The Community That Raymond Brown Left Behind: Reflections on the Johannine Dialectical Situation

The preaching and teaching of the Beloved Disciple is taken to represent the constructive work of the Johannine Evangelist, whoever he might have been. And, the author of the Epistles—the Johannine Elder—is taken to be the compiler, who edited at least the final edition of the Johannine Gospel after the death of the Beloved Disciple.

See Also: The John, Jesus and History Project - New Glimpses of Jesus and a Bi-Optic Hypothesis
Addressing the Johannine Riddles—A New Introduction
Acts 4:19-20?An Overlooked First-Century Clue to Johannine Authorship and Luke's Dependence upon the Johannine Tradition
From Mainz to Marburg?A Diachronic Exchange with the Master of Diachronicity and A Bi-Optic Hypothesis

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Among the paradigm-making contributions in Johannine studies over the last half century, one of the most significant is the sketching of "the community of the Beloved Disciple" by Raymond E. Brown (Brown 1979). Extending beyond Johannine studies, Brown's work on the history of early Christianity and "the churches the apostles left behind" (Brown 1984) is also among the most practical and interesting of his 47 books.[1] Here, Brown's analyses of the unity and diversity of early Christians' approaches to leadership and community organization[2] have extensive implications, not only to historical and sociological understandings of the first-century Christian movement, but also for approaches to Christian leadership in later generations.[3] In reviewing the impact of the Johannine community that Raymond Brown left behind, this paper will assess the perdurance (to use one of his terms) of Brown's overall theory, suggesting also new constructs worthy of consideration by biblical interpreters into the twenty-first century. These issues are

[1] Brown also wrote 200 articles and 108 reviews according to the bibliographic essay by Michael L. Barré in the collection of essays in his honor (Donahue 2005, pp. 259-289). By my count, Brown published nearly 4,000 pages on the Johannine writings; but as impressive as the quantity of his work was its quality. In my *RBL* (1/14/2006) review of *Life in Abundance*, I argue that "I cannot think of a single American New Testament scholar whose work has been more helpful, measured, and significant than Brown's." And, within Brown's extensive number of publications, one of his most enduring contributions has been the sketching of the Johannine situation based upon his generative analyses of the Gospel and Epistles of John.

[2] In addition to Brown's focused works on the Johannine literature, see his edited volumes on the ecclesial implications of Mary and Peter in the New Testament (Brown *et al*, eds., 1978), as well as his analyses of the strengths and weaknesses in various ecclesial models among the churches the apostles left behind (Brown 1984) and his treatment of Antioch and Rome as catholic origins of the early church (Brown & Meier, 1984).

[3] Following in Brown's wake, applying exegetical insights to ecclesial concerns, this NCCC Faith & Order Commission response was contributed following Walter Kasper's invitation to engage Pope John Paul II's encyclical, asking if a new day in church unity might be possible (Anderson 2005).

especially important in service to interpreting the Johannine writings meaningfully—especially the Epistles.

BROWN'S THEORY ON THE COMMUNITY OF THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

Given that Raymond Brown was commissioned to write commentaries on the Gospel and the Epistles of John for the Anchor Bible Commentary series, he thus engaged the larger corpus of Johannine literature in his work.[4] This forced a focus on the Johannine sector of the early Christian movement from which the Johannine writings presumably emerged. Between completing his second Gospel commentary volume in 1970 and his commentary on the Epistles in 1982, Brown sought to answer several questions for himself and the larger community of scholars about the Johannine situation. In his 1979 treatment of "the community of the Beloved Disciple," he laid out his fuller theories of the Johannine tradition and the Johannine situation, which reinforced each other compellingly, and over the next two or three decades, his theory continued to develop.

The Community of the Beloved Disciple (1979). Within his primary book on the subject, four phases of the history of the Johannine community are outlined, and six groups within the Johannine audience are discerned.

Phase One (mid 50s-late 80s—a pre-Gospel phase)
The Originating Group (in Palestine, including followers of John the Baptist) developed around the Beloved Disciple, who had been a follower of Jesus (though not necessarily a member of the Twelve). They had a relatively low Christology, embracing Jesus as a Davidic Messiah and embracing his signs as fulfillments of prophecy. A second group joined the Johannine community, involving Samaritans with an anti-temple bias and a high Christology connecting Jesus with the Prophet like Moses of Deuteronomy 18:15-22, and finally with the pre-existent Christology of the Logos-hymn. As the addition of this group pushed the Johannine Christology higher, this movement increased theological tensions with local Jewish communities, resulting in accusations of ditheism, which led to the expulsion of Johannine Christians from local Jewish synagogues. This led, then, to taking the gospel to Gentile audiences resulting in Gentile converts and their joining the Johannine community.

Phase Two (ca. 90—when the Gospel was written—addressing Six Groups within the Johannine Community)
The Johannine community has likely moved by this time to a Diaspora setting, wherein the gospel was extended to the Greeks as well as the Jews. Within this new setting, contact with universal understandings of God's redemptive work come into play, and the Evangelist constructs engaging dialogues with Jesus as a means of drawing his audiences into an experience of faith. Brown identifies a total of six groups within the Johannine situation that the Evangelist targets rhetorically; three groups are non-believing, and three other groups are believing.

[4] Brown's shorter commentary on the Gospel and Epistles of John (New Testament Reading Guide 13), first published in 1960, was revised in 1965 and 1982 and replaced by the new version (Brown 1988). Note that at the end of the first of his two volumes on the Gospel of John, his word studies include analyses of word-distribution between the Johannine Gospel and Epistles, and even the Apocalypse (Brown 1966, pp. 497-518).

- "The world" refers to unbelieving Gentiles (parallel to earlier unbelieving Jews), whom the Evangelist seeks to reach with the gospel of Jesus as the Christ.
- "The Jews" refers to members of local synagogues whom the Evangelist seeks to convince that Jesus is the Messiah/Christ, even after the separation from the synagogue.
- "The Adherents of John the Baptist" Brown takes to involve those in Asia Minor who believed John was the Messiah/Christ rather than Jesus.
- "Crypto-Christians" included those who remained in the synagogue as secret believers in Jesus, but who were unwilling to confess openly their belief in him as the Christ.
- "Jewish Christian Churches of Inadequate Faith" involved those who had separated from the synagogue, yet while believing in Jesus as the Christ did not accept his divinity or the eucharist as the true flesh and blood of Jesus.
- "Apostolic Christians" would have involved Petrine-hierarchy institutional Christian leaders, who did not appreciate the spiritual work of the risen Christ through the Paraclete.

Brown believes that the Gospel narrative addresses at least these six groups with its audience, seeking to draw all of them to more adequate faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

Phase Three (ca. 100—when the Epistles were written)

The Johannine community's internal tensions are unfolded more clearly in the light of the Epistles, which Brown takes to be written by the Presbyter (or the Elder). Rather than seeing this person as being the final editor of the Gospel, however, he opts for a Johannine school, in which several leaders may have been involved—the editor being at least a third literary contributor. The primary crisis experienced here is secession, which Brown associates with those who have loved the world and are thus labeled "Antichrists." Here Brown wisely dissociates the inferred faith and practice of the secessionists from later second-century heretics and simply constructs a portrait out of a selection of polemical themes in the epistles, using the letters of Ignatius as a backdrop and building on what may be known of Cerinthus, a known opponent in the Johannine situation in later traditions. In Brown's view, the Presbyter and the secessionists (or, "the opponents") were fellow Johannine Christians, who valued the teaching of the Beloved Disciple, but who also interpreted his teachings differently.

In terms of *Christology*, the secessionists denied that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and that he came in the flesh; hence, they possessed docetizing inclinations, also denying the value of the eucharist. In terms of *ethics*, the secessionists claimed intimacy with God to the point of being sinless, did not put much emphasis on keeping the commandments of Jesus, and thus did not practice sufficiently brotherly love. Therefore, they walk not in light but in darkness. In terms of *eschatology*, while the secessionists probably embraced the Evangelist's realized eschatology, the Presbyter appeals to earlier futuristic themes to challenge their beliefs and actions; realized eschatology implies ethical faithfulness. Their errors were alluded to in earlier warnings against false christs and prophets (Mk. 13:22) and lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:8), and they are challenged by promises of future rewards and accountability; the last hour, warning of Antichrists to come, is indeed at hand! In terms of *pneumatology*, the secessionists have distorted the Gospel's teaching on the pneumatic ministry of the Paraclete by forgetting that the teaching work of the Holy Spirit is actually tied to that of the first advocate—Jesus Christ. While guidance by the Spirit should conform to abiding in the teaching about Christ (shared from the beginning), their popular success in the world indicates not gospel faithfulness but worldly

compromise. They escape the world's hatred because they have sided with the Prince of this World.

Phase Four (after the Epistles, 2nd century)

Following their departure, the Johannine secessionists moved from Docetism into the Christian Gnosticism of the mid-2nd century. Assuming they took the Johannine Gospel with then, Brown infers that this explains how the Gnostic-Christian leader, Heracleon, produced the first commentary on John, why Montanus endorsed women in ministry and came to refer to himself as "the Paraclete," and why Cerinthus evolved a doctrine of the divine part of Jesus having departed before the crucifixion as a factor of his being "lifted up from the earth" in the Johannine witness. Such developments then plausibly contributed to why the Johannine writings raised suspicion among some orthodox leaders of the 2nd century church, resulting in their being called "alogoi" by Johannine defenders. The rest of Johannine Christianity, on the other hand, was easily subsumed into "the Great Church," as it was also influenced by the Johannine Gospel (including a movement toward high Christology), and as Johannine leaders resorted to structural leadership (including presbyter-bishops) for the combating of secessionists and intramural adversaries. With the letters of Ignatius (ca. 110 C.E.) as a backdrop, Brown infers a common high-Christology and a pro-sacramental thrust shared between Ignatius and the Evangelist, although Diotrephes who loves to be first (3 Jn. 1:9-10) poses a threat to the Johannine egalitarian and pneumatic ethos. Diotrephes thus demonstrates a movement toward hierarchical leadership supporting the supreme authority of the bishop, even over and against the movement of the Holy Spirit. In the Gospel's being read in orthodox ways, as interpreted by the Presbyter and the Epistles, its message is subsumed into "the church catholic," and John 21, as a plausible later addition to the Gospel, reflects a Johannine embracing of Petrine apostolic leadership.

The Epistles of John (1982). Over the following years, Brown further developed his theory of the Johannine community in several ways, beginning with his Anchor Bible Commentary on the Johannine Epistles. On *dating*, Brown notes apparent references to themes in the Johannine Epistles by Clement of Rome (ca. 96 C.E.), Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 110-115 C.E.), and the *Didache* (ca. 90-120 C.E.)—between 90 and 100 C.E. (Brown 1982, pp. 6-13). On *authorship*, Brown sees John the Elder as the author of the Epistles, who is different from the unnamed evangelist, and whose critiques of Peter and the twelve exclude him from being among their number (Brown 1982, pp. 14-30). On *composition*, Brown takes the order of 1, 2, 3 John as they are and sees the first two Epistles as written within a decade of the main part of the Gospel's composition around 90 C.E. He also allows for some later material to have been added to the Gospel by the redactor (parts or all of Jn. 1:1-18; 3:31-36; 6:51-58; and chs. 15-17, 21, etc.), perhaps some of it added after the Epistles; although, unlike Bultmann and some others, he does not connect the final redactor of the Gospel with the Elder (Brown 1982, pp. 30-35, 69-115).

Rejecting theories of underlying *sources* in the Epistles, Brown sees behind 1 and 2 John a set of struggles with a single group of adversaries, siding with "Ockham's razor" against multiplying entities unnecessarily.[5] Therefore, a) *christologically*, the adversaries (called "Antichrists") were a threat because they denied that Jesus was the Messiah/Christ (1 Jn. 2:22-23) and denied that he came in the flesh (1 Jn. 4:2-3; 2 Jn. 1:7); b) *ethically*, they were a threat because they were secessionists willing to divide the community, perhaps believing that their high Christology eclipsed the salvific consequences of their less-than-loving actions and attitudes

[5] Interestingly, Brown does not apply the principle of parsimony to the issue of authorship.

toward the brethren. Flawed theology and ethics impact each other, and the uneven presentation of the adversaries' views and actions has a precedent in the uneven presentation of such heretical/ethical threats as represented by Cerinthus (although Brown notes that little is known about him specifically; Brown 1982, pp. 47-68, 766-771). Brown sees 3 John (between 100 and 110 C.E.) as a struggle between the Johannine Elder and Diotrephes over church order; the primacy-loving Diotrephes was rejecting Johannine emissaries advocating a Paraclete-centered and egalitarian ecclesiology—on the way to being incorporated into the Great Church (Brown 1982, pp. 69-115).

The Churches the Apostles Left Behind (1984). As Brown connects his overall theory with more detailed treatments of particular passages in his commentary on the Johannine Epistles, his book on New Testament models of leadership and ecclesiology carries the ecclesial implications of his analysis further. As the heritage of the Beloved Disciple in the Fourth Gospel presents *a community of people personally attached to Jesus*, the strengths and weaknesses of such an ecclesial model are several. The two major strengths involve: a) *the priority of individual connectedness to Jesus*, emphasizing relationship with the present Christ effected by the *Paraklētos*, and b) the *egalitarian character* of such an ethos. Resulting weaknesses include: a) *tendencies toward individualism*, especially if separated from Jewish collectivity, and b) resulting *questions of authority and accountability* (Brown 1984, pp. 84-101).

Continuing in that trajectory, the heritage of the Beloved Disciple reflected by the Johannine Epistles involves issues related to a community of individuals guided by the Paraclete-Spirit. Building on the strengths of Johannine Christ-centered egalitarianism and spirit-based ecclesial operation, Brown imagines four weaknesses with this model as reflected in the schism and other developments in the Epistles: a) *dogmatism*—"the one-sidedness of a theology shaped in polemic, ultimately led to exaggeration and division"—that which is fought over in one generation is often what is forwarded to the next, and having split off from the synagogue makes it easier for further schisms to happen; b) *isolation*—having split off from the synagogue leads to a loss of Jewish religious heritage; c) *sectarianism*—"extreme hostility toward outsiders" and insular love for "the brethren" leads to a sectarian existence cut off from the world; d) *unruly pneumatism*—"uncontrolled divisions caused by appeal to the Paraclete" leads to incorrigible pneumatism and ambivalent resistance to emerging Christian structures of authority (Brown 1982, 102-123). Interestingly, Brown notes mostly unfavorable attributes of the Johannine Epistles' ecclesiology, while in his following chapter on Matthean ecclesiology—showing also the rise of hierarchical structure associated with the memory of Peter (Matt. 16:17-19) with institutional approaches to accountability and order following (Matt. 18:15-18)—Brown mentions primarily strengths and *hardly any* weaknesses.[6]

An Introduction to the Gospel of John (2003). Following his untimely death in 1998, Brown's revision of his commentary on John was gathered into a new introduction to the Gospel of John by Frank Moloney, nonetheless with implications for the Epistles. In this refinement of his

[6] Rather, Matthew's "authority that does not stifle" showcases the "great anomaly of Christianity…that only through institution can the message of a non-institutional Jesus be preserved" (Brown 1984, pp. 124-145). I imagine Diotrephes would have agreed with some of Brown's points, here, especially if he was threatened by Johannine challenges to hierarchical leadership. However, if Diotrephes may have legitimated his high-handed approach to issues of order and accountability on the basis of Matthean ecclesiology, the Johannine leadership would not have agreed with Brown's analyses of Matthean or Johannine ecclesiologies.

overall theory, several developments can be seen. First, Brown *simplifies his composition theory*, consolidating the five stages of the Fourth Gospel into three (for the "arithmetically challenged"). As he had received a bit of criticism for his theory being too complex, his new approach featured "Stage One: Origin in the Public Ministry or Activity of Jesus of Nazareth" (the Beloved Disciple was a Judean follower of Jesus—not a Galilean, but someone with perspectives consonant with the dualistic Qumran writings—accounting for his distinctive access to events in Jesus' ministry and different religious interests); "Stage Two: Proclaiming Jesus in the Postresurrection Context of Community History" (this tradition-shaping stage features the memory and preaching of a follower of Jesus—not one of the twelve but someone having contact with Samaritans and their Moses typology—accounting for differences with Mark, ostensibly based on the memory and preaching of Peter); "Stage Three: The Writing of the Gospel" (the evangelist prepared the main body of the gospel, concluding at 20:31 designed to confirm believers in their faith; the redactor added other material, including the Logos hymn as the Prologue, chs. 15-17 and 21, and other shorter repetitive units in chs. 3, 6, 11, and 12—the Evangelist and the redactor were followers of the Beloved Disciple in Stage Two). The Johannine Epistles were written by a fourth hand within the Johannine "school" between the first and final editions. Despite this attempt to reconstruct the development of the Johannine tradition, Brown finally agrees with Barrett and Culpepper that the Gospel must be approached as a literary whole (Brown, 2003, pp. 62-86).

Second, in his new introduction Brown adds new insights on the relation between the Johannine and the Synoptic traditions, with implications for John's historicity. The value of information found only in John (esp. the archaeological details in chs. 4, 5, 7-8, 9, 10) is significant, and it reflects first-hand knowledge of Palestine before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Further, it cannot be said that John is dependent on the Synoptics or other alien sources; the evidence is too scant. As an independent tradition, Brown believes the Johannine Evangelist was familiar with Mark, but not in its written form. Rather, he proposes "cross-influence" between the early Markan and Johannine traditions (giving rise to such details as 200 and 300 denarii and "perfume made of real nard")[7] and infers some sort of inter-traditional contact on the presentation of Peter in Matthew and John. He is most taken with the distinctive contacts between Luke and John, inferring some sort of cross-influence in both directions. As a result, "John is based on a solid tradition on the works and words of Jesus, a tradition that at times is very primitive. Indeed, I believe that often John gives us correct historical information about Jesus that no other gospel tradition has preserved." (Brown 2003, p. 110)

Third, from the echoes of apologetics and the purpose of the Gospel, Brown infers several partners in dialogue within the Johannine community, consolidating his earlier six groups into four. a) *Adherents of John the Baptist* are addressed apologetically during the early stages of the Johannine tradition, seeking to convince them that Jesus (not John) was the Messiah. b) *"The Jews" who refused to believe in Jesus* (sometimes equated with "the world") are addressed apologetically, reflecting Judeans in Palestine who rejected the northern prophet from Galilee earlier in the tradition, and later reflecting synagogue authorities in Asia Minor who were resistant to the high Christology of Johannine believers. c) *Jews who did not confess publicly their belief in Jesus* (in the 80s and 90s), as some Johannine Christians had been expelled from

[7] Over the decade before his death, Brown and I had several discussions on what I would call "interfluence" between the pre-Markan and early Johannine traditions—probably in their oral stages; his input was also helpful to me as I finalized an opening theory of Johannine influence upon the Lukan tradition in Appendix VIII in *Christology of the Fourth Gospel* (Anderson 1996, pp. 274-277).

the synagogue for confessing their faith in Jesus openly, others refused to do so—preferring human praise over the glory of God (such as Nicodemus)—as crypto-Christians. d) *Other Jesus adherents* may also have been rivals as *heretics* such as Cerinthians (with Gnostic leanings), Ebionites (with Jewish-Christian leanings), or Docetists (with heretical leanings), and other Christians *of inadequate faith*, including Christians of the "larger church who looked on Peter as the most representative figure" and those who may have refused to "eat Jesus' flesh and drink his blood" having a low Christology. Rather than being a missionary document, Brown believes that the Johannine gospel narrative called people to faithfulness to the message they had heard and to abiding with Jesus and his community of faith (Brown 2003, pp. 151-183).

What one can observe in Raymond Brown's larger paradigm is its development over thirty years, integrating in his judgment the best arguments within the secondary literature and the best ways of making sense of the primary texts in the Gospel and Epistles of John, in seeking to ascertain three interconnected theories: a) a two-edition theory of the Gospel's composition, with the Epistles' being written in between them, b) a belief in John's traditional autonomy and a modest inference of its relations to other traditions, and c) a history of the Johannine community—developing for some time in Palestine and then coming to a fuller presentation in a Diaspora setting with a variety of apologetic targets as informed by the Gospel and Epistles of John. This is the Johannine community that Raymond Brown has left behind, bequeathed to the world of New Testament scholarship as a pivotal contribution in the last third of the twentieth century. That being the case, what has happened to that gift, and how is it faring among its heirs?

Responses to Brown's Theory and Further Developments

While John Ashton considered J. Louis Martyn's *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* "probably the most important single monograph on the Gospel since Bultmann's Commentary," this judgment was made in the mid-1980s, before Brown's commentary on the Johannine Epistles had made its full impact.[8] Indeed, the theory of Johannine-synagogue dialectic has been a pivotal interest in Johannine studies, and while Martyn's theory has been countered by several scholars, it has been qualified rather than overturned. Still, Martyn's theory would not have fared as well if Brown's complementary theory had not taken it further over the next couple of decades. It is Brown's more nuanced and extended theory that has made Martyn's general thesis

[8] While I had earlier agreed with John Ashton's naming J. Louis Martyn's monograph as the most significant single monograph since Bultmann's commentary (Martyn 2003, first appearing in 1968; Ashton 1997, p. 12; Anderson 2008, pp. 367-368), I am coming to rethink that judgment, siding instead with Brown's three Johannine commentary volumes as the most significant contribution (despite being multiple volumes) since Bultmann's commentary. This judgment is arguable, given that: a) Brown had already laid out a theory of synagogue expulsion, Johannine Jewish-Christian apologetics, and a two-level reading of the narrative (Martyn's seminal work expands upon the approach laid out by Brown two years earlier, although Brown also acknowledges building alongside Martyn's work); b) Brown's overall approach draws in the larger corpus of Johannine literature, including the Johannine Epistles (whereas Martyn warns against connecting them too closely); and c) Brown's far more extensive and dialectical model, involving several partners in dialogue over several decades, is more realistic (whereas Martyn focused on a singular partner in dialogue with the Johannine community—the local Jewish presence). Therefore, while I see Alan Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (1983) as the most important Johannine monograph over the last three decades (Anderson 2008, pp. 95-96), I must side either with Brown's overall set of Johannine writings as the most important contribution since Bultmann's or go with a Martyn/Brown approach to the Johannine situation as the most important development in Johannine studies since Bultmann, rather than Martyn's monograph alone.

difficult to discredit overall. While Martyn insisted on one primary dialogue—the Jewish-Christian dialogue—Brown's more extensive inference of several sets of dialogues makes better sense of the evidence and is thus more realistic.

A further strength of Brown's theory is that it built not only on the Johannine Gospel, but it also incorporated the situation of the Epistles in its purview. In my judgment, the greatest weakness with Martyn's thesis is not that it overread the *Birkat* (which it did only somewhat), it is that he sought to divorce the Johannine Epistles from the socio-religious situation out of which the Gospel also originated. On this matter, both Martyn and Brown failed to make sufficient sense of Jewish-Christian debates behind the first Johannine Epistle (at least), as it is also discernible behind the Johannine Apocalypse, the Gospel of Matthew, the letters of Ignatius, and other Christian writings around the turn of the first century C.E., as well. Contra Martyn, however, the dialogue with local Jewish communities was not the only dialectical set of relationships within the Johannine situation, and the great strength of Brown's paradigm is its sensitivity to a multiplicity of groups and related crises within the Johannine situation in longitudinal perspective. Therefore, the fuller Johannine dialectical situation involved multiple partners in dialogue, not just the local Jewish sector.

Among the critiques of Brown's theory, at least three deserve mention. First, some have argued against a two-level reading of the Johannine narrative, believing a focus on later levels of history threatens to displace the earlier ones. While something of the Johannine situation-history can indeed be inferred by means of a mirror reading of the Gospel's narrative, this does not displace the tradition's originative history. The presentation of Jesus is indeed highly interpreted in John, but that interpretation is still focused on the ministry of Jesus as remembered and recrafted within the oral and written stages of the tradition. For instance, tensions between Jesus adherents and Jewish leaders did *not* begin in 85 C.E. Resistance from Jewish and Roman authorities was likely a fact during the ministry of Jesus, and yet many Jewish people and some Samaritans and Hellenists likely believed in Jesus even during his ministry. Therefore, just because issues with Jews, Romans, and Hellenists developed later within Johannine Christianity, this does not discount earlier engagements with similar groups—perhaps even during the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth.[9] Likewise, just because people are reported as reacting to Jesus in the narrative, this does not prove that such individuals or groups later joined or rejected Johannine Christianity. In particular, just because Samaritans are presented as believing in Jesus in John 4, this does not prove that Samaritans entered the Johannine community, although they may indeed have joined the Jesus movement in general (see the successful missions of Peter and John and Philip in Acts 8).

A second critique has to do with the challenging of the Martyn-Brown hypothesis that Johannine Christians were expelled from local synagogues during the post-70 C.E. Jamnia period in connection with the *Birkat ha-Minim*. While such Jewish scholars as Katz, Kimelman and Reinhartz have sought to overturn the view that expulsions of open Jesus adherents from synagogues were intensive and extensive on the basis that close relations between Jews and Christians during this time were warm and reciprocal, this likelihood may actually prove the opposite.[10] The very fact of close Jewish-Christian relations in the late first-century Asia-Minor situation would have insured fraternal tensions over Johannine christological developments (at

[9] See Klink 2007; also Anderson 1996, pp. 194-250; 1997, pp. 24-57.

[10] See analyzes of Katz (1984) and Kimelman (1981) in Anderson 2008 and elsewhere. While challenging the Martyn hypothesis, Reinhartz (2001, p. 52) nonetheless declares, "Despite their differences, these passages share one central point: the incompatibility of participating in synagogue fellowship while confessing Christ."

least!) rather than alleviating them. Therefore, while the *Birkat ha-Minim* may never have involved extensive or thorough excommunications of Jesus-adherents from local synagogues, it likely functioned as a means of disciplining those whose monotheistic faith was perceived as being threatened by ascending christological beliefs. If indeed a blessing (or curse) against "the Nazarenes" (followers of Jesus of Nazareth) as heretics was recited in even some synagogues during this time period, open followers of Jesus would have been made to feel very uncomfortable, forcing a choice between denying or concealing one's belief in Jesus as the Messiah/Christ and departing from the fellowship. The goal of Jewish leaders, however, was probably not to cast out Jesus-adherents; it was rather to discipline their growing ditheism, motivating adherence to the way of Moses and the promise of Abraham. Put otherwise, would a public recitation of the Johannine *Logos*-hymn have been tolerated within *any* orthodox Jewish meeting for worship around that time? Certainly not! Therefore, the Martyn-Brown hypothesis regarding the Jewish-Johannine dialectic is qualified, but not overturned.[11]

A third critique has sought to wrest the audience of the Johannine Evangelist away from a single community (as well as those of all the evangelists), arguing that the Gospels were written for all Christians, not just a provincial few. Especially sonorous has been Richard Bauckham's collection of essays arguing that thesis (Bauckham 1998). Given that gospel narratives would have enjoyed wide circulation, being transmitted (and crafted) by Christian preachers and teachers traveling among the churches in the larger Mediterranean world, it would have been impossible to restrain gospel narratives from being circulated broadly, and early Christian traveling ministers likely proliferated written testimonies rather than restricting them. Like traveling circulars and epistles, gospel narratives were designed from the start to be read and circulated broadly among the churches, so Brown's theory should be qualified as follows: while the canonical Gospels were not written *for* a community and particular situation alone, they were written *from* particular communities and situations. Further, those situations continued to evolve over time, changing locations and scope at least a couple of times, and the Johannine situation was not always a singular community.

Therefore, the Johannine community that Raymond Brown left behind is indeed worth retaining and building upon, but the overall hypothesis has matured in several ways. In my judgment, the most compelling and non-compelling features of Brown's hypothesis are as follows:

> *Compelling*—a) the Johannine Gospel and Epistles must be read together (contra Martyn) as a means of providing a window into Johannine Christianity, and the four phases put forward by Brown are worthy constructs overall; b) earlier phases of its history originated in Palestine, and later phases involved a move to Asia Minor, plausibly Ephesus and its environs; c) the Epistles were written after (most of) the Gospel, by a different hand, reflecting a slightly later situation, and a Johannine school and plurality of leadership (with Culpepper and others) is a likely inference rather than a single Johannine author; d) different groups in the Johannine dialectical situation included at least followers of the Baptist, Jewish leaders in Palestine and later in Asia Minor, docetizing Gentile believers who "loved the world," believers and nonbelievers needing to be reached by the writers,

[11] See, for instance, the pushback by Moody Smith (1996) and Joel Marcus (2009) on this issue, confirming support for the impact of the *Birkat* upon Johannine believers. In my own view, I see a departure from the synagogue in the Johannine situation (whether forced or consequential) followed by a Jewish recruitment of Jesus adherents back into the synagogue (Anderson 1997, pp. 32-40; 2007; 2007b).

and hierarchical leaders in the "Great Church" (some of these partners in dialogue, especially those adumbrated by the Johannine Epistles, are confirmed by Revelation and the letters of Ignatius); e) the Docetists took the Gospel with them and later evolved into Montanism and Gnostic Christianity of the 2nd century C.E.; f) the Johannine tradition reflects an independent Jesus tradition, which differs with intentionality from the Markan traditions.

Non-Compelling—a) the idea that the Johannine situation was *always* a "community" is flawed; it enjoyed some time as such in Asia Minor, but it might not have been a single community during its Palestinian phase (30-70 C.E.), and it clearly developed into multiple communities in its later Asia Minor phase (85-100 C.E.) as suggested by the Epistles; b) Samaritans need not have entered the Johannine community for Johannine Christology to have ascended in its appraisal of Jesus' divinity, and John's Prophet-like-Moses Christology would have arisen in Galilee just as easily as in Samaria (it may also have been closer to Jesus' self-understanding than the Synoptic Davidic-King typology); c) not all adversaries were secessionists, as the term "Antichrists" appears to have been used with reference to two distinct threats—the first reflecting a secessionist crisis among those who refused to believe Jesus was the Messiah/Christ in clinging to "the Father" monotheistically (Jewish Christians returning to the synagogue), while the second and third references involved an invasionist crisis (Gentile Christians advocating assimilation in the world) spreading such false teachings as the refusal to believe Jesus came in the flesh; d) there is no evidence at all that the Docetists rationalized their assimilative teaching on the basis of Spirit-led pneumatism, as they more likely were Gentile believers who simply were not convinced that divergences from Jewish-Christian moral standards were to be regarded as "sin"—claiming to be "without sin" thus related to disagreement over mortal and venial sins in the context of required Emperor laud arising under Domitian (81-96 C.E.) rather than claims of perfection-status, proper; e) in challenging Diotrephes and his hierarchical kin in the name of a more inclusive and egalitarian form of ecclesiology, the Evangelist and the Elder were not opposing apostolic leadership from the outside; they were defending its more primitive articulations over and against proto-Ignatian movements toward institutionalization; f) Brown's basis for excluding the Johannine Evangelist from the apostolic twelve more plausibly argues *for* his inclusion among them, as an apostolic challenge to rising institutionalism in the late first-century Christian situation adheres more closely to inferences of the charismatic and itinerant ministry of the historical-Jesus over the last century or more (while Johannine theology is highly developed, its ecclesiology, sacramentology, and presentation of women in leadership are more primitive than Synoptic parallels).

With these assessments in mind, and in making the best sense of ancient texts and building upon what I feel are the strongest of proposals in the secondary literature, a constructive appreciation of Brown's work leads to proposing the following paradigms, which are similar to his: a) a two-edition model of composition, seeing the Epistles as written between the first and final editions of John; b) an interfluential theory of gospel relations—I call it a "Bi-Optic Hypothesis"; and c) a

sketching of the Johannine situation in longitudinal perspective—seven crises over seven decades. I call this overall theory *the dialogical autonomy of the Johannine tradition*.[12]

The Dialogical Autonomy of the Johannine Tradition

Many errors of interpretation have resulted from failing to consider John's autonomy as a self-standing tradition, as well as the multiple ways in which its material originates, develops, and is delivered dialogically. *Theologically*, the Johannine Evangelist thought dialectically about his subject, Jesus, who came as the Revealer to humanity, inviting a response of faith to the divine initiative. *Historically*, intratraditional dialogue can be seen as earlier memories are refined in the light of subsequent discovery and reflection, intertraditional dialogue can be seen between varying renderings of Jesus' ministry, and the history of the Johannine situation can be inferred by a two-level reading of the narrative text in the light of the Johannine Epistles. *Literarily*, the narrative invites the hearer/reader into an imaginary dialogue with Jesus by means of constructing dialogues rhetorically within the story, the compiler speaks of the author as the apparently deceased source of the Gospel, and the prologues of both the Gospel and the first Epistle draw later audiences into transformative engagement with what has been "seen and heard" from the beginning. The failure to appreciate Johannine polyvalence has led to more than one interpretive error based upon what can and cannot have been a possibility.[13]

An Overall Theory of Johannine Composition

With Brown, on John's *origin and composition*, John's is an autonomous tradition, developing alongside other traditions but not dependent on any of them. Rightly rejecting alien source theories due to their lack of evidence, Brown also finds no evidence for Synoptic-dependence theories.[14] Rather, John's distinctive material and familiarity with pre-70 C.E. Palestine are more explicable as factors of the Johannine tradition's being as an autonomous memory of Jesus and his ministry than inferences of theologized or fictive origins of the narrative allow. Brown also rightly notes homiletical developments within the Johannine tradition, as stories of Jesus' works and teachings are narrated by the Evangelist as a function of his own ministry before being gathered into a written narrative. This accounts for the distinctive elements of the Johannine tradition as an independent perspective on Jesus' ministry.

While 90 C.E. is a good guess regarding the first edition's completion, however, it could just as easily have been completed a few years earlier (say, 80-85 C.E.). If the Evangelist had

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[12] Other elements of John's dialogical autonomy are spelled out in chapter 6 of *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel* (Anderson 2011, pp. 125-155) and elsewhere (see also Anderson 2006, pp. 37-41), and they include: a) the Fourth Evangelist as a dialectical thinker, b) the Prophet-like-Moses Agency schema as the foundation for John's Father-Son relationship and agency motif, c) the Johannine gospel narrative as a knowing alternative to (an augmentation and modest correction of) Mark, d) revelation and rhetoric—two dialogical modes within the Johannine narrative, and e) Acts 4:19-20 as an overlooked first-century clue to Johannine authorship. The three described in the present essay are central to the history of the Johannine tradition and its emerging situation.

[13] For a fuller treatment of Johannine polyvalence and differing types of Johannine dialogism, see Anderson 2008a and 2011.

[14] This was my conclusion also, as I tested all of Bultmann's stylistic criteria for distinguishing disparate sources underlying and overlaying the Fourth Evangelist's work, using John 6 as a case study. Likewise, of 45 similarities between John 6 and Mark 6 and 8, there are zero identical similarities, thus disconfirming theories that the Johannine tradition is a derivative one (Anderson 1996, pp. 72-109).

indeed moved to Ephesus or one of the other mission churches (and, with Brown, no site is superior to the traditional Ephesus as a choice—including Alexandria) after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., this would explain the translation of Aramaisms and Jewish customs for a Hellenistic audience. As tensions between the Jesus movement and Judaism would have been experienced long before the Jamnia councils between 70 and 90 C.E., the *Birkat* is more likely to have been a codification of existing practices among some synagogues rather than a jump-starting of an innovated practice. Therefore, tensions with local synagogues did not begin in 90 C.E.; if anything, they were probably cooling as the Jesus movement transitioned (using Martyn's language) from being Christian Jews to becoming Jewish Christians.[15]

We do have a reflection of an anti-Domitian thrust in the first-edition narrative material, challenging empire-worship demands, which is echoed in 1 John 5:21 (leveraged soon after his becoming Emperor in 81 C.E. and beginning construction of the Domitian temple in Ephesus shortly thereafter) so the confession of Thomas "My Lord and my God!" (Jn. 20:28) argues for a date around that time. Thus, having heard the Gospel of Mark delivered among the churches, John's first edition is likely to have been the *second* gospel, designed to augment and complement Mark.[16] This is why a date of 80-85 C.E. for the first edition of John seems most plausible.

A strength of Brown's composition theory is that he allows the Epistles to follow the main edition of the Gospel, while still allowing later material to have been added after the writing of the Epistles. A weakness, however, is that he leaves considerable ambiguity regarding what sort of material is likely to have been added as part of the final edition of the Johannine Gospel. On this matter, the theory laid out by Barnabas Lindars (1972) is far clearer, and they agree on many of the particulars.[17] It is also not certain (versus Brown) that variations and repetitions (Jn. 3:31-36; 6:51-58; 12:44-50, for instance) were added by the redactor as leftover units of tradition rather than reiterative emphases of the Evangelist. More likely, these were a part of the material in the same edition, as the recapitulation of themes is a common feature of oral delivery and its consolidation in written form.

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[15] The cooling of tensions between Johannine communities and local synagogues is also apparent in the supplementary material as inferred by Barnabas Lindars (1972), which John Ashton (1991) and I came to embrace independently as the most plausible and simplest approach to resolving the major Johannine aporias. In John 6, 15-17, and 21 the animosity with Jewish leaders is fairly muted, and other issues, such as the incarnational suffering of Jesus and the Holy Spirit's guiding the community of believers are far more pronounced.

[16] In Bauckham's essay on John written for readers of Mark (1998), he notes several instances in which the Johannine narrative appears to set things straight in Mark. For instance, the Baptist is involved in ministry *before* he was thrown into prison (Jn. 3:24; contra Mk. 1:14), and I might note that the reference to Jesus' having testified regarding the dishonored hometown prophet in John 4:44 seems to be a direct reference to his having done so in Mark 6:4. A general familiarity with "performed Mark" (as suggested by the important monograph of Ian Mackay 2004) might also account for John's differences with Mark, not just distinctive parallels. A general familiarity with Mark might explain John's differences from Mark as an intentionally crafted alternative presentation of Jesus' ministry.

[17] Lindars (1972, pp. 46-54) identifies the supplementary material to have been added (by the Evangelist) as consisting of John 1:1-18, chapters 6, 11, 15-17, and 21, as well as Beloved Disciple and eyewitness references; in his treatment of composition theories in his new introduction, Brown does not seem to be aware of Lindars' theory—which also is constructed upon aspects of Brown's. John Ashton (1991, pp. 124-204), however, independently came to the same conclusion that I had, which is that, with Lindars, the adding of supplementary material accounts for the most problematic literary aporias in the Fourth Gospel in an efficient and plausible way. I take exception, though, to the inference that John 11 was added later, as it seems to fulfill the words of the steward in John 2:10 regarding saving the best for last.

On *the identity of the Evangelist and the redactor*, two exceptions must be taken regarding Brown's view. First, that the Evangelist challenges the presentation of Peter and the twelve and that he includes a good deal of Judean/Jerusalem material, these features do not argue conclusively that the author was not one of the twelve. Rather, the opposite is more plausibly argued, at least on the first point. As most Jesus scholars over the last century or more have concluded, Jesus of Nazareth was a charismatic leader, who challenged institutions and cultic rites rather than establishing them. Therefore, Johannine challenging of such in the late first-century situation appear to be challenging institutionalizing innovations in the name of apostolic memory and Jesus' original designs for the church. Given that Acts 4:20 has been totally overlooked by critical and traditional scholarship alike, connecting John the apostle with a Johannine phrase (Jn. 3:32; 1 Jn. 1:3), we may have in the Johannine tradition an apostolic corrective to the perceived hijacking of apostolic authority by Diotrephes and his institutionalizing kin.[18] Therefore, Brown's earlier conviction that the Fourth Evangelist bore considerable overlap with what we know of John the Son of Zebedee, or another first-hand apostolic witness, seems bolstered *because of* John's critique of Peter and the institutionalizing co-opting of the twelve.

On requiring the Evangelist to have been a Judean resident on the basis of his familiarity to the high priest and addition of Judean material, this is weak argumentation. If the Evangelist was not a Galilean, why does he apparently know so much about Galilean places of origin for Jesus' followers (Bethsaida, Cana, Magdala), and why would travels through Samaria (as well as knowledge of archaeological details) be so prominent in the Johannine narrative. So, inferring a Judean author rather than a Galilean author has its own set of new critical problems. Further, assuming that leading Galilean families would not have traveled to Jerusalem at all is a terribly weak hypothesis. If devout families traveled to Jerusalem two or three times a year, a young adult from Galilee would have visited Jerusalem fifty times by the time he was twenty years of age. Judean material does appear to be included in John with intentionality, but such a feature more likely reflects an interest in augmenting Mark's northern presentation of Jesus' ministry rather than the non-Galilean origin of the Evangelist.

As the later material added renderings of scenes in Jesus' ministry that were already a part of the Synoptics (John 6—the five signs in the first edition are precisely the ones *not* included in Mark), expanding the material developed in John 13-14 (John 15-17) and restoring dialectically the memory of Peter alongside that of the apparently deceased Beloved Disciple (John 21), distinctive purposes are evident between the earlier and later editions of John. The first edition indeed is apologetic in its purpose (contra Brown), seeking to convince hearers and readers that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah/Christ. Five signs of Jesus, along with five I-am discourses (rhetorically echoing the five books of Moses), pose a presentation of him as the Prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15-22), whose words come true, confirming the authenticity of his mission—worthy of belief (Jn. 20:31). If the first antichristic threat in 1 John 2:18-25 evidenced a questioning of whether Jesus was indeed the Jewish Messiah/Christ, the first edition of the Johannine narrative would certainly have set that issue straight.

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[18] In my conversations with Brown before the publication of *Christology* (1996), he was actually quite sympathetic with my treatment of Acts 4:19-20 and apparent Lukan dependence on the Johannine tradition in Appendix VIII (pp. 274-277). Since then I have discovered over six dozen cases where Luke departs with Mark and sides with the Johannine rendering of Jesus' ministry—likely a factor of the Johannine witness (probably in its oral forms) having been one of Luke's sources, which he acknowledges in Luke 1:2 (expressing gratitude to eyewitnesses and servants of the *Logos*).

The later material, however, includes nearly all of the incarnational (antidocetic) themes in John (Lindars 1972, p. 63), suggesting a later rhetorical concern—reflected also by the second and third antichristic references in the Johannine Epistles. For those questioning Jesus' coming in the flesh (the antichristic false teachers of 1 Jn. 4:1-3 and 2 Jn. 1:7), the later Johannine narrative material would certainly have challenged those views. Given the splits and challenges of the evidenced by the Epistles, the main thrust of the Evangelist's continuing preaching (between the first and final editions of the Gospel) and the compiler's finalization of the narrative, shows an acute concern for abiding with Jesus and his fellowship. On that point, Brown would agree—to believe in Jesus is to abide in him and within his community of faith.

Given, though, that the compiler adds the Johannine Logos hymn (echoed in 1 Jn. 1:1-4), adds the water-and blood-theme (Jn. 19:34; echoed in 1 Jn. 5:6-8), and asserts "his testimony is true" (Jn. 19:35; 21:24; echoed in 3 Jn. 1:12), the author of the Epistles quite plausibly could have been the final compiler/redactor of the Gospel (with Bultmann and others). Rather than multiplying authorial/editorial entities, Ockham's razor also slices against the proliferation of Johannine authors and editors, connecting the multiply-attested claims of Eusebius regarding "two Johns buried at Ephesus" with the Johannine Evangelist (John the apostle) and author of the Epistles/compiler of the Gospel (John the Elder). In the light of Acts 4:19-20, such is not an implausible critical inference.[19]

Between the first and final editions of the Gospel (roughly 85-100 C.E.), several things appear to be happening within the Johannine situation (involving several communities, not just one)—the time during which the Epistles likely were written. First, the Beloved Disciple continues to teach and preach about Jesus and the relevance of his words and works for later generations. This can be seen in the later Johannine material, a) as the Mosaic agency schema—the *Leitmotif* of the main narrative—is recrafted into a worship hymn to Christ the *Logos* using terms and language friendly to Jewish and Gentile audiences alike (Jn. 1:1-18); b) as the call to costly discipleship and martyrdom willingness is levied around the call for solidarity with Jesus and his community in the face of growing hard times (John 6); c) as the call to abide in Jesus and to demonstrate his costly love for community is delivered alongside the prayer of Jesus that his disciples be in the world but not of the world—affirming that Christ would continue to lead his flock by means of the work of the *Paraklētos* (John 15-17); and d) as the character of apostolic leadership is sketched as a reminder to both love the flock agapeically and to retain an intimate relationship with the Lord (John 21). Some of the Beloved Disciple's continued spoken (and perhaps written) ministry is thus preserved by the compiler and added to the finalized Gospel after his apparent death (Jn. 21:20-24).

These themes, however, can be seen to be addressing several acute crises experienced by Jesus adherents in Asia Minor during this period, echoed in the Epistles. 1 John is written around 85 C.E. as a circular, plausibly circulated among several Christian communities in the region.

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[19] Here the so-called "confusion of Johns at Ephesus" has itself confused the second-century memory as reported by Eusebius, Irenaeus, and other ancient witnesses. Just because Irenaeus may have confused Papias' reference to John the Elder with John the apostle, this does not mean he and all other second-century authorities were wrong about two leaders named "John" buried at Ephesus. Given that Eusebius is unequivocal about connecting John the apostle with an extended ministry in Ephesus, living into the reign of Trajan (98 C.E.) and being buried in Ephesus along with John the Elder (*Hist. Eccles.* 3.1, 18, 21, 23, 24, 29, 31, 39; 4.14; 5.18, 20, 24), and that John the apostle's ministry in Ephesus is also attested by Polycarp, Irenaeus, Polycrates, and other second-century authorities, attempts to remove him from the scene entirely are frail. The point is not to assert who the Johannine authors must have been; it is to question whether their non-identity is as much of an open-and-shut case as critical scholars have recently claimed.

While at least one Johannine community had experienced a schism (1 Jn. 2:18-25), other threats are on the way: a) debates over mortal and venial sins are finally addressed in the last word as the first word—little children, *stay away from idols!* (1 Jn. 5); b) just as the water and blood from Jesus' side testify to his suffering humanity, false teachers teaching doctrines of assimilation and easy discipleship ought to be eschewed and resisted (1 Jn. 4); c) to abide in Christ is to have nothing to do with sin—to walk as he walked—therefore, love not the world and its ways, but stay true to Christ and his sacrifice (1 Jn. 2-3); and d) in doing so, the love command that has been heard from the beginning (in the gospel narrative) is fulfilled, and walking in the light goes hand-in-hand with abiding in love (1 Jn. 1-4). While less dialectical in his theology than the Evangelist, the Elder nonetheless appeals to the self-perception of his audience as the basis for his appeals to loving behavior—*if you claim to love God whom you have not seen, you must also love one another, whom you have seen.*[20] In his letters to the chosen lady and her children (2 Jn.) and to Gaius (3 Jn.), the Elder addresses more particular issues related to hospitality and its denial—on both ends of equation. As a means of dealing with Diotrephes and his hierarchical kin, the Elder compiles and circulates the testimony of the Beloved Disciple—whose testimony and first-hand representation of Jesus and his view of the church is *true*.

Within a larger view of Johannine dialogical autonomy, the following three outlines contribute to a paradigm building on the strongest features of Brown's overall theory, as well as those of other scholars, serving to provide a grounded basis for interpreting the Johannine Gospel and Epistles.

Outline A: A Two-Edition Theory of Johannine Composition[21]

The Johannine tradition develops as an independent Jesus memory in its own right, somewhat in dialogue with the pre-Markan oral tradition. A Palestinian setting is reflected, including northern (Galilean) perspectives on southern (Judean) religious/political practices and familiarity with Jerusalem. Sometime between 55 and 70 C.E. (probably closer to the latter, although an earlier visit cannot be ruled out) the Johannine Evangelist relocates among the mission churches (plausibly Asia Minor, and even Ephesus) delivering the story of Jesus' mission to Jewish and Gentile audiences alike. Both Luke and Q appear to have had access to the Johannine tradition in its oral stages, suggested by Luke's departures from Mark and siding with John and by the "bolt out of the Johannine blue" in Matthew and Luke. The Johannine narrator hooks the hearer/reader into an imaginary dialogue with Jesus as a means of engaging later audiences and drawing them into the original story.

A) The First Edition of the Johannine Gospel (80-85 C.E.)

[20] I find no basis for inferring a difference in authorship between the three Johannine Epistles; the vocabulary and syntax of 3 John is somewhat distinctive, but the subject and purpose is also different. While 3 John was finally accepted into the canon on the basis of 1 and 2 John, this does not mean that its having been questioned was a factor of authorship; more likely, its critique of hierarchical leadership would have posed an ample basis for its uneven reception *whoever* the author may have been. Nor does the difference in form between the first epistle and the two shorter ones imply anything about a difference of authorship. To require identical forms of delivery of all authors, ancient and modern, is not exactly a scientific approach to authorship inferences. Therefore, I stand with Brown on the common authorship of the Johannine Epistles, and also their order.

[21] This outline is an adaptation of Table 1.4 and Appendix I in *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus* (n. 19, p. 40; pp. 193-95).

Following several decades of Johannine preaching (and perhaps some writing) *a first edition of John was completed* by the Evangelist or an amenuensis between 80 and 85 C.E., to some degree as an augmentive and corrective response to Mark. This "second" gospel (chronologically) was not distributed widely, but it began with the ministry of John the Baptist (Jn. 1:15, 19-42) and concluded with Jn. 20:31, declaring the evangelistic purpose of the Johannine Gospel: inviting hearers/readers to *receive Jesus* as the Jewish Messiah/Christ and Son of God.

B) The Writing of the Johannine Epistles (85-95 C.E.)
The teaching/preaching ministry of the Beloved Disciple (and possibly other Johannine leaders) continued over the next decade or two, and during this time (85-95 C.E.), *the three Johannine Epistles were written* by the Elder (85, 90, 95 C.E.). What was "seen and heard" from the beginning is taken further in terms of community implications, and the "new commandment" of Jesus, to love one another (Jn. 13:34), has now become the "old commandment" (1 Jn. 2:7). 1 John was written as a circular to the churches in the region calling for Christian unity in loving one another; 2 John was written to a particular church and its leadership: the "Chosen Lady and her children," exhorting them to remain together in love and to ward off docetizing preachers; 3 John was written to a particular leader: Gaius, exhorting him to extend hospitality, despite its having been denied him and others by Diotrephes.

C) The Finalization of the Johannine Gospel (100 C.E.)
After the death of the Beloved Disciple (around 100 C.E.) who reportedly lived until the reign of Trajan (98 C.E.), the Elder *compiled the Gospel*, adding to it the worship material of the Prologue (Jn. 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 (esp. Jn. 19:34-35) and crafted a second ending (Jn. 21:24-25) in the pattern of the first (Jn. 20:30-31). Then, he circulated the finalized witness of the Beloved Disciple, whose "testimony is true," as an encouragement and challenge to the larger Christian movement, inviting hearers/readers to *abide in Jesus* as the Son of God.

After the finalization of the Johannine Gospel, now the fourth among the finalized Gospels, it garners a new set of hearings and readings. It quickly becomes a favorite among Gentile Christians, but it also takes root in Jewish and mainstream Christianity. By the end of the second century C.E., more surviving Christian citations are connected to the Johannine Gospel than any other piece of Christian literature. The *purposes* of John, both *apologetic* (in its first edition, A) and *pastoral* (in its final edition, C), thus appear to have taken effect, despite some breaches in community (suggested by the Epistles, B). The Johannine Gospel becomes a pattern for the apologetic work of Justin and others, and the rhetoric against the Johannine Antichrists becomes a prime source of Christian polemics from the second century to the present.

While Brown's analysis of the relations between the Johannine and Synoptic traditions shows some development in his new introduction to John (Brown 2003, pp. 90-111), he largely leaves unspecified the particular relationships with each of the Synoptic traditions. What he rightly does, though, is to consider the particular connections (or lack thereof) between the Johannine and each of the Synoptic traditions instead of assuming that they were gathered into a collection (along with a floating Q source). To assume that "the Synoptics" as a gathered set of traditions was known by anyone in the late first century is a fiction; it also is probably not true. John's relation to each of the traditions must be assessed individually.

Particular elements of Brown's overall theory worth building on, however, include the following. First, he rightly sees John and Mark as two individuated traditions with their own perspectives on Jesus' ministry. I might call them "the Bi-Optic Gospels." Second, Brown correctly infers some level of interaction during the oral stages of their traditions, explaining the presence of common details and buzz words (not taken up by Matthew or Luke)—thus likely characteristic of oral stages of traditional development (such as green grass/much grass, 200 and 300 denarii, etc.).[22] While it is impossible to know whether the claim of Papias—that Peter was one of Mark's primary sources—is correct and whether John or another eyewitness was the source of the Johannine tradition (although some first-century evidence for John's connection with Johannine themes in Acts 4:19-20 has been overlooked on all sides of the debate), Brown notes that Peter and John are reported as preaching and ministering together in Acts 8 (also in Acts 3 and 4). Therefore, something like this could explain some of the non-identical similarities in the pre-Markan and early Johannine traditions.[23] While the present analysis will not go into as great a detail as is spelled out elsewhere, the following inferences carry an overall theory of Johannine-Synoptic interfluential relations. Third, Brown notes similarities between John and Luke, although he fails to note Luke's departures from Mark in favor of Johannine detail, ordering, and presentation. Rather than opt for a hypothetical (and unavailable!) source explaining similarities between Luke and John, more plausible is the possibility that Luke has borrowed from the Johannine tradition, probably during the oral stages of its development. This may also have been the case with Q, as "the bolt out of the Johannine blue" in Matt. 11:27 and Lk. 10:22 bears a distinctively Johannine ring. Fourth, Brown rightly notes "cross-influence" between the later stages of the Matthean and Johannine traditions over aspects of church governance and the function of Peter's memory organizationally, and some of this dialogue is suggested by the third Johannine Epistle. While I have developed this theory in greater detail elsewhere,[24] here is a synopsis of my second paradigm within an overall theory of Johannine dialogical autonomy.

Outline B:
A Bi-Optic Hypothesis

[22] Note Brown's consideration of "cross-influence" between John and Mark (2003, pp. 102-104), as well as my inference of "interfluence" between the early oral stages of these two traditions (Anderson 1996, pp. 170-193).
[23] While Brown makes sense of the mission of Peter and John through Samaria (Acts 8) as a factor in the narration of John 4, involving Samaritans' joining the Johannine community (Brown 1979, pp. 36-40), I see the presentation of two Christian leaders traveling together in ministry (whether or not they were Peter and John in particular) as a plausible explanation for interfluence between oral stages of gospel traditions and their human purveyors.
[24] For more detailed developments of this larger theory of Johannine-Synoptic interfluentiality, see Anderson 2001; 2002; 2004; 2006, pp. 101-125; 2007a; 2007c; 2010; 2010a).

While John's material appears to reflect an independent Jesus tradition developing in its own distinctive way over seven decades before its finalization, it does not appear to be isolated or out of contact with other traditions. Contact, however, does not imply dependence, nor does influence imply a singular direction of movement. Likewise, familiarity may have evoked dissonance as well as consonance, and it is highly unlikely that the timing and manner of the relation between John's and all other traditions were uniform. John's inter-traditional contact may have even been different between distinct phases and forms of a particular tradition, such as Mark's. Therefore, the following components are integral elements of a new synthesis regarding John's dialogical autonomy and interfluential relationships with other gospel traditions. In that sense, John represents a "bi-optic" alternative to the Markan Gospels (Mark, Luke, and Matthew), as both complementarity and dialogical engagements may plausibly be inferred as follows.

a) *John's Dialogical Autonomy Develops in ways Parallel to other Traditions.* Parallel to the pre-Markan tradition, the early Johannine tradition developed in its own autonomous set of ways. First impressions developed into Johannine paraphrases, crafted to meet the needs of early audiences (including tensions with Judeans and Baptist adherents) and suited to the personal ministry of the Johannine Evangelist, developing parallel to the human source(s) of the pre-Markan tradition.

b) *Interfluential Contacts between the pre-Markan and early Johannine Traditions.* Early contacts between these two traditions created a set of commonly shared buzz-words, references and themes, explaining their non-identical similarities in the later texts. Especially within the oral stages of their traditions, influence may have crossed in both directions, making "interfluence" during the oral stages of the Johannine and Markan traditions a plausible inference.

c) *Augmentation and Correction of Written Mark.* After Mark was written, at least some of it became familiar to the Johannine Evangelist, evoking a complementary project. This explains some of the Markan echoes in John, and also some of John's departures from Mark. Some of them may reflect knowing intentionality (Jn. 20:30), as the first edition of John was plausibly the *second* written Gospel, though enjoying primarily local circulation. Therefore, Johannine-Synoptic differences are not factors of a three-against-one majority; rather, John and Mark deserve consideration as "*the Bi-Optic Gospels*."

d) *John's Formative Impact upon Luke.* During the oral stages of the Johannine tradition, some of its material came to influence Luke's tradition. This explains the fact that at least six dozen times Luke departs from Mark and sides with John. Because many of John's features are not followed, the Johannine influence upon Luke is unlikely to have taken place in full, written form but probably reflects Lukan familiarity with the Johannine oral tradition. This explains also why Luke does not follow the Johannine ordering of the Temple cleansing and why Luke places the great catch of fish at the first calling of Peter and the disciples, rather than at their re-calling. Does mention of what has been received from "eyewitnesses and servants of the Logos" in Luke 1:2 imply acknowledgement of the Johannine tradition as a source?

e) *John's Influence upon the Q Tradition?* Not implausible is the likelihood that the contacts between several Q passages and John imply early Johannine influences upon the Q tradition. Especially the "bolt out of the Johannine blue" (Matt. 11:25-27; Lk. 10:21-22) points to such a possibility, as the Father-Son relationship is a distinctively Johannine theme. Or, these motifs linking the Father and Son together may go back to the historical Jesus, or earlier tradition, but the more plausible inference is that Q, if there was a Q tradition, was influenced by early

Johannine tradition. Some interfluentiality may also have been involved regarding other Johannine and Q parallels exhibiting less distinctively Johannine features.

f) *Johannine Preaching (and some writing) Continues.* Following the first edition of the Johannine Gospel (80-85 C.E.), the Beloved Disciple continues to preach and teach, and possibly even to write. The fleshly suffering of Jesus becomes an example to emulate for Christians facing hardship under the reign of Domitian (81-96 C.E.), and the sustaining/guiding work of the Holy Spirit addresses new crises: dialogues with the synagogue, the Roman presence, Gentile docetizers, and institutionalizing tendencies.

g) *Matthean and Johannine Traditions Engage in an Interfluential Set of Dialogues.* Especially on matters of church governance, the Matthean and Johannine traditions appear to have been engaged in a series of dialogues over how the risen Lord continues to lead the church. They also reinforce each other in their outreach to Jewish audiences over Jesus' agency as the Jewish Messiah. Might we have two ecclesial models in parallel gospel traditions in dialogue with each other in the late first-century situation?

h) *The Johannine Epistles Were Written by the Elder*. During this time (85-95 C.E.) the Johannine Elder writes the Johannine Epistles, calling for loving unity, corporate solidarity, willingness to suffer for the faith, and challenging the inhospitality of Diotrephes and his kin. The Johannine Epistles were thus written *before and after* the Johannine Gospel.

i) *The Johannine Gospel was Supplemented and Finalized by the Johannine Elder*. After the death of the Beloved Disciple, the Elder adds the Prologue and other material (chs. 6, 15-17, 21), circulating it around 100 C.E. as the witness of the Beloved Disciple, whose "testimony is true." As the first edition calls for belief in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, the final edition of John calls for believers to abide in Jesus and his community, posing also a corrective to rising institutionalism in the name of the original intention of Jesus for his church. Acts 4:19-20 provides a first-century clue to Johannine authorship.

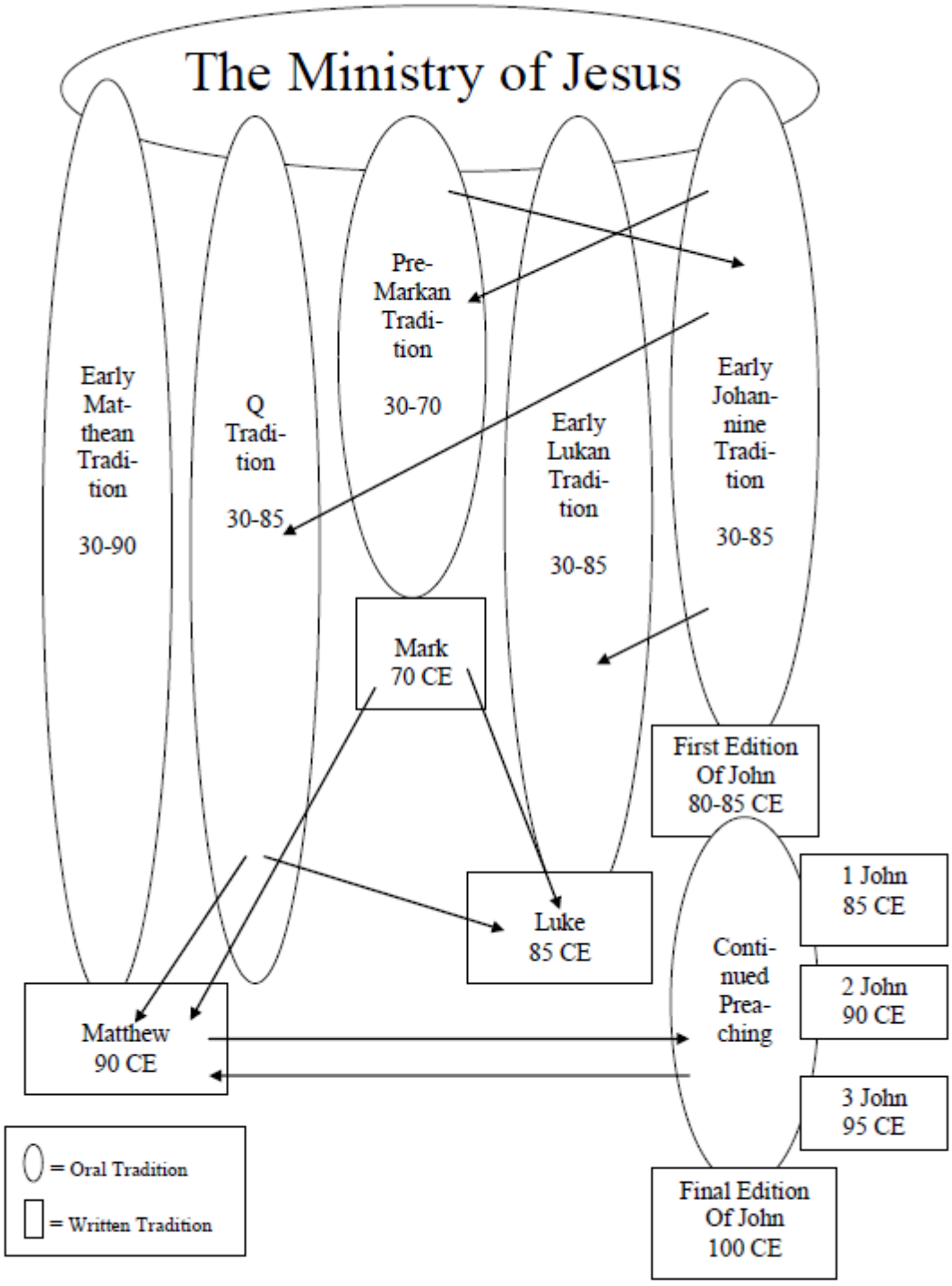
j) *The Spiritual Gospel Poses a Bi-Optic Alternative to the Somatic Gospels.* While Matthew and Luke built *upon* Mark, John built *around* Mark. As an independent Jesus tradition developed theologically, however, the Johannine and Markan traditions all contribute to Gospel christological studies, as well as quests for the historical Jesus in *bi-optic* perspective.

k) *The Second Markan Ending Bears Johannine Echoes within It*. Interestingly, Mark 16:9-20, while betraying a distinctively non-Markan style and vocabulary and not found in earliest texts, suggesting a later addition—probably in the early-to-mid second century C.E.—shows familiarity with particular details in the other Gospels and Acts, *including* Johannine themes and presentations of events. Interfluentiality continues!

This overall paradigm is actually too simplistic, as inter-traditional relationships were undoubtedly more complex than the basic set of inferences listed above and sketched diagrammatically below. The following model assumes a basis Synoptic Hypothesis, assuming that Matthew and Luke built upon Mark and Q. Of course, additional traditions are likely besides the four Synoptic traditions and John, and while the oval shapes reflect oral traditions and the rectangles reflect written ones, it is not implausible to infer that earlier traditions may have included some written as well as oral material. As all five gospel traditions (including hypothetical Q) likely had at least some contact with the historical ministry of Jesus, they also reflect individuated developments with particular situation-histories. Among these, the development of the Johannine tradition is the most individuated and autonomous, and yet it is also the most illuminated longitudinally because of the Johannine Epistles. Therefore, a two-

edition model of the Fourth Gospel's composition, informed by a charting of Johannine-Synoptic relations, contributes to a larger Bi-Optic Hypothesis.

A Charting of Johannine-Synoptic Interfluential Relations



Paul N. Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus* (London: T&T Clark, 2006, p. 126)

THE HISTORY OF THE JOHANNINE SITUATION

Within the Johannine situation, we have more than just one community, although there are signs of at least one community of believers involved. With Brown and Martyn, three phases of Johannine Christianity are discernible, followed by post-Johannine influence and the reception of its material. Within each of these phases two major crises are evident, with Johannine-Synoptic dialectic spanning all three phases. While these crises are largely sequential, they are also somewhat overlapping, as an emerging crisis rarely waits until previous ones have subsided before rearing its head. And, most controversies never disappear entirely; they simply are crowded out by more pressing ones, although their memory still informs later stances. Brown is indeed correct to infer the Palestinian origin of the Johannine tradition, and for several decades there would have been an ongoing set of debates between southern religious authorities (*hoi Ioudaioi* = "the Judeans"), challenging the movement of the northern (Galilean) prophet.

While some contact with Samaritans is plausible, such is not a necessary basis for the ascendency of Johannine Christology; such was already emerging within the Jesus movement in Palestine and also among the mission churches in Diaspora Judaism. Some high-christological memory was also a part of the Johannine tradition from the beginning, as spiritual encounters associated with the man, Jesus, also have an established place within the Johannine tradition. Agency-schema connections with the Prophet-like-Moses (Deut. 18:15-22) also could have been Galilean in their origin and development (not particularly Samaritan), likely reflecting a closer fit with the self-understanding of the prophet from Nazareth than King-like-David associations also emerging within the early Jesus movement. Much of John's high-christological material is a factor of the Mosaic agency schema rather than a Gnostic Redeemer-Myth (versus Bultmann). Brown also correctly infers dialogues with followers of the Baptist, and either in Palestine or Asia Minor, the Evangelist is keen to present the Baptist as pointing to Jesus as the Messiah, not himself. Therefore, these two dialogical partners (Judean religious leaders and followers of the Baptist) were likely primary dialogical partners within the first phase of the Johannine situation between 30 and 70 C.E.

With the Roman invasion and the destruction of Jerusalem (67-70 C.E.), however, large numbers of Judeans and Galileans were forced to relocate. Resettling within Jewish communities in such places as Jamnia, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome, there is no reason to doubt the tradition that the Johannine Evangelist relocated in Ephesus, lending his support among the mission churches. Within Asia Minor between 70-85 C.E., a primary community is a plausible inference, with some give and take from the local synagogue. When the Evangelist came to Ephesus, the mission to the Gentiles had certainly already begun; therefore, Jewish followers of Jesus probably worshiped with Jewish family and friends in the synagogue on Sabbath days, and they probably shared first-day fellowship with Gentile believers. With the *Birkat ha-Minim* some Jesus adherents likely left the synagogue and joined local Gentile believers for worship and fellowship. Not unlikely also is the possibility that some Jesus adherents stayed behind in the synagogue (whom Brown calls "crypto-Christians"), and that some who felt excluded from the synagogue were proselytized back into the Jewish faith after their departure. This can be seen in the first antichristic crisis in 1 John 2:18-25, where the secessionists had renounced their belief in Jesus as the Christ—ostensibly as a factor of monotheistic clinging to the Father. The Elder clarifies that if they reject the Son they will lose the Father; the only way to preserve their union with the Father is to receive also the Son.

A second crisis during this phase is one that Brown has largely missed, but which has emerged as a significant factor in Johannine-community studies over the last two decades—namely, the problem of the Roman presence and increasing pressure to demonstrate loyalty to Rome by offering Emperor laud. If Jewish Christians were no longer able to claim a Jewish dispensation (paying two drachmas to Rome instead of having to confess Caesar as Lord or being forced to offer incense or a burnt offering in Caesar's honor) having been distanced from the synagogue, they were now subject to harassment and even capital punishment if they did not confess Caesar as Lord.[25] Further, if Ignatius of Antioch is any indicator of their practice, the Romans sought to make examples of Christian leaders, seeking to influence their followers accordingly. Ignatius himself was taken to Rome and executed around 117 C.E. The restoration of Emperor worship was instituted by Domitian in 81 C.E., and he even required his Roman lieutenants to regard him as *dominus et deus* (lord and god). Therefore, one can imagine the confession of Thomas in John 20:28 to have anti-imperial overtones (let alone the dialogue between Jesus and Pilate) for audiences in the late first century, and the clear admonition at the end of 1 John 5 puts directly one of the main themes of the letter—*stay away from idols*!

While such an admonition would have applied to Roman imperial worship, it would also have included festivals related to fertility, prosperity, and guild cults clustered together within virtually every major metropolis in the Greco-Roman world. In Pergamum and Ephesus, in particular, many different temples are located together so that local residents could offer sacrifices and engage in festivities in an inclusive fashion. Ephesus and Pergamum competed with each other for *Neokoros* status (Friesen 1993), seeking to be the favored center of Emperor worship in the region, so civic leaders and city residents who did not show public support for the Empire and its beneficence could jeopardize favor from Rome, including the civic grants and construction projects it bestowed upon its favored cities. With Domitian's high-handed approach, however, came resentment and hostility because of his sometimes violent capriciousness.

In the Domitian Temple in Ephesus there are holes in the marble wall engraving announcing his name; a metal plaque is thought to have been placed over the name as a means of effecting *damnatio memoriae* (the damnation of his memory), as local residents—no doubt *with* imperial blessing after the end of Domitian's reign (96 C.E.)—sought to blot out its memory. This sentiment would have been especially true of Christians, who had resisted both pressures and enticements to participate in local festivities surrounding the Emperor cult. Therefore, the admonition to love not the world in 1 John 2:1-17 and the mortal/venial sins distinctions of 1 John 5:16-21 should be seen in this light. If denying that one was a follower of Jesus and a member of the Christian fellowship (as some before Pliny had done—claiming they used to be a Christian several years ago, but no longer were), this was another way of not loving the brethren (not simply secession); if participating in local cultic festivities in celebrating the Emperor's birthday or making offerings of incense to Caesar or declaring "Caesar is Lord" was done in public, this would be seen as a death-producing sin and loving the world instead of Christ and his followers. The overall implication here is that the Johannine community during this phase was

[25] See the treatment given to two young women and others by Pliny, Governor of neighboring Bithynia, in his correspondence with Trajan a couple of decades or so later (around 110 C.E., Letters 10.96-97). Any who were accused simply of bearing the name *Christiani* were charged with a crime worthy of torture and death. If accused of such a crime, subjects (now rampant in the villages and towns as well as the cities) were brought to trial and exhorted to denounce Christ and his movement and to offer incense or wine to an image of Caesar, confessing loyalty to Caesar. If they refused they were executed. The works of Richard Cassidy (1992) and Warren Carter (2008) here are important.

not sectarian; it was metropolitan.[26] Jewish Christians had no dispensation from the synagogue, and while most of them were likely willing to suffer and die for their Lord, Gentile Christians may not have been troubled by the festivities; they were likely more assimilative in their new-found faith. Such tensions were brought on by the local Roman presence under Domitian, forcing debates within the Christian movement on several levels.

The third phase of the Johannine situation would have involved the developing of new Christian communities, roughly from the mid-80s until the Gospel was finalized around 100 C.E. It was during this phase that the Epistles were written, say, between 85 and 95 C.E. as a plausible estimation. As 1 John 2:18-25 shows a community split, wherein former community members withdrew and plausibly rejoined the synagogue (diminishing their commitment to Jesus as the Messiah/Christ), and as Emperor worship with its associated implications was a growing problem, the acute threat now involved a fifth crisis in the Johannine situation: docetizing Gentile Christians, who were teaching a doctrine of cultural assimilation and easy discipleship. As in the letters of Ignatius, the Judaizing threat was followed by the docetizing threat, and the Johannine Elder, within his Christ-centered setting, levies the ultimate charge against both problems, calling their instigators "Antichrists".

It is important to note, here, that the targets themselves would not have been comfortable with such titles. These were pejorative labels intended to disturb, and they were also used as a disincentive to others who might be tempted to join their ranks. While Brown does note differences between the Antichrists of 1 John 2:18-25 and 4:1-3, he does not take full notice of how different the presentations of the two groups really are. First, there is a difference of *timing*: the first crisis had happened, and the next one is on the way but not fully realized. Second, there is a difference of *action*: the first crisis involved secession (they went out from us), but the next one involves an impending invasion (they have gone out into the world—not necessarily from us, but beware, lest they come to *our or your* community). Third, the *content* of their doctrinal beliefs is entirely different: the secessionists do not believe Jesus *was the Christ* (let alone divine), and the false teachers deny that Jesus *came in the flesh* (he was so divine that he was not even human). Therefore, the second antichristic threat involved traveling Gentile-Christian ministers in the area, who may have been soft on certain elements of Jewish faith and practice. These were not Gnostics, and on such an assumption many an interpretive approach has foundered. Further, docetizing Christology might not even have been their primary interest; it became for the Elder a means of testing the teachers to see if their larger doctrine was rooted in a suffering Jesus, and the implications for Christian living are what was at stake.

Again, in noting the correspondence between Pliny the younger and Emperor Trajan, two decades or so after the writing of 1 and 2 John, several issues become apparent. First, the Governor says that he was charging people of simply bearing the name "Christian," and if found guilty, they were liable to be executed unless they recanted. If they reviled the name of Christ and/or worshipped the idol of Caesar, they were acquitted; even Pliny declares that such could never be guilty of being a Christian if they were willing to perform such actions. Second, he notes some who were brought in denied being Christians even though they met with believers

[26] Here I take issue with the longstanding judgment of Wayne Meeks and others, seeing the Johannine situation as highly sectarian (for instance, Johnson 1993), which Robert Gundry (2002) carries to an extreme. Rather, I see Johannine Christianity as less sectarian than established Judaism in Asia Minor at the time, and certainly not as sectarian as Qumran Judaism—cutting itself off from "the world" in the desert. Johannine leaders were experiencing tensions with "the world" precisely because community members were questioning the Jewishness of the community's standards of faith and practice.

before the dawn on a given day of the week, ate common food, and sang a hymn to Christ "as though he were god". Such were judged innocent of the crime, as well. Third, pressures were being felt from the merchants whose living depended upon the idol-worship trade because of the effect these Christians were having on the pagan cultic enterprise. Pliny expresses some relief that some of that has begun to be corrected and that the adverse impact of the Christian movement is not as severe as it once had been.

Therefore, inferring two distinctive antichristic threats makes the best sense from the evidence within the first two Johannine Epistles, as informed by the backdrop availed by the Letters of Ignatius and the Pliny-Trajan correspondence. The first antichristic crisis was a schism, wherein some Johannine community members of Jewish origin likely rejoined the synagogue, and the Elder surmises somewhat poignantly, "they never really were a part of us." Following the increased pressures toward Empire and cultural assimilation under Domitian, the second antichristic threat is labeled as such because Gentile-Christian teachers had apparently advocated assimilation in worldly directions, and they resisted costly implications of Christian discipleship by affirming a non-suffering Jesus. Opponents of Ignatius reflect the same tendency a decade or two later. These crises precipitate a sixth, involving Diotrephes and his kin.

Within the third phase of the Johannine Situation, the second crisis was one precipitated by rising institutionalism in the late first-century Christian movement, as third-generation leaders sought to discipline problematic traveling ministers and other centrifugal tendencies by means of a proto-Ignatian monepiscopal (single-bishop) approach to leadership. Seeing that the Johannine familial approach to governance and discipline had failed considerably, Diotrephes and other institutionalizing leaders may even have felt claiming the authority of Petrine Keys to the Kingdom (Matt. 16:17-19) was an advance over less effective (and primitive) organizational structures. Therefore, the opposition of Diotrephes to the Johannine traveling ministers was less likely a feature of their encroachment (versus Lieu 1986) and more a factor of their egalitarianism—a direct threat to his hierarchical approach to holding his community together. The fact that Diotrephes is reported as willing to cast out members of his own community who refused to heed his commands shows that hospitality was an incidental matter rather than the central one. This may be why the Elder then circulates the testimony of the Beloved Disciple, adding the passages affirming the accessible leadership of the Holy Spirit, available to all believers. "His testimony is true!" not only signals a belief in the Evangelist's historical witness; it also affirms his conviction that the ecclesial thrust of his witness is apostolic and authoritative for believers.

Outline C:
The Dialectical Johannine Situation—Seven Crises over Seven Decades[27]

The early Johannine Situation develops in Palestine, reflecting northern perspective (likely in Galilee with Samarian sympathies) and southern familiarity (with Jerusalem and Judea). Within this setting, an autonomous Jesus tradition develops, to some degree in dialogue with Petrine (or other pre-Markan) oral traditions, but also in dialogue with other groups, including political/religious leaders in Judea and followers of John the Baptist. Palestinian

[27] This outline is an adaptation of Table 2.5 and Appendix II in *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus* (n. 19, pp. 64; pp. 196-99).

archaeological and topographical references reflect historical realism, betraying knowledge of the area before its destruction by the Romans in 70 C.E.

Period I: The Palestinian Period, the Developing of an Autonomous Johannine Jesus Tradition (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*.)

The Johannine Evangelist and perhaps other associates relocate to one of the mission churches – plausibly Ephesus or another mission setting in Asia Minor – some time before or around the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. There contacts with the local synagogue eventually become strained (the *Birkat ha-Minim* is a codification of Jewish resistance to the Jesus movement), leading to an individuated Johannine community composed of Christian Jews and Gentile Christians. While appealing for Jewish family and friends to receive Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, members of the synagogue also exhort those with Jewish backgrounds to return to the way of Moses and the household of Abraham. This leads some to abandon the new community and rejoin the synagogue, while Jesus-adherents who never left, and perhaps others who did, sought to straddle the two communities. During the reign of Domitian (81-96 C.E.) the increased expectation of public Emperor worship and participation in pagan festivals and civic life creates a crisis for Hellenistic followers of Jesus, especially Gentile Christians with non-Jewish origins.

Period II: The First Asia Minor Phase, the Forging of a Johannine 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*.)

The Johannine sector of the early church grows, both by the starting of new communities and by establishing contact with other Christian communities in Asia Minor and beyond, leading to correspondence and intervisitation between the churches. Some Gentile teachers/preachers comfort their audiences with a teaching allowing some worldly assimilation, including softening the stand on forbidding Emperor worship and participation in Hellenistic festivals, arguing a non-suffering Jesus. Rising institutionalization among neighbor churches reflects a proto-Ignatian means of addressing similar issues, but it also becomes a strident matter as expressed by Diotrephes and his kin. Dialogues with Synoptic traditions continue, now with a focus on Matthean-Johannine dialogues regarding church leadership and how Christ continues to lead the church.

Period III: The Second Asia Minor Phase, Dialogues between Christian Communities (ca. 85-100 C.E.)

Crisis A – Engaging Docetizing Gentile Christians and their Teachings
Crisis B – Engaging Christian Institutionalizing Tendencies (Diotrpehes and his kin)

Crisis C – Engaging Dialectically Christians' Presentations of Jesus and his Ministry (actually reflecting a running dialogue over *all three* periods)

(*The Evangelist continues to teach and perhaps write; the Epistles are written by the Johannine Elder, who then finalizes and circulates the testimony of the Beloved Disciple after his death*.)

The Post-Johannine Situation reflects the spurned docetizing preachers' taking the Johannine Gospel with them, leading into what eventually became some parts of 2nd century Christian Gnosticism (including eventual Johannine influences upon Heracleon, the Gospel of Truth, and the Gospel of Philip). The Johannine Gospel becomes a favorite among orthodox Christians in the broader Mediterranean world, and Montanus and his followers are moved by its influence to seek to restore the spirit-based vitality of the church. John's dialectical Christology becomes a source of debate among Christians, and eventually the Johannine Gospel is employed to combat Gnostic influences (Marcion and Valentinus) and to challenge those who would reject the Johannine writings (referred to pejoratively as the *Alogoi*) for secondary reasons (references to the *Paraklētos*, differences with the Synoptics, confusion over the Apocalypse, advocating for a particular calendar, etc.). By the turn of the second century C.E. the Fourth Gospel has become the "Spiritual Gospel" written by "John the Theologian," a great source of debate within Christology studies and Jesus studies to the present day.

Within this overall theory, the preaching and teaching of the Beloved Disciple is taken to represent the constructive work of the Johannine Evangelist, whoever he might have been. And, the author of the Epistles—the Johannine Elder—is taken to be the compiler, who edited at least the final edition of the Johannine Gospel after the death of the Beloved Disciple. I use the term "compiler" because (with Brown) the editor's work seems conservative—trying to preserve the testimony of the Evangelist—rather than innovative (even leaving rough transitions in the text, here and there). Of course, he could have played a role in recording earlier editions of the Gospel, as well, so that possibility could account for some linguistic similarities—as well as differences—between the Johannine Gospel and Epistles. Other leaders may have also contributed to the Johannine corpus, but such an overall theory is arguable *whoever* these figures might have been. With Culpepper and others, one's interpretation of the Johannine writings must be based the literary anatomy of the texts themselves rather than risk getting mired down in particulars of authorship or composition inferences.[28]

E. Conclusion and Implications—Interpreting the Johannine Epistles in the Light of the Dialectical Johannine Situation

[28] As differing approaches to the origin and development of the Johannine tradition hinge upon three premises—who the author must have been, who the author cannot have been, and inferences from literary phenomena whoever the author(s) might have been—the latter (as advanced especially by Culpepper 1983, 1998) is the best way to proceed (Anderson 2011, pp. 93-124). Therefore, the above three paradigms are arguable regardless of who the Johannine Evangelist and Elder might have been, despite the fact that the extensive and diverse second-century testimonies to "two Johns at Ephesus" deserves renewed critical consideration.

In the light of an overall theory regarding the Johannine situation and the composition of its literature, a suitable foundation is laid for interpreting the Johannine Epistles. Especially 1 and 2 John show evidence of building on some of the teaching that has been a part of an earlier edition of the Johannine Gospel, as a "new commandment" of Jesus has become an "old commandment" that has been heard from the beginning—providing the centripetal means of holding the community together against centrifugal forces. Further, the appeal to abide in Jesus has changed into an exhortation to abide in the teaching about Jesus—communicated by the Elder. In addition, the extensive appeals to consider Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Father in the central part of the Gospel narrative have shifted in their thrust to a warning to secessionists—if one does not receive the Son, one will indeed forfeit the Father. And, emphases on the Holy Spirit's being in and with Jesus' followers are echoed by the Elder's reminder that believers have no need for anyone to teach them outwardly, as they possess the inward guidance of the Spirit. In these ways, the Epistles reflect upon and develop further particular themes in the Gospel.

If the inference of supplementary material added to the Gospel is correct, however, later material in the Johannine Gospel reflects some of the issues in play as presented in the Epistles. The emphasis on the guidance of the Holy Spirit is expanded, then, to emphasize the work of the *Paraklētos* in convicting believers of sin and of righteousness and guiding them in a hostile situation in the world. Further, challenges to the docetizing tendencies of the false teachers' precipitating the second antichristic threat are countered by emphases upon the Word-become-flesh, ingesting the flesh and blood of the Son of Man, and water and blood flowing forth from the side of Jesus. In addition, emphases upon first-hand relationship with Jesus and one's witness being "true" become asserted with reference to the eyewitness and Beloved Disciple, whose "testimony is true". And, the prologue of the first Epistle has become expanded into a full-fledged worship hymn, recapitulating the main themes of the Gospel's earlier rendering and serving as an engaging introduction to the finalized circulation of the Johannine evangel. Of course, some of these connections could be envisioned as the influence flowing in the other direction, or even both, but the value of seeing the Epistles as being produced before-and-after the Gospel fits well with the intertextual evidence.[29]

In addition to noting possible interfluence between the Gospel narrative and the Epistles, interpreting the Johannine Epistles in the light of the Johannine dialectical situation clarifies several issues regarding its content. First, *claiming to be "without sin"* is less likely to be a factor of Gnostic perfectionism and more likely to reflect disagreement within the Johannine community over what is sin and what is not. Despite the fact that most Christian Gnostics would have been Docetists, it is not the case that all Docetists were Gnostics. Therefore, in the light of discussions over which sins were death-producing, in contrast to less momentous ones, the emphasis of the Elder in 1 John 1 was most likely a challenge to members of the Johannine situation who disagreed that what they were doing was sinful. Therefore, disagreements between community members of Jewish and Gentile origins over assimilative issues were most likely the backdrop for controversies over sin and sinlessness in 1 John.

Second, the exhortation to *love not the world* in the Johannine Epistles reflects not the sectarian stance of an ingrown community, but a group attempting to straddle Jewish and Gentile understandings of faith and practice, having been separated from the synagogue while still seeking to maintain a basic set of Jewish values. In that sense, Johannine Christianity in Asia Minor faced multi-ethnic, interreligious, and cross-cultural tensions, making it far more

[29] In addition to Brown, the view that the Epistles are written between an earlier and final edition of the Johannine Gospel is shared by Kenneth Grayston (1984) and Urban Von Wahlde (2010), among others.

cosmopolitan than sectarian. If one were to consider the second generation of what Wayne Meeks describes as "urban" Christianity, seeing the Johannine struggles with loving "the world" as factors of civic engagement in tension with markers of Jewish ideals, things become a bit clearer. Johannine Christianity thus had more in common with the other mission churches in Rome, Corinth, Thessalonica, and Galatia than with Qumran Judaism.

Third, the secession of Johannine Christians in 1 John 2:18-25 reflects not the departure of Ceninthian proto-Gnostics, but of Jewish family and friends, who refused to remain committed to the teaching that Jesus was indeed the Messiah/Christ, and who likely returned to the local synagogue whence they had been distanced. As the appeal for their return to the synagogue was likely motivated around loyalty to "the Father" and Jewish monotheism, an emphasis upon forfeiture of the Father if they denied the Son can be seen to be challenging such investments directly. In the light of plausible appeals to Jewish loyalties, rhetorical echoes advocating being "children of Abraham" and "disciples of Moses" in the gospel narrative make the attraction of synagogue-appeals palpable. In disciplining Jesus-related perceived "ditheism" by means of the *Birkat ha-Minim* and other religious emphases, Jewish leaders in Asia Minor might not have intended synagogue expulsions; the departure of Jesus-adherents from Jewish worship settings may have been the unintended consequence of disciplinary measures. As distanced Jewish members of Johannine Christianity were then proselytized back into the Jewish community of faith, it is now the Johannine Christians who feel abandoned, expressing their disappointment with the conjecture that "they never really were a part of us" (1 Jn. 2:19). Therefore, the first antichristic threat involved the appeal of religious certainty over and against faith in Jesus as the Messiah/Christ within a fledgling community of faith.

Fourth, the last word of the first Johannine Epistle is likely the first word in terms of its acute religious concern: *little children, stay away from idols!* (1 Jn. 5:21). Given the rising requirement of emperor worship under Domitian (81-96 C.E.), a new set of crises presented themselves for Jesus adherents in the Greco-Roman world. a) As Jesus-adherents could no longer claim Jewish identity if distanced from the synagogue, whether on their own or by synagogue leaders, they were no longer under the dispensation for the Jews allowing them to forego the demands of emperor worship if they "tithed" two drachmas to Rome each year—the exact amount traditionally required as the expected tithe to the temple in Jerusalem before its destruction. Therefore, Christians of Jewish origin were forced to commit loyalty to Caesar, as they could no longer claim the dispensation as Jews. b) The expectation that Gentile believers were to forego public demonstrations of emperor laud, potentially risking life and limb, must have introduced a momentous crisis among the mission churches. As some Roman officials may have invited superficial-though-insincere ways of meeting the minimal imperial requirement, some Gentile believers saw no conflict between inward loyalty to Jesus as the Christ and the demonstration of outward loyalty to Caesar. c) Lest it be construed, however, that emperor worship was the only issue involved, a longstanding practice of empire expansion in the Mediterranean world was to use other religious and civic customs to diminish local resistance to the imperial presence. As a means of subverting Jewish monotheism and its ethical demands, Antiochus Epiphanes (nearly three centuries earlier, ca. 167 BCE) is reported in 2 Maccabees 6:1-9 not only to have set up a statue of Zeus in the Jerusalem temple, but also to have filled its corridors with cultic prostitution, to have commanded monthly celebrations of the Emperor's birthday, and to have required sacrifices and participation in the Dionysius Cult announced by the wearing of ivy garlands and wreaths. As a means of instilling Antiochine Hellenism, members of other Greek cities were encouraged to institute such practices and to kill Jews who did not participate in regional civic culture. Therefore, the admonition to stay away from idols must have carried extensive cultural implications not only involving outright

Emperor worship, but also participating in local civic celebrations as a means of vying for Neokoros status, in competition with Pergamum for imperial honors in the region.

Fifth, it is against this backdrop that the assimilative teachings of the second antichristic threat should be understood. The Antichrists of 1 John 4:1-3 and 2 John 1:7 were not secessionists but invasionists. The false teachings of Gentile-Christian traveling ministers probably revolved around discussions of what was allowable in terms of faith and practice, with an acute emphasis on the latter. If Gentile-Christian leaders disagreed with ethical and religious standards advocated by Jewish-Christian leaders regarding how "Jewish" followers of Jesus needed to be, they may have argued something parallel to the earlier Pauline debates over grace-redemption over and against works-righteousness. On this note, the Elder may be seen to be co-opting the propitiation theme (1 Jn. 2:1) and pushing the implications of the costly sacrifice of Christ for costly discipleship among his followers. As Gentile-Christian preachers probably were more liberal in their teachings on cultural assimilation (i.e. less insistent upon forsaking Hellenistic cultural and festive practices in exchange for Jewish religious standards), they probably resisted Jewish-Christian challenges with the appeal that abundant life through Christ was intended to make things better, not to invite suffering. When reminded that Jesus suffered on the cross, the Hellenistic response was likely that he, if he was indeed divine, could not have suffered—thus, neither need his disciples do so in order to be faithful in the world. Therefore, docetizing Christology may not have been their lead thesis; it may have been the means to hold them accountable to emerging Christian orthodoxy around the turn of the first century, C.E. As with most debates, it is often not theory (or theology) that drives the consternation, but the praxis (or ethical dimensions). As in the Epistles of Ignatius, the Docetists' denial of a suffering Jesus and reminders of his suffering via eucharistic practices had to do primarily with the moral implications involved. If Jesus did not suffer, his followers need not do so in their assimilating existence in the world. Therefore, like the eyewitness testimony at the cross, water and blood and the Spirit testify to the implications of discipleship. Grace is not cheap, and following Jesus in the world implies being willing to suffer with him on the cross if one expects to be raised with him in the afterlife. Solidarity with Jesus and his community implies the willingness to ingest his flesh and blood; without faithfulness, one's faith is of no avail.

Sixth, the moral exhortation to love one another becomes the organizing means by which the Elder seeks to hold his community together in the face of its intense and divisive debates over lifestyle, faith, and its implications. Here the "new commandment" of Jesus to love one another has become the "old commandment" that has been heard from the beginning (Jn. 13:34-35; 15:12-17; 1 Jn. 3:11-4:21; 2 Jn. 1:5). While some interpreters have distanced the appeal for love within community from the exhortation of the Synoptic Jesus to love one's enemies (Matt. 5:44; Lk. 6:27-35), in addition to loving God and neighbor (Matt. 19:19; 22:39; Mk. 12:31-33; Lk. 10:27), the difference is directional rather than qualitative. Indeed, it can be more difficult to love those with whom one is close than to love an adversary, although the latter is also a challenge. It could also be that the Johannine emphasis on loving one another may have grown out of impatience with believers who felt they had been successful in their love for God and neighbor, but who had been impatient or even strident within the community of faith. Therefore, to hold community members accountable to the implications of their self-identifying priority of loving God (whom one has not seen) as the greatest of commandments, a reminder of the need to love brothers and sisters (whom one has seen) poses a reminder to be faithful to the central teachings of Jesus as well as their implications. Reflecting again a general appeal to order rather than a more specific disciplining of particular irritating actions within the community, the Elder's

love-oriented appeals were relatively unsuccessful, as community members split off in Jewish directions (antichristic crisis #1) and as false teachers advocated problematic assimilation in the world (antichristic crisis #2).

Seventh, as a means of staving off docetizing teachings, assimilative tendencies, and schismatic developments, Diotrephes appears to have been asserting monepiscopal authority in an effort to foster Christian unity and to ward off threats to the movement. In doing so, he seems to be following the counsel of someone like Ignatius of Antioch, who slightly later calls for the appointing of a single bishop in every church—one who will maintain unity within the community as a function of being entrusted with Petrine Keys to the Kingdom (Matt. 16:17-19). Just as Ignatius also dealt with a Judaizing crisis, imperial Roman hegemony, docetizing teachers, and questions of authority, Diotrephes appears to have embraced the monepiscopal approach to addressing these issues. In doing so, however, he appears threatened by Johannine Christian leaders, and not only does he forbid them from visiting his church, he also threatens to expel any from his own community who take them in. Plausibly, he was threatened by their egalitarianism, especially if Johannine claims to Spirit-based and inclusive governance bore apostolic claims, threatening his own authority claims within a Petrine trajectory. Note that the Elder has written to Diotrephes directly, has also written to "the church" (plausibly a Christian center, such as Antioch, whence Diotrephes may have been deriving his authority), and is promising to come for a visit—similar to the accountability procedures of Matt. 18:15-17. In contrast to institutionalizing developments in the third Christian generation, the Johannine tradition challenges such innovations in the memory of an earlier, more primitive approach to organization and governance, rooted in the memory of more familial and egalitarian approaches of the charismatic prophet from Nazareth.

Eighth, this may also explain why the Elder finalized and circulated the Johannine Gospel as an appeal to an apostolic and eyewitness memory of Jesus and his intention for the church. It is not hierarchical innovations that bear the seal of apostolic authorization alone, but the risen Christ seeks to lead his church by means of the *Paraklētos*, the Holy Spirit, accessible to all believers, and directly so. In the material added to the Johannine Gospel, Peter even affirms such (Jn. 6:68-69). Upon the aging and eventual death of the Beloved Disciple, the Elder continues to face increasing challenges of holding communities together, staving off false teachings, and challenging abrupt implementations of institutionalizing innovations among the churches of Asia Minor. In addition to dealing with Diotrephes and his kin directly and appealing to centralizing innovators within the region, the Elder finalizes and distributes the testimony of the Beloved Disciple, witnessing not only to the ministry of Jesus but to the ongoing leadership of the risen Lord through the Holy Spirit. In that sense, the Johannine Gospel and Epistles were not backwater compositions taking place in a cul-de-sac (with Käsemann 1968). No. They were produced in the thoroughfare of traveling ministries throughout Anatolia and Asia Minor, directly between Antioch and Rome and at the center of the Pauline Mission a generation or two later. That being the case, they came to influence both orthodoxy and heterodoxy in second-century Christianity precisely because of their use and prominence among the churches. And, they have continued to influence Christian movements in every generation hence.

Therefore, in reflecting on the Johannine community that Raymond Brown left behind, we indeed see not only the larger perspective of the Johannine eagle—soaring above the other New Testament writings in transcendent perspective; we also get a sense of the eaglets (to build further on Brown's imagery) scrapping and vying for order within the nest, as threats were being

faced from without and from within. While most of Brown's inferences remain worth building upon for future interpreters, alternative insights along the way suggest new venues worthy of consideration within future commentaries and treatments of the Johannine Epistles.[30] In the light of the Fourth Gospel's dialogical autonomy, this new overall theory also has extensive implications for interpreting the Johannine Epistles within their highly dialectical situation. Bringing Roman imperialism into the picture, identifying the Antichrists as two different threats, seeing docetizing tendencies of Gentile Christians being more of an issue than full-blown Gnosticism, and noting debates over particularities of what should be considered "sin" adds new insights into the audiences to which the Epistles were written. Given his untimely death in 1998, one wonders how Raymond Brown would have responded to this alternative approach to an overall theory. Whatever the case, the Johannine community scholars today shares with and learns from one another in ways that not only seek the truth, but at times might even further it. And, as is ever the case, the truth—even when it is only approximated—is always liberating!

[30] Indeed, one of my current projects is writing the Eerdmans *Two Horizon Commentary* on the Johannine Epistles (anticipated in 2014), and that study will build on the above analyses in ways I hope will contribute to both theology and exegesis.

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