Le Donne and Thatcher, eds. 2011). Also, in celebration the 50th and 60th anniversaries of C.H. Dodd's magna opera (1953, 1963), Tom Thatcher and Catrin Williams gathered a collection of essays celebrating the interpretation and historical tradition of John (Thatcher and Williams, eds. 2013). Papers engaging the essays in this volume were presented at a special conference at Saint Mary's Theological Seminary, hosted by Michael Gorman, and connections were also made with Raymond Brown's formidable works (Brown 1965, 1966–70, 1979, 2003). We also organized two other special conferences designed to cast light on larger aspects of historicity within the Johannine writings and situation. Hosted by Alan Culpepper and the McAfee School of Theology, a conference on the Johannine Epistles was organized in 2010 (cf. Culpepper and Anderson, eds. 2014), and a conference on John and Judaism was organized in 2015 (cf. Culpepper and Anderson, eds. est. 2016). All three of these conferences allowed us to invite leading scholars in the world to present and participate in state-of-the-art gatherings on the way to the AAR/SBL meetings, celebrating and furthering further publications.

As these overviews of the extra sessions organized by the John, Jesus, and History Group suggest, evaluating critically the bases for the dehistoricization of John and the de-Johannification of Jesus has exposed these platforms as being flimsy and unstable. As a result, a good number of reasons for making use of John in the quest for Jesus have emerged in a variety of ways, laying foundations for a new quest for Jesus—one that includes John rather than excluding it. Therefore, as this third volume of the John, Jesus, and History Project is being published, it is becoming more and more apparent that we are witnessing a paradigm shift within New Testament studies, which the present volume accompanies and also advances.

A Paradigm Shift within Jesus Studies in the New Millennium

In addition to the work presented within the John, Jesus, and History Project over the last decade or so, larger sets of discussions have evinced a marked shift within New Testament and Jesus studies overall. In the new millennium, some Jesus scholars have not so rapidly dismissed John from the canons of historicity and the historical quest for Jesus. While C. H. Dodd, Raymond Brown, and others had called for a reconsideration of the historical tradition underlying the Fourth Gospel, and even Bultmann's inference of underlying sources sought to account for John's distinctive historical material, the move toward connecting Johannine data with the

historical study of Jesus by critical scholars is a relatively recent development. Mark Allan Powell notes this shift in his *Word & World* essay (2009) and also in the second edition of his analysis of Jesus research (2013). Likewise, James Charlesworth (2010) not only calls for a paradigm shift in Jesus studies—away from ignoring John to including John—but he notes that such a paradigm shift is already underway. Charlesworth thus features five compelling examples of scholars who have already made the shift in their own approaches to Jesus and Johannine issues and then contributes to the venture himself.[11]

This movement within Jesus studies is also accompanied by the advancement of archaeological and material-culture studies of Palestine at the time of Jesus. Following the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, increased interest in economic, political, religious, and cultural realities of pre-70 CE Galilee, Samaria, and Judea has also yielded considerable knowledge of the context in which Jesus ministered. For instance, K. C. Hanson and Doug Oakman (2008) illuminate social structures and conflicts during the time of Jesus, and Jonathan Reed (2002) sheds valuable light upon the economic and social realities in the regions of such cosmopolitan cities as Beit She'an (Scythopolis), Tiberias, and Sepphoris. Under Roman occupation, and under the provincial reign of Herod Antipas, awareness of economic and political realities forms an essential backdrop for understanding the situation into which Jesus came and ministered. In the unprecedented collection of essays on Jesus and archaeology gathered by James Charlesworth (2006), over half of the essays addressed features particular to the Gospel of John.[12] Only within the last decade or so have these developments piqued an interest in connections between John, archaeology, and Jesus, actually building upon some of the insights of William Foxwell Albright six decades ago (1956), where he notes intriguing links between John's narrative and material archaeological realities.[13]

International interest in this shift in Jesus studies is also reflected by a request from the *Zeitschrift für Neues Testament* for a report on the history of the John, Jesus, and History Project for European audiences, including an outlining of a Bi-Optic Hypothesis as a potential successor to Bultmann's approach to the issues (Anderson 2009). This international interest was extended in a DAAD grant in 2010, hosted by Ruben Zimmermann at the University of Mainz, which led to

[11] Charlesworth (2010) includes within that list the works of John P. Meier, Gerhard Theissen / Annette Merz, Richard Bauckham, Paul N. Anderson, and D. Moody Smith; some of their further contributions are included in the present volume.

[12] The essays in this collection by von Wahlde (2006a) and Anderson (2006a) identify over two-dozen instances of details in the Fourth Gospel coinciding with archaeological or topographical realities.

[13] Raymond Brown builds on this essay in his treatment of the problem of historicity in John (1965: 191-221); cf. also Moloney 2000.

academic courses devoted to the John, Jesus, and History Project and a "Fourth Quest for Jesus"—one that includes John centrally in the endeavor. Lectures were then invited on these subjects at the Universities of Nijmegen, Muenster, and Marburg. Later, Fulbright-Specialist visits to Nijmegen in 2013 and 2014, hosted by Jan van der Watt, continued those engagements. Given the international interest and multiple new approaches to the issues, a paradigm shift within the last decade or so appears indeed to be underway within American and European scholarship.

Another contribution to Jesus studies aided by the Fourth Gospel is volume 9:2 in the *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*. In especially incisive ways, the four essays in that volume address the most difficult issue at hand: the sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John, given their differences from the same in the Synoptics. Subjects engaged include the Son of Man sayings (Reynolds 2011), agrarian aphorisms (McKinnish Bridges 2011), and parabolic speech (Zimmermann 2011) in John, as well as parallels to the Johannine "I am" sayings and metaphors in the Synoptics (Anderson 2011).[14] Several implications of these four papers follow: a) Son of Man sayings in John and the Synoptics cohere in interesting ways, showing something of an apocalyptic thrust of Jesus' ministry in dual perspective; b) mundane and agrarian elements in Jesus' teachings are found also in John, not just the Synoptics; c) parabolic sayings—even if somewhat different in form—are found in John as well as the Synoptics; and d) all nine of the "I am" metaphors or themes in the sayings of the Johannine Jesus are also found in the Synoptics, though undeveloped christologically, as well as absolute "I am" sayings and a reference to the burning bush of Exodus 3:14 (Mark 12:26). Therefore, when viewed alongside the Synoptics, John's rendering of Jesus's teachings is distinctive, but not categorically other.

In addition to developments within historical Jesus studies, understandings of history and historiography themselves have also undergone significant development in the last few decades, especially in the aftermath of structuralism-post-structuralism debates. Challenging the 19th century empiricist interpretation of Leopold von Ranke's definition of history as *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist* (how things actually happened), E. H. Carr (1961) questioned empiricist understandings of what is meant by "history." A crossing of the Rubicon was not in itself historic; rather, Julius Caesar's crossing of this river in 49 BCE was *deemed* historic because of its inferred significance. Subjective factors impact what is considered "historic" every bit as much as objective facts, as Karl Popper (1957) had noted earlier. Hayden White continued the challenge to modernist understandings of

[14] The essays by Reynolds and McKinnish-Bridges are included in the present volume in slightly modified form.

history with his work on metahistory (1973), showing the elective affinities that comprise central components of any process of historical inference.[15]

Raising the question of contextual perspective and *whose* history is being reported, "new historicism" has challenged determinations of "history" as reflections of dominant interpretations rendered by military or societal victors.[16] Along these lines, analyses of historiography and the historian's craft have built on Marc Bloch's earlier work (1953), and disciplinary understandings of the character, tools, sources, and operations of ancient and modern historiography have refined the discipline in recent decades.[17] Of course, numerous fallacies abound within any discipline, and yet historicality itself sometimes requires a defense in the light of apparent historical relativism.[18] The importance of critical theory applied to historical criticism is that it accounts for some of the impasse within the quests for the "historical" Jesus, although biblical scholars are often not up to date on historiography scholarship as a discipline. As different approaches to historiography itself proliferate, what is meant by "history" must also be considered within the inquiry itself. Perhaps more importantly, certainty becomes more and more elusive regarding what "cannot" be considered historical, as a result of more probing disciplinary inquiry.

Finally, in terms of genre studies, Richard Burridge (2004) and others have established that the Gospels are written in the literary form of Greco-Roman biography. While Jewish hero-narrative features are also present,[19] the Gospels exhibit features consonant with traits of contemporary historical narrative—including John—so they deserve to be treated accordingly. These and other developments have impacted the role of the Johannine tradition within historical studies and Jesus studies, challenging many of the key bases for excluding John's witness to Jesus from historical consideration. Finding effective ways to evaluate and make use of the Johannine tradition for historical studies and Jesus studies, of

[15] Note that shortly after Hayden's monograph was published, Moody Smith (1977) describes John's presentation of Jesus as metahistorical.
[16] Following on Karl Popper's 1957 critique of historicism and the works of Michel Foucault and Stephen Greenblatt, attempts to advance new approaches to historicism have been proposed within the new historicism movement, including Wesley Morris 1972 and the essays gathered by Aram Veeser in 1989. In 2002 Gina Hens-Piazza introduced the field to biblical studies.
[17] Cf. Marc Bloch 1957; see also Ernst Breisach 1983, Keith Jenkins 1991, John Gaddis 2002, Georg Iggers 1997, and Howell & Prevenier 2001.
[18] For an extensive critique of historians' fallacies, cf. David Fischer 1970; for a defense of history, cf. Richard Evans 1999.
[19] Note, for instance, the treatment of Mark by Michael Vines 2002.

course, is another matter, and ways forward along those lines hinge upon recent developments in Johannine studies.[20]

Recent Developments within Johannine Studies

In addition to the developments outlined above, recent advances within Johannine studies also impact the work of the John, Jesus, and History Project. Approaches to addressing the Johannine riddles (literary, historical, theological) have themselves been at odds among leading Johannine scholars internationally for more than a century, so this field is also highly complex. Notably, theories of Johannine composition are tied to inferences of authorship, and those inferences are often connected to understandings of Jesus rooted in Synoptic studies. Some theories hinge upon an inference of who the Beloved Disciple must have been (a known or unknown follower of Jesus) or cannot have been (forcing dependence on either inferred sources or the Synoptics); but the strongest way forward is to proceed with assessing the data critically regardless of who the evangelist and/or the final editor may or may not have been.[21] As such, the John, Jesus, and History Project makes no attempt to advocate or attain consensus over how to approach any of the Johannine riddles, although clarity on one issue will invariably impact approaches to others. As even modest insight regarding aspects of historicity and glimpses of Jesus in John is garnered, such advances will indeed be of service to understanding its intra-traditional and inter-traditional dialectics and developments. For instance, dialogues between earlier and later understandings within the Johannine tradition are apparent, as are dialogues between John's tradition and those represented in the Synoptic Gospels (Anderson 1996).

Four further developments in Johannine studies over the last decade or so also inform the interdisciplinary character of the John, Jesus, and History Project, albeit indirectly. The first is an expanded understanding of how gospel traditions developed and functioned, moving from orality to literacy in the light of media theory and memory theory, and sometimes back again. Building on Walter Ong's work on secondary orality (1982) and Werner Kelber's work on oral and written gospel-tradition developments (1983, 1985, 1987, 1987a), analyses of the Fourth

[20] For recent overviews of Johannine scholarship, cf. Attridge 2002 and Anderson 2008a.

[21] For an analysis of a dozen theories of composition and how each does and does not address adequately various Johannine riddles, see Anderson 2011 (95-124). John's historical riddles are also outlined (45-65) and accounted for, and a chapter on John's contribution to Jesus studies is included between two chapters on John's theology (175-237).

Gospel in first-century media culture have gone some distance in accounting for John's similarities with and differences from the Synoptics. In particular, the collection of essays on that topic edited by Anthony Le Donne and Tom Thatcher (2011) argues the importance of liberating the Johannine tradition from text-bound confines as the primary critical basis for evaluating its historical contribution. In Thatcher's synchronic analysis of John's composition and purpose (2006), for instance, he argues that John's Gospel includes a good deal of historical memory, crafted apologetically, and that its purpose is more historical than that of Luke and Matthew. Given the constructive work that James Dunn (2013) has produced on the development of oral gospel traditions and the Johannine tradition's place within that mix, these interdisciplinary media and memory studies call for a new day in understanding the origin and character of gospel traditions, including John's distinctive presentation of Jesus. No longer is the Johannine text relegated to step-sister status, beholden to synoptic hegemony; the Fourth Gospel possesses its own claims to being a representation of the message and mission of Jesus of Nazareth, to be considered in its own right.

The second advance in Johannine studies involves a continuing understanding of the literary design and function of the Johannine narrative, so as to connect its rhetorical crafting with the emerging Johannine situation in which it was delivered. Most significant in the new literary studies performed on the Fourth Gospel over the last three decades or more has been the work of Alan Culpepper (1983), elucidating the literary design and function of the Johannine narrative. A number of important studies on characters and characterization have been developed in the meantime. Norman Peterson (1993) made connections between the rhetorical features of the narrative and the targeted Johannine audience.[22] Taking characterization studies further, David Beck (1997) and Nicholas Farelly (2010) analyzed the discipleship implications of the characterization of anonymous figures and disciples in John, Adeline Fehribach (1998) performed a feminist-historical analysis of female characters in John, and Colleen Conway (1999) assessed critically the presentation of men and women in John as a feature of characterization within gender theory. Stan Harstine (2002) performed an analysis of the characterization of Moses in John, and Cornelis Bennema (2014) developed an overall theory of characterization to be applied to the Johannine narrative. After the first edition of Bennema's work in 2009, two major collections of Johannine

[22] Cf. also a Bakhtinian analysis of the rhetorical function of the Johannine dialogue within the emerging Johannine situation, Anderson 2007.

characterization studies were published in 2013,[23] establishing Johannine characterization studies as a robust field of inquiry. In addition to characterological studies, Tom Thatcher and Steven Moore gathered a set of new literary-critical analyses of the Johannine text in honor of Alan Culpepper's contribution a quarter century earlier (Moore and Thatcher 2008), and Kasper Bro Larsen (2012) contributed meaningful insights on literary character of John's recognition scenes.[24] The value of these studies for historical analysis is incidental, in that fictive and historical narratives both employ rhetorical designs. Thus, while John's literary features could explain the character of its content, they fall short of helping to determine its origin. Literary analysis nonetheless helps one appreciate what is being said by noting how it is expressed.

A third recent development in Johannine studies involves a more nuanced appreciation for the development of John's tradition alongside the synoptic traditions. While some scholars continue to lump John with or pit John against "the Synoptics" as a gathered collection, the Synoptics were probably not gathered together until half a century or so after they were finalized. Therefore, considering John's tradition in relation to each of the synoptic traditions requires a more refined approach to the issues. Regarding the Johannine and Markan traditions, Raymond Brown (2003) inferred some sort of cross-influence (or interfluence) between their pre-literary stages of development. Richard Bauckham (1998) saw the Johannine narrative as crafted as a dialectical corrective for readers of Mark, and Ian Mackay (2004) saw John's pattern to be indebted to Mark—perhaps familiar with an oral performance of Mark but not dependent on a written text. Following the work of Lamar Cribbs (1973), a number of scholars have come to see Luke's departures from Mark in ways that coincide with John as plausible indicators of Luke's access to the Johannine tradition (cf. Moody Smith's analysis of John among the Gospels, 1992).

As a result, Mark Matson (2001), Barbara Shellard (2002), and Paul Anderson (1996, 274-77) came to see Luke's coinciding with John in its departures from Mark as hints of Luke's dependence on the Johannine tradition. The provocative work of Ernst Käsemann (1966) carried the work of von Harnack and others further, in seeing John's spirit-based ecclesiology as being in tension with Matthean Christianity in the late first-century situation, including the rise of

[23] Cf. the collections edited by Christopher Skinner (2013) and by Steven Hunt, François Tolmie, and Ruben Zimmermann (2013); the latter contributes some seventy essays—the most extensive collection of analyses performed on any biblical text.

[24] Regarding the polyvalent character of the Johannine text, cf. Anderson 2008; and of the Johannine dialogues, cf. Tomaskutty 2015.

institutionalism within some settings. In Käsemann's view, therefore, the Johannine tradition should not be seen as beyond the mainstream Christian movement, but closer to the center than previous scholars had allowed.

A fourth recent development within Johannine studies notes the history of the Johannine tradition within its developing historical situation. While it will be of no surprise that some one-volume Johannine commentaries have embraced John's historical features (cf. especially Michaels 2010 and Bruner 2012), one of the most significant diachronic commentaries on John by Urban von Wahlde (2010, 3 volumes) provides a critical path forward in accounting for its first-hand knowledge of pre-70 CE Palestine.[25] According to von Wahlde's three-edition theory of John's composition (locating the writing of the Epistles between the second and third editions), the first edition represents an independent Jesus narrative that was written in the 60s by an unknown follower of Jesus. This accounts for the abundance of archaeological and topographical detail within the Johannine narrative as well as the account's originative independence from Mark and other traditions. Casting light on the Jesus of history, this early narrative also presents Jesus of Nazareth as a prophet like Moses, whose agency from the Father was eventually cast into a more Hellenistic *Logos* schema later within the tradition. Palpable within the early material is also the north-south tension between the Galilean prophet (and his followers) and the Jerusalem-centered leadership, where the religious adversaries are the "Pharisees," "rulers," and "chief priests" rather than the *Ioudaioi* (a term assigned to the second-edition material in his theory). In the early material, Jesus' signs show him to be a charismatic Jewish prophet, and his teachings show him to be a bringer of the Spirit; the divine *Logos* association came later. While not all scholars will be convinced by von Wahlde's intricate and extensive delineation of literary layers, his theory constitutes an impressive critical accounting for the relationships between the history and theology within the Johannine tradition, bearing implications for Jesus and Johannine studies alike.

Parallel to von Wahlde's approach, but simpler in its design, is the overall Johannine theory of Paul N. Anderson, elucidating John's dialogical autonomy (2011). Within this theory, a) the Johannine narrative is produced by a dialectical thinker, which explains many of its both-and characteristics; b) John's oral tradition developed alongside the pre-Markan tradition, showing some interfluence in the preservation of similar sound bites and memorable details; c) the Father-Son relationship in John is founded upon a Jewish agency motif, showing two-dozen parallels with Deuteronomy 18:15-22; d) following familiarity with the Markan

[25] The John, Jesus, and History Group thus organized a special session in 2011, featuring reviews of von Wahlde's commentary by Craig Koester, Paul N. Anderson, and Alicia Myers, to which the author responded.

narrative, perhaps as performed in a meeting for worship, a first edition of John was gathered as the second gospel narrative—an augmentation of and modest corrective to Mark; e) John's story of Jesus is performed within a post-70 CE diaspora setting, and several crises over several decades are apparent in the emerging Johannine situation; f) following the Johannine Epistles and the death of the Fourth Evangelist, the Johannine Elder gathers the witness of the Beloved Disciple and adds the Prologue, chapters 6, 15-17, and 21, and other material, including eyewitness and Beloved Disciple references; g) the Johannine tradition's relations to other traditions include a formative impact on the Lukan tradition (and perhaps Q) as well as some interfluential engagement with later Matthean tradition on ecclesiology and on Jewish apologetic thrusts. This modest two-edition theory of John's composition, based upon the theory of Barnabas Lindars (1972), deals most efficiently with John's most problematic aporias.

While none of the authors in the present volume were expected to be aware of or in agreement with any of these developments in Johannine studies, it is instructive to note how one's approaches to John's composition, tradition development, relation to the Synoptics, and literary design impact one's inferences regarding John's historicity. Further, there is a considerable degree of difference within the John, Jesus, and History steering committee as to how to approach Jesus studies and how to understand the origin and development of the Johannine tradition. Nonetheless, scholars learn from each other through their dialogues together, and in arguing a thesis along with its supporting evidence, discovery and learning are both effectively advanced.

Critical Ways Forward

In furthering the central thrust of this collection, several critical issues deserve to be addressed. First, given that the criteria for determining historicity within the Gospels have largely been designed to favor synoptic features over and against Johannine ones, new criteria for determining gospel historicity are required. Several of the leading criteria might be re-envisioned as follows.[26]

Inclusive Criteria for Determining Gospel Historicity

[26] These criteria were presented by Paul Anderson at the 2009 SBL meetings in our methodology session in his paper, "Dialectical History and the Fourth Gospel." They were later developed following Anderson's public dialogues with Marcus Borg in 2010, exploring the Gospels and Jesus in Bi-Optic perspective (Anderson 2010) and were later summarized in his contextual introduction to the New Testament (Anderson 2014, 175-76).

- *Corroborative Impression Versus Multiple Attestation*. A huge problem with the criterion of multiple attestation is that by definition it excludes everything that might be added to Mark's account of Jesus' ministry by other gospel traditions and writers. Further, if Mark was used by Matthew and Luke, then triple-tradition material may simply denote their uses of Mark rather than reflecting independent attestations of a historical memory or event. And, if anything within John—or for that matter, in Matthew or Luke—is intended to augment or correct Mark, it is automatically excluded from consideration, even if the basis for such a judgment is flawed. A more adequate approach looks for corroborative sets of impressions, wherein paraphrases, alternative ways of putting something, or distinctive renderings of a similar feature inform a fuller understanding of the ministry of Jesus. Such an approach would thus include the Johannine witness rather than excluding it programmatically.
- *Primitivity Versus Dissimiliarity or Embarrassment*. While the criteria of dissimilarity and embarrassment might keep one from mistaking later Christian views for earlier ones going back to Jesus, they also tend to distort the historiographic process, itself. What if apostolic Christians and their successors *actually did get something right* in their memories of Jesus? Or, what if Jesus of Nazareth *actually did teach conventional Jewish views* during his ministry? The criterion of dissimilarity would thereby exclude such features from historical consideration, allowing only the odd or embarrassing features to be built upon. Even if such data is unlikely to be concocted, to exclude other material from the database of material creates an odd assortment of portraiture material, which if used, is likely to create a distortive image of Jesus. And, while embarrassing features might be less likely to have been concocted, does a collage of unseemliness really represent a subject better than an assortment of honorable and less honorable features? A more adequate way forward is to identify primitive material, seeking to distinguish it from its more developed counterparts. This may include Palestine-familiarity features, Aramaic and Hebraic terms, primitive institutional developments, and other undeveloped material less influenced by the later mission to the Gentiles.
- *Critical Realism Versus Dogmatic Naturalism or Supranaturalism.* Just as dogmatic supranaturalism is an affront to historical inquiry, so is dogmatic naturalism—especially when it functions to exclude anything that might approximate the wondrous in gospel narratives. John's Prologue was probably added to a later or final edition of the Gospel, so its cosmic perspective should not eclipse or distort the more conventional features of John's narrative, just as the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke should not

eclipse their more mundane features. Rather, political realism, religious anthropology, and social-sciences analyses should provide helpful lenses for understanding the perception of Jesus as a Galilean prophetic figure in all four Gospel traditions. After all, John's narrative begins in ways similar to Mark's, launched by the association of Jesus with John the Baptist, and it concludes with his arrest, trials, and death in Jerusalem at the hand of the Romans. Therefore, historical and critical realism acknowledges the historical problem of wondrous claims, but it also considers cognitive, religious, political, and societal aspects of realism that might account for such impressions.

- *Open Coherence Versus Closed Portraiture.* Two central flaws in coherence-oriented criteria for determining historicity in the quest for Jesus include the circularity of the approach and the closed character of its portraiture. On one hand, the Gospels form the primary database for determining a coherent impression of Jesus of Nazareth; on the other, those same Gospels are evaluated on the basis of information contained within them. Further, scholars too easily base a view of what cannot represent a feature of Jesus' ministry based upon the narrowing down of what he must have done and said.

In addition to these proposed considerations, other criteria for determining historicity will also be serviceable, and scholars are encouraged to develop their own criteria for conducting gospel historiography with John in the mix. Whatever the case, scholars must at least be mindful of the assumptions upon which a judgment is made, qualifying the outcomes of their inquiries on the basis of those givens. This is something that the Jesus Seminar did quite clearly. They stated that the results of their judgments were based upon particular criteria, which had been developed over some time. While some of our contributors have employed some of these new criteria, others have employed earlier criteria, and that in itself will determine much of their analyses and their outcomes.

Gradations of Certainty

While the Jesus Seminar sought to drive an either/or wedge between the opinions of scholars on the question of historicity, such an approach fails to account for a potential middle ground, given that some issues are terribly difficult to decide based on the available evidence alone. While the editors did not stipulate how our authors should approach their subjects, we simply asked them to perform their analyses of Johannine themes and texts and to describe any implications that might follow regarding the historical Jesus. Therefore, whether a detail or feature of the

Johannine text advances or does not advance knowledge of the historical Jesus, we asked each of our authors to describe their degree of certainty regarding each judgment, including its critical basis. We encouraged our authors to locate their various judgments along the following grid:

- Certainly not (1-14%)
- Unlikely (15-29%)
- Questionable (30-44%)
- Possible (45-54%),
- Plausible (55-69%)
- Likely (70-84%)
- Certain (85-99%)

An important advantage of allowing a larger middle area is that both positive and negative certainties are extremely elusive within any historical venture, especially the quest for Jesus. On this matter, positivism—if it is employed in any approach to ancient historiography—must be plied with reference to falsification as well as verification. Too often calls for positivistic confirmation are levied only in one direction: challenging historical claims, yet failing to establish asserted falsification. While claiming certainty that something happened is an elusive matter, so is claiming that something cannot have happened, or did not happen—an error that positivist scholars too easily commit.

Additionally, a trenchant problem with modern critical studies involves moving from "not certain" to "certainly not." Therefore, judgments need to be more measured in their analyses. An "unlikely" appraisal of certainty need not be jammed within a "certainly not" category, when proving such a thesis lacks a compelling basis. Likewise, an inference might not fall into categories of "certain" or "likely," but it might simply be "plausible"—posing at least some service to the historical quest for Jesus in corroborative ways. Overall, no category is advocated either for 0% impossibility or 100% certainty, and a modest middle category of what might be "possible" sometimes offers the most suitable of options regarding issues that are simply impossible to decide. Historical agnosticism must thus remain an option for honest inquiry, rather than forcing a judgment pro or con in all cases. Whatever gradations of certainty scholars may choose, however, we ask them to articulate *why* they make such a judgment, which invites other scholars to engage both judgments and their bases, as well as their implications.

Comparing John and the Synoptics

The issues that present themselves when scholars seek to ascertain Johannine historicity depend on analyses of John in relation to the Synoptics; it cannot be otherwise. Given the fact that New Testament scholars vary in their understandings of these traditions, their developments, and their relationships, this also accounts for differences in judgment regarding John's historicity among scholars. Therefore, the essays in each of the three parts of this book will address various components of these issues, and the introductions to each section will outline several features worth considering in the process of determining John's contribution to Jesus studies.

First, John's parallels to the Synoptics will be outlined, noting also where the details are similar and/or different. Within that comparison/contrast, of course, if a scholar views John's tradition as an autonomous account, John's material could be seen as an independent attestation to a particular feature of Jesus' ministry, thereby contributing to a historical understanding of his mission and work. Conversely, if a scholar believes John is dependent on Mark or one of the other Synoptics, then John will be seen as having very little to contribute in terms of its historical value. Jesus' healing on the Sabbath, ministering with his disciples, and last days in Jerusalem are examples of Johannine-Synoptic convergences.

A second category involves incompatible differences between John and the Synoptics. While some differences in terms of historicity can be harmonized, others cannot, forcing a choice between the Synoptics and John. On these matters, scholars who believe John is familiar with Mark will likely see John's departures as a set of dialectical engagements, or perhaps correctives, over and against Mark. Conversely, if scholars see John's serious differences with Mark as rooted in theological interests, not historical engagement, this might excuse one from having to choose between two differing histories. It could also be that John's narrator was simply unaware of the Synoptics on one or more accounts. The dating of the temple incident and the last supper are prime examples of this conundrum, and sometimes a scholar must choose between John and the Synoptics. One cannot have it both ways.

A third feature of John's differences with the Synoptics involves John's distinctive material that is not found in the Synoptics, as this represents about 85% of John's content. Again, where it is assumed that John is familiar with Mark at least, John's distinctive material might be seen as an augmentation. The problem with this type of material, however, is that if John's material is absent from the Synoptics, this raises a question as to why it is not also included in one or more of the other traditions. One can thus understand why scholars might view John's distinctive presentations of Jesus as extensions of the evangelist's theological interests rather than representations of historical knowledge. In all three of these categories, a scholar's view of the history of the Johannine tradition and its relation

to the Synoptics will affect what he or she does with the facts of John's similarities with and differences from Mark and the other Synoptic Gospels.

Perspectives on John's Tradition Development and Relation to the Synoptics

Regarding the development of the Johannine tradition, scholarly opinion varies greatly. Leading views include the following: first, that John's is an independent tradition, reflecting some awareness of other traditions, especially Mark's, but developing within its own contextual situation in one or more editions; second, that the Johannine evangelist may have made use of other sources, although these remain unavailable; third, that John's tradition had no history of its own but was dependent upon one or more of the Synoptics, which it spiritualized and developed theologically; fourth, that the Johannine narrator had no interest in history, but rather employed mimetic imitations of reality as a means of making the narrative seem rooted in history, when it actually was not. The John, Jesus, and History steering committee has not sought to advocate any of these positions, although individual scholars have their views, of course. Most authors in this collection favor the first view regarding John's being an independent tradition, while others infer the use of other sources or synoptic traditions.

On the development of the Johannine tradition itself, scholars tend to gravitate toward one of two options. Synchronic approaches to John note that the completed text as we have it made sense to someone, so it should be viewed as a literary whole, however it came together. Diachronic approaches to John's composition note that a final editor seems to make reference to the writer of the Gospel narrative in John 21:24, inferring at least two hands in the composition process. Within that process, at least two editions of the gospel narrative are apparent, although scholars differ on the particulars.[27] If something like this scenario were the case, John's first edition seems to have concluded at 20:31, expressing its purpose as seeking to lead audiences to believe in Jesus as the Messiah/Christ. The thrust of the later material calls for solidarity with Jesus and his community, emphasizing the guiding and empowering work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Johannine Epistles seem to build on some of the material in John's narrative, while the Gospel's later material seems to address the centrifugal issues represented in

[27] A form of this modest approach to dealing with the most problematic of John's aporias, or literary perplexities, was first put forward by Barnabas Lindars 1972, endorsed also by John Ashton 1991. A multiplicity of Johannine composition theories abounds, and some scholars insist on interpreting John as a whole, as it made sense to whoever the final author/editor might have been. A dozen leading theories of John's composition and development are laid out and analyzed according to their strengths and weaknesses in Anderson 2011, 95-124.

the Johannine Epistles.[28] Within this analysis, at least some of the later Johannine material seems crafted to address the later history of the Johannine situation as much as it represents a memory of the ministry of Jesus.

A final issue that affects discussions of historicity in John involves the relation between history and theology within the Johannine tradition. As argued by Strauss above, one approach to history and theology in gospel traditions is to infer that if a text is theological it cannot be historical. In this view, theology eclipses history. Given John's highly theological thrust, the identification of a feature as theological discredits its historical worth. Yet historicity itself is always fraught with valued meaning, and meaning will invariably have theological implications. Therefore, a nuanced approach to this issue must be embraced if one's analysis is to be critically adequate. A second theology-history issue involves the origin of the wondrous and divinely commissioned role of Jesus. Was it rooted in the history of Jesus' ministry, or did it originate in the religious history of John's Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts. While John's material included some parallels with contemporary religions, though, identifying the packaging might not necessarily denote the origin or character of the content. A third history-theology issue in John involves the tension between its delivered history and its originative history. Given that John's narrative seems to be engaging a) Galilean-Judean tensions, b) followers of John the Baptist, c) audiences experiencing later Johannine-Synagogue tensions in a diaspora setting, d) issues related to the Roman imperial presence, e) docetizing developments within Gentile Christianity, and f) institutionalizing movements within the early Christian situation, the question is whether John's situation-history eclipses the originative history of its tradition.

Glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine Lens

In approaching the present subject, the John, Jesus, and History steering committee sought to move from the more historically certain to the more difficult aspects of the inquiry. Thus we began with the passion narratives and then proceeded to the works and words of Jesus. Incidentally, it can be noted that the present approach bears a closer procedural parallel to C. H. Dodd's than to that of Robert Funk and

[28] Including the Johannine Epistles within the composition process of the Johannine Gospel is clearly seen as an emerging consensus in the collection on the Epistles edited by Culpepper and Anderson (2014). An estimation of which parts of John's narrative scholars see as added to an earlier narrative, in descending order, include: first, John 21; second, John 1:1-18 (or sections thereof); third, eyewitness and Beloved Disciple passages; fourth, John 15-17; and fifth, John 6.

the Jesus Seminar.[29] Of course, Dodd's first monograph (1953) engaged the socio-religious milieu of the Johannine tradition, but a History-of-Religions analysis could not in itself account for the distinctive historical material in John, requiring a second magnum opus (1963). While Dodd stopped short of applying the implications of his analysis to Jesus research, the present collection seeks to advance critical inquiry within Johannine and Jesus studies alike.

Knowing that each scholar works within his or her own understanding of the Johannine tradition's development and its potential relations to other traditions (synoptic or otherwise), it is interesting to note each scholar's inferences regarding Johannine-Synoptic relations. While most of our contributors infer some sort of autonomous tradition underlying the Johannine witness, some infer a spiritualization of tradition found in the Synoptics (e.g. North), while a founding member of the Jesus Seminar infers a hypothetical "Signs Gospel" upon which the final narrative is thought to be based (Fortna), and some scholars (e.g. Koestenberger) see John's presentation as a corroboration of Mark's. Thus, differences among the following essays also reflect the various scholars' approaches to the larger set of the Johannine riddles.

Each of the three parts of this collection is introduced with an essay highlighting relevant historical-Jesus issues, including a breakdown of John's similarities with and differences from the Synoptics. A noted Jesus scholar (Tom Thatcher, Annette Merz, James Dunn) responds to each set of essays, allowing evaluative engagements along the way. The concluding essay then reflects upon the contributions made by this particular collection and suggests ways forward as the present inquiry continues. In all of the following contributions, however, the central question at hand is not a matter of putting forward a theory of composition, a view of John's relation to the Synoptics, or even the history of the emerging Johannine situation. Rather, the goal is to ascertain the degree to which the Johannine story of Jesus offers glimpses into his ministry and message—and if so, how so; and if not, why not?

The critical issues related to the Gospel of John, Jesus of Nazareth, and the character of historicity undoubtedly comprise the most difficult challenges in modern biblical scholarship, and every approach is fraught with perils. Rather than begin with establishing a methodology, we decided to jump in and see what

[29] Dodd (1963) began with Part I, "The Narrative" ("The Passion Narrative," 21-151; "The Ministry," 152-247; "John the Baptist and the First Disciples," 248-312) and proceeded to "The Sayings" (313-420); the Jesus Seminar began with asking, "What did Jesus really say?" (Funk *et al* 1993), moving then to the question, "What did Jesus really do?" (Funk *et al* 1998).

happens—inviting scholars to apply their own approaches to the issues, seeking to ascertain from thence what works and what doesn't. Wayne Meeks had reminded us at the outset of other projects that sought to establish a methodology before launching their inquiries sometimes failed to agree on an optimal way forward, preventing the primary inquiry of interest from getting going at the outset. What has emerged from our Project, though, is the eventual completion of 12 book-length collections of essays, engaging 12 other books related to our interests, involving an estimated total of over 200 presentations by over 150 different scholars. With multiple aspects of historicity in John being demonstrated in the second JJH volume, and with illuminating glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine lens being offered in the present volume, perhaps the dehistoricization of John and the de-Johannification of Jesus are not as critically robust platforms as modern New Testament scholars have been led to believe. Of course, the most difficult challenge is knowing how to proceed with John in the mix, but that will require the grinding of new lenses for determining Johannine historicity and garnering an understanding of Jesus via the multiplicity of ancient sources, not just the non-Johannine ones.

So, as *Volume 3* of the John, Jesus, and History Project is published by SBL Press in the next few months, and as other book-length projects come to completion over the next several years, let the critical inquiry begin! While the Gospel of John might not eclipse synoptic and other memories of Jesus, it might at least offer some unanticipated glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine lens, and such is what this book offers its readers.

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- *Portraits of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, Craig Koester, ed. (est. 2017).
- *John, Jesus, and History 4: Jesus Remembered in the Johannine Situation*, Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just SJ, and Tom Thatcher, eds. (est. 2017).
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