

victorious word when he died on the cross: τετέλεσται, "it is finished" (19:30).

The kingship of Jesus is really different from what you expect from a king. This is a common topic in all the gospels, but is elaborated in a unique way in the Gospel of John. In the Book of Revelation he is even presented as the lord of lords and the king of kings (Rev 17:14; 19:16). From this it is no surprise that the functional meaning (kingship, kingly power, rule) is dominating in some word connections speaking of the βασιλεία of Jesus.³¹ In some texts, however, also the βασιλεία of Jesus refers to the realm of salvation, like the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. This corresponds to a development in the Early Church, where the βασιλεία of Jesus and the βασιλεία of God were not distinguished from one another and became identical.³² In my view this development does not undermine, but confirms that the phrase βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ in Jesus' message had a concrete and local meaning from the beginning.³³

When we read the gospels, however, we should not confuse the two concepts of the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ as referring to the realm of God's salvation and the βασιλεία of Jesus as referring to his position as king, neither in the Synoptic Gospels nor in John.³⁴ A closer look at the relationship of these concepts to each other is beyond the scope of this article. To say that Jesus is the king "in the kingdom of God" would be an oversimplification. But one conclusion has emerged from our considerations: when we look at the centrality of the presentation of Jesus as king in the Gospels and compare it with the absence of topics related to God as king or the kingship of God, the concrete meaning of the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ should not be doubted. At this point our dictionaries need a revision.

³¹ Matt 16:28 Luke 1:33; 22:29; 1 Cor 15:24; Heb 1:8.

³² Eph 5:6; Col 1:13; 2 Tim 4:1.18; 2 Pet 1:11. In these texts βασιλεία evidently has a concrete, spatial meaning and refers to the realm of salvation.

³³ Pace Merklein, *Jesu Botschaft*, 24.

³⁴ See the wise comments on John 18:36 in Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John*, 3: 249: "Jesus' βασιλεία does not here signify his 'kingdom' but, in accordance with Pilate's question it is a designation of a function ('kingship'). Thus, Jesus' βασιλεία is not the heavenly realm like the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ in 3:3,5 . . . it is not at all permissible to forge a link between the answer to Pilate and Jesus' Kingdom of God preaching."

JOHN'S QUEST FOR JESUS

D. Moody Smith

1. *The Gospel: Finding Jesus in the Present*

The Quest of the Historical Jesus was the title given to the English translation of Albert Schweitzer's great book *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*.¹ It has become the name of the search for the real (i.e. historical) Jesus in modern NT scholarship. We thus have the Old Quest, the New Quest, and the Third Quest. All are products of modernity (if not post-modernity) and have no parallel in antiquity, or so we historians and exegetes think. There was in antiquity no "disinterested" quest for Jesus. But we have learned recently—if we did not already know—that no quest was ever "disinterested."² There are various interests, some more appropriate than others.

Today, as in antiquity, Jesus has found people. He has found George W. Bush, Jane Fonda, and my sister-in-law, among others—and not least Schweitzer himself ("He comes to us as one unknown, as of old, by the lakeside, he came to those men who did not know who he was. He says the same word: 'Follow thou me.'"). In antiquity he found, first of all (or "last of all") Paul of Tarsus. There is a sense in which the priority always lies, or lay, with Jesus. "You did not choose me but I chose you," says Jesus in John (15:16). Yet this does not mean people do not—did not—also seek Jesus (John 1:38–39). John Painter has written an important book about the quest motif and quest stories in the Gospel of John.³ Jesus seeks and

¹ As noted by Dennis Nineham in his "Forward to the Complete Edition" of Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, ed. John Bowman (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 488 n. 6. This significant new publication includes for the first time in English translation Schweitzer's own additions in his second edition (1913), entitled *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, as well as revisions of W. Montgomery's translation (1912). I have used this revision of Schweitzer's last paragraph, with a few alterations as I have consulted the original German text.

² On this important point note the work of Leander E. Keck, *Who Is Jesus? History in Perfect Tense*, Studies on Personalities of the New Testament (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2000) esp. 2–7.

³ John Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah: The History, Literature, and Theology of the Johannine Community* (2d ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1993).

finds people, but they also quest for him. This is a theological motif, but it also has a historical basis, one that may be quite ancient.

The very production of Gospels bespeaks an interest in who Jesus was, that is, in a quest. I think this is true of Matthew and even Mark, although they do not express it. In Matthew, of course, Jesus is Emmanuel, "God with us" (1:23), and he promises to stay with his disciples to the end of the age (28:20). But because he is who he is, and will be who he will be, who he *was* is important, both theologically and historically. If Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8), who he was is an essential part of who he is. We (exegetes and historians) may agree that in the Gospels there was an uncritical merging of Jesus *was-ness* with his *is-ness*, but this does not necessarily mean who Jesus was had been forgotten or deemed of no importance. When Paul speaks of Jesus' having been rich, and for our sakes becoming poor (2 Cor 8:9), or of his humbling himself and becoming obedient to death (Phil 2:8) does he not reflect knowledge of who Jesus was and what his ministry was like?

I just said "even Mark" bespeaks such an historical interest. The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ the Son of God (Mark 1:1) may be John the Baptizer, or it could be Jesus himself. In any event, the fact that Mark tells this story—what becomes the basic narrative—of Jesus' ministry must be of fundamental importance for understanding what Mark is about. The beginning of the good news is this story. Or the beginning is John the Baptizer whose activity is the first episode of this story of Jesus' ministry.

When we turn to the presumably later Gospels of Luke and John, the historical interest becomes explicit. Luke tells us several important things in his brief preface (1:1–4): First, he has had predecessors, and is not the first to write such a narrative. (We know Mark, but were there others?). Second, he himself was not an eyewitness. Third, he has conducted a thorough investigation. Fourth, and finally, this historical narrative will apparently confirm the Christian instruction that Theophilus, has received. Luke actually reinforces the view, now long held by Christians, that the historical truth of the narrative is somehow basic to its theological truth. What is implicit in Mark's and Matthew's undertaking to write a Gospel now becomes explicit. Indeed, what here becomes explicit is already implicit in Paul's "He died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3). Something happened that naturally evokes a narrative.

When one turns to the Gospel of John, the same interest appears,

if in different form. In the prologue John writes, "We have beheld his glory" (1:14), and for John the glory of Jesus is already present to the eyes of his followers in his historic ministry (cf. 2:11), even though they cannot comprehend it. Beyond that, as in Luke, the historical dimension is attested by the work or position of the author. The disciple whom Jesus loved is the one "who is testifying to these things" (or "who bears witness concerning these things") and "who has written these things" (or "who has caused these things to be written"). He represents, and testifies to, a community: "We know that his witness is true" (21:24). The Gospel then concludes with the author's, or narrator's, concession that this Gospel does not contain everything Jesus did and his rumination about how much space it would take to hold the books that would be filled if a complete account of Jesus' ministry were given (21:25). The same witness also appears earlier at the foot of the cross, to attest the piercing of Jesus' side and the efflux of water and blood (19:35). The historical interest of Luke thus finds its counterpart in John.

Both these later Gospels make this interest, and its theological importance, quite obvious. There is, nevertheless, a major difference: Luke, although confident of the accuracy of his narrative, makes clear that he himself was not an eyewitness, but rather dependent on their testimony. The Gospel of John, on the other hand, claims to be based on the eyewitness of one person in particular, the disciple whom Jesus loved: John, according to later tradition. (The Gospel itself never names this disciple; he remains anonymous.) No Gospel makes as strong or as specific a claim. Ironically, Luke, who is one or two steps removed from the eyewitness generation seems to most of us much closer to the historical figure of Jesus than the Fourth Gospel. I think that is actually the case. Jesus proclaimed God's will for human beings, spoke of the advent of the kingdom of God, taught in parables, healed the sick, cast out demons, debated with scribes and Pharisees about matters other than his role and dignity. This characterization agrees with Mark and Matthew, but not so much with John, whose portrayal of Jesus and his ministry, while embracing the broad outlines of the Markan narrative, is different in many respects, large and small. In John Jesus talks about himself: he talks Christology.

But even as John assures the reader of the sufficiency of the Gospel's witness, a different concern comes into view: not how the church can reach the Jesus of the past, but how the Jesus of the past,

and future, is, or can be, present to the church. The Fourth Evangelist ("John" for convenience's sake) surely believes Jesus is present to his church. I do not think that he believes Jesus can be produced by literary or theological sleight of hand. Still, John has a purpose and a project: to show how, despite the doubts and apprehension of his disciples, Jesus intended and accomplished his purpose of returning to his disciples after his death and departure from them.

Unlike Luke, John does not write a narrative about Jesus followed by a narrative of the church. His narrative ends with the resurrection, and also the ascension of Jesus, which coincides with his resurrection rather than following it (or concluding it) as in Luke. John's narrative, while it is about Jesus, also portrays the historical situation of his own church, which is opposed by some Jews, particularly Pharisees, who reject the claims made for Jesus. Let me give the example made famous by J. Louis Martyn.⁴

In John's depiction of the giving of sight to the man born blind (chap. 9), the Jews and Pharisees are named interchangeably as the opponents of Jesus, and particularly of the healed man, who insists on the reality of what Jesus had done for him. Meanwhile, his parents decline to answer the crucial question of the Jews for fear of being put out of the Synagogue as followers of the Christ (9:22; "the Jews" have agreed to put Christ-confessors out of the Synagogue). Martyn has convincingly argued that a piece of old Jesus' tradition, which tells of his healing of a blind man, has been developed in terms of the controversies of John's own day. Jewish opponents of the Johannine church are in effect excommunicating other Jews who believe that Jesus is the Messiah of Jewish and biblical expectation. The opponents of Jesus merge with the church's opponents, and even the figure of Jesus merges with that of the early Christian preachers. Thus Martyn speaks of two levels in the Gospel of John, that of the old tradition, putatively Jesus, and that of the Johannine church. Whether or not John has analyzed these two levels as we do, he obviously believes that the two levels of conflict and struggle are fundamentally the same. Thus rather than telling the story of Jesus and then the story of the church, as Luke does, John imposes the one upon the other. We might say that in doing so John distorts

⁴ J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (rev. ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1979) esp. 24-36.

history. If he were to think in these terms, John might, contrariwise, insist that instead history is clarified, because the two levels are two (historical) stages of the same struggle.

John does not believe that Jesus' presence in the conflicts of his followers is something he himself has accomplished simply by his literary or theological cleverness. It is a real state of affairs corresponding to the church's post-resurrection experience. Of course, prior to Jesus' death, ascension, and resurrection, the disciples could scarcely know what was in store for them, despite the fact that in the farewell discourses Jesus had already told them.

In fact, a principal question of the discourses is raised by Jesus' telling his disciples, in response to Peter's question ("Lord, where are you going?"), that he is going where Peter cannot follow until "afterward"—that is, after Jesus' own death and resurrection (13:36). But this language is enigmatic to Peter, as it will be to the disciples throughout the discourses, even when they think they understand (16:29-32). Jesus' initial statements then deal with the question of how the disciples will continue in Jesus' dwelling place with the Father (14:1-4). Not surprisingly, these words are perennial favorites at Christian funeral services, and with some reason, but they actually introduce a basic theme of the farewell discourses: Jesus' continuing presence with the disciples. Thomas plays a key role in evincing the disciples' ignorance (14:5): "How can we know the way?"⁵ Jesus then makes his famous response, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (14:6). We may read this and assume there were many ways to God the Father, and Jesus has closed the others off. Jesus and John's hearers would have assumed there was no way except the one opened by Jesus. Jesus then continues by assuring the disciples that they know the Father through knowing him, Jesus (v. 7), but their perplexity continues (vss. 8-14) as Philip asks, "Show us the Father. . . ." So Jesus eventually issues the first promise of the (another) Paraclete, translated Advocate (NRSV) or Counselor (RSV), the Spirit of truth (14:15-17).

⁵ On the positive role of Thomas in the Gospel of John, see James H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John?* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1995). In arguing that Thomas is the Beloved Disciple, he rightly emphasizes the important, and even positive, role Thomas plays in the narrative (see esp. 225-87). He also presents a valuable history of the discussion of the problem, indicating the various proposals about his identity (127-224).

Only the Gospel of John calls the Spirit of truth or Holy Spirit (14:26) the Advocate or Counselor. The Greek word is *παράκλητος* (English transliteration: Paraclete), which can be translated either way. "Lawyer" is also a possible meaning. The lawyer pleads for his client ("Advocate") or counsels his client ("Counselor"). In 1 John 2:1 Jesus himself is called our Advocate (Paraclete) with the Father. That application to Jesus is apparently in view when Jesus speaks of another Advocate, that is, the Spirit of truth. In view of the Spirit-Paraclete's actual function according to the Gospel, "Counselor" seems to me the better translation.⁶ The Spirit of truth or Holy Spirit counsels the disciples. Indeed the Spirit-Paraclete is the form of Jesus' presence with them. He speaks for Jesus and to the church.

After promising the Spirit-Paraclete,⁷ Jesus reverts to more widely known, traditional eschatological forms of speech: "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. . . ." (vss. 18, 19). Soon thereafter Judas, not Iscariot, asks Jesus how he will reveal himself to the disciples and not to the world (vs. 22). Judas' question recognizes that traditional eschatological expectation is being revised. Jesus' coming is not to be a public event. Jesus' presence with his disciples is somehow contingent on their keeping his commandments (vs. 21), his words (vs. 24), but there is more to it than that. Once again Jesus speaks of the Paraclete, now identified as the Holy Spirit, who will be the means of Jesus' active presence in the community of his disciples, teaching them "all things" and reminding them of what Jesus has said (14:25-26).

One thinks back to 2:22, after Jesus' word about his resurrection that concludes John's temple cleansing scene: "When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken" (John 2:22). Also the conclusion of the triumphal entry scene (12:12-19), with its citation of Ps 18:25-26 and Zech 9:9: "His dis-

⁶ The NRSV shows a tendency to strive for consistency in translation. Thus "Advocate" is used to translate *παράκλητος* in 1 John 2:1 and in the farewell discourses of the Gospel. But in the Gospel "Counselor" seems a better translation, because it embraces the juridical aspect of the term as well as the obvious function of the Paraclete in conveying the reality of Jesus to the disciples.

⁷ As far as I know, the apt term was introduced to prominence by George Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John*, SNTSMS, 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970) 29-39.

ciples did not understand this at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that this had been written of him and had been done to him" (John 12:16). Moreover, after Jesus' mysterious saying about thirsting and drinking (7:37-38), the evangelist comments: "Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). What is now being said in the concluding discourses has been anticipated during Jesus' public ministry. But later on, the disciples' continuing anxiety over Jesus' departure is reflected in Jesus' reassuring word: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" (John 16:7).

With Jesus' departure the disciples will be closer to, not farther from, Jesus, but they cannot yet appreciate this fact. Yet the importance of the advent of the Spirit Paraclete cannot be overstated. The Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, has a continuing revelatory, as well as a reminding and reassuring, function: ". . . he will guide you into all truth" (16:13). Obviously, he will tell the church things Jesus has not yet told the disciples: ". . . you cannot bear them now" (16:12). But these new things will not be discontinuous with Jesus: ". . . he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (vs. 14). Nevertheless, there will be further words of Jesus, which he did not utter during his historic ministry, but which will be delivered to the church through the Spirit.

When one reflects on it, this is an astounding assertion and claim. With good reason one asks how much of the Gospel of John itself is a fulfillment of this promise. What we have been reading here corresponds to the character of the Gospel of John, particularly the words ascribed to Jesus. As far as we can tell through comparison with the Synoptics, there are numerous words of Jesus in John that go back to old tradition, if not Jesus himself (e.g., 12:25-26; cf. Mark 8:34-35 *et par.* Matt 16:34 and Luke 17:33). (In many cases, however, these sayings do not seem to be derived directly from the Synoptics, although scholarly opinions differ.) On the other hand, much of what is ascribed to Jesus is unparalleled in the Synoptics, or any other Gospel we know. Moreover, most of these words, including the farewell discourses themselves, speak directly to the situation and needs of the Johannine church in the post-resurrection period. In the long run Christians generally have found in these words Jesus'

direct address to themselves. To a large extent the words of the Johannine Jesus are Spirit-inspired words, and are to be taken seriously as such. They are misconstrued if taken as self-consciously conceived means of expressing the evangelist's theology. They deserve to be taken at face value as words of the exalted Christ speaking through the Spirit.⁸

As Martyn maintained, the Spirit-Paraclete is the key to the two levels of John's witness, the once-upon-a-time (*einmalig*) and the level of the Johannine church.⁹ The Paraclete brings the two together and is the mode or means of Jesus' speaking to the church. The Paraclete warrants the claim within the church that its situation and that of Jesus are fundamentally the same. Therefore, words of Jesus spoken to his situation may now be directed to the church, and new words of Jesus may be, and are, forthcoming as new situations arise: "He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (16:14). What the Spirit declares in the name of Jesus there is the revelation of God to the church: "All that the Father has in mine. For this reason I said he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (16:15). So through the Fourth Evangelist and under the aegis of the Spirit, Jesus continues to speak. As Schweitzer concludes:

He says the same words, "Follow thou me!", and sets us to the tasks which he must fulfill in our time. He commands, and to those who obey him, whether wise or simple, he will reveal himself in the tranquility, the toils, the conflicts, which they will live through in his fellowship, and as an inexpressible mystery they will experience who he is.

⁸ This proposal is by no means new. See my own *The Theology of the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1995) 139–44. There I cite works that have been seminal for me: M. E. Boring, "The Influence of Christian Prophecy on the Johannine Portrait of the Paraclete and Jesus," *NTS* 25 (1978–79) 113–23; D. Bruce Woll, *Johannine Christianity in Conflict: Authority, Rank, and Succession in the First Farewell Discourse* (SBLDS 60; Chico: Scholars Press, 1981) 109–28; David E. Aune, "The Odes of Solomon and Early Christian Prophecy," *NTS* 28 (1982) 435–60. Earlier on I had made such a suggestion in "Johannine Christianity: Some Reflections on Its Character and Delineation," *NTS* 21 (1976) 222–48; note esp. 232–3 and 243–4. Of course, in Ernst Käsemann's famous monograph, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17*, trans. G. Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), one finds a Gospel that is not only sectarian, incipiently docetic, and fundamentally dogmatic, but also charismatic (esp. 36–8, 45–7), originating in Christian prophecy (38) and subject to the vagaries of Spirit inspiration (47). The dogma of Christ as the Word and the insistence upon following him alone, however, controls the Johannine proclamation.

⁹ Martyn, *History and Theology* 143–51, esp. 145–46.

Ironically perhaps, the same Albert Schweitzer who dismisses the Gospel of John as a historical source, here sounds quite Johannine. Perhaps it is not irony, but rather that Schweitzer, like the Fourth Evangelist, has heard Jesus speaking. No wonder then that in these almost poetic lines he falls into a rhythmic cadence, a Johannine mode of speech!

We see here the establishment of a Spiritual authority, but one that does not actualize itself in the community apart from Jesus, who in his own historical moment has been seen and heard. Jesus is the basis and criterion. Yet such spiritual authority already implies a charismatic office or prophetic ministry in the church. When we turn to the Apocalypse and the Johannine Letters we can see something of its effect.

2. *The Epistles: Finding Jesus in the Past*

When we compare the Gospel with the Epistles, there are, as interpreters have long observed, many similarities, not only in vocabulary and style, but in specifically theological language. They come from the same theological and presumably ecclesiastical circles, if not from the same author.¹⁰ True, the First Epistle lacks the same theological depth, and sharpness, that we find in the Gospel. It is sometimes perplexing, and one wonders whether the author himself was perplexed. Or, as some have seriously suggested, perhaps he had grown old and somewhat less articulate!

However that may be, and we shall not attempt to decide the question of authorship, there is a common theological ground (*Mütterboden*) on which Gospel and Epistles are based. They come from the same school or circle of churches.¹¹ Yet there are differences.

¹⁰ Thus Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (2 vols.; New York: Scribner's, 1951–55) 2.3–92, treats them together: "Whether the Epistles were written by the author of the Gospel himself or simply came out of his 'school' can here be disregarded" (3). For a good discussion of questions regarding common authorship and tradition, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (AB, 30; Garden City: Doubleday, 1982) 14–35. He concludes: "... I think it very likely but not certain that 1 John was written by one other than the evangelist" (35).

¹¹ As Bultmann already acknowledged (above, n. 10). Brown, *Epistles of John*, esp. 94–97, distinguishes the Johannine school, as the tradition bearers, from the Johannine community generally.

For one thing, the setting or situation is apparently different. The Jewish opponents of Jesus—probably also the opponents of the Johannine church—have disappeared. That is, the opponents are not—I would say no longer—"the Jews," but heretical Christians, whose confession or theology is not only inadequate but dangerous. Their heresy has to do with their view of Jesus, and this in turn is related to the somewhat different perspective on Jesus in the Epistles, particularly 1 John, as compared with that of the Gospel. In the Gospel the presence of Jesus to the church is an urgent need and, for the evangelist, a reality. In the Epistle there is a renewed emphasis on Jesus as a figure of the past. To put it another way, the problem is no longer occasioned by the absence of Jesus, but his spiritual presence, or at least what is said about him with the authorization of the Spirit.

Before turning to the Epistles, however, we should consider the Revelation to John, particularly the so-called letters to the seven churches of chapters 2–3. That the author of Revelation is the same as the evangelist or the elder of the letters (2 and 3 John) is generally, and I think correctly, denied by critical scholarship. (Interestingly, however, only in Revelation does the author call himself "John.") The differences in language, literary style, and theology are all too great. Yet there are points of similarity: for example, the emphasis on witness and witnessing (testimony and testifying); the portrayal of Christ as the Word of God (Rev 19:13); Christ's or his followers' "conquering." (Jörg Frey has not too long ago once again made the case—I think convincingly—for the Apocalypse's relation to the Johannine school.)¹² For our purposes the most significant connections are found in these letters to the seven churches of Asia.

At the outset John of Patmos sees the heavenly, exalted, Son of Man, who announces the messages to be written to each of the angels of the churches. Yet each of these messages is at the end described as "what the Spirit is saying to the churches." So these seem to be messages from Christ delivered in writing to the angels of the seven churches, who presumably deliver their respective messages to the churches themselves. The I-words throughout the letters

¹² Jörg Frey's long essay, "Erwägungen zum Verhältnis der Johannesapokalypse zu den übrigen Schriften des Corpus Johanneum," concludes (326–42) Martin Hengel's *Die johanneische Frage: Ein Lösungsversuch*, WUNT, 67 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1993).

also make it clear that these are messages of the exalted Jesus Christ himself.¹³ It is he who says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Yet the whole process is described as the Spirit's speaking to the churches. Thus the heavenly Son of Man, Christ, and the Spirit are very closely associated, if not actually identified. What is promised from the Paraclete in the Gospel seems to be fulfilled in what is now happening among the churches of Asia Minor (although the Spirit is not called *παράκλητος* in Revelation). The message is, or has become, one of ethical exhortation, encouragement, and warning. There are clear hints at the existence of doctrinal problems (e.g., "the deep things of Satan" in 2:24; cf. 2:25 and 2 John 9), but in Revelation these do not yet seem central. In 1 and 2 John, however, heresy of a christological sort is the crucial danger.

We can draw some lines of connection between the Gospel, Revelation, and the Epistles. These lines cannot be demonstrated, but they seem quite probable. So how do they connect? What picture can be drawn? First of all, in Revelation and 1 John (probably also 2 John), we see signs of Christian prophets at work—not all, however, on the right side. John of Patmos is himself such a prophet, (1:3; 22:18–19), a role that the wicked Jezebel also claims (2:20). (Perhaps it is significant that the Jezebel of Rev 2:20 styles herself a prophetess, even as she leads the church of Thyatira astray.) In the Fourth Gospel such prophets are not explicitly named, but the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, gives utterance to words of Jesus, either by way of reminder or extending into the present (and future) what Jesus said in the past or would say were he present. Such words were presumably uttered by prophets. As we have noted, such prophets are not mentioned in the Gospel, even as the Spirit-Paraclete is not mentioned in Revelation or the Epistles. Although the Spirit is not called *παράκλητος* in 1 John, the exalted Christ is (2:1): "We have an Advocate [*παράκλητος*] with the Father. . . ." Thus when the Paraclete is first mentioned in the Gospel, we hear of "another Paraclete" (or Advocate; 14:16), whom the Father will send on Jesus' petition. It may be, as we shall observe, that there are reasons why in 1 John *παράκλητος* is used only of Jesus.

¹³ On the sayings of Jesus in Revelation, see David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary 52 (Dallas: Word Books, 1997) 264–65, who cites relevant bibliography.

If in the Gospel there is no mention of Christian prophets, Jesus himself is called a prophet (4:19; 6:14). While this title may be inadequate for Johannine Christology, it is not erroneous, and the followers of Jesus recapitulate his ministry (20:21). Perhaps such Christian prophets are not yet mentioned because John presents the disciples as they were during Jesus' historic ministry. They lack post-resurrection knowledge and have not assumed the roles they will later play. Yet the role of the Christian prophet in the post-resurrection Johannine community was likely a large one. If the Spirit-Paraclete was to pronounce words of Jesus, someone must actually have done the speaking if the words were to be heard throughout the community. Probably the best evidence for the existence of such words of Jesus is the Gospel of John itself. (We have already noted such words in Revelation 1-3, and in 2 Cor 12:8-9 Paul speaks of receiving a word from the Lord.) Virtually all the words of Jesus "sound" Johannine although a number have synoptic parallels. For example 12:25 has the typical Johannine cadence and terminology: "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." Yet it has impressive synoptic parallels, not only in Mark (8:34 *et par.*), but also in Q (Matt. 10:39; Luke 17:33). It has, therefore, triple attestation. One can imagine this is a traditional saying of Jesus of which the Spirit-Paraclete has reminded the community. On the other hand, Jesus also says: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (14:6). This sounds, and is, quite Johannine and is, moreover, without significant synoptic parallels. One can imagine that this is a Spirit-inspired word originating with the post-resurrection, exalted Jesus. This sayings suits, and speaks to, the situation of the Johannine church in its conflict with the synagogue. Jesus makes sweeping revelatory and salvific claims for himself, which fit that situation. Those who reject Jesus (i.e., the Johannine community's proclamation of Jesus) cut themselves off from God.

Such sayings have often been regarded as theological, literary creations of the evangelist, or his community/church. Perhaps one can too easily imagine the learned theologian sitting at his desk with other Gospels, documents, or fragments of tradition before him, which he regards as inadequate. So he shapes them to suit his needs or creates sayings that will make the theological points that need making. All the time he is thinking: "If I put them on the lips of Jesus everybody will have to acknowledge them." Then they will be

authoritative. Possibly, but such a scenario is as improbable in antiquity as it would seem to be today. Are not these words of Jesus more intelligible as Spirit-inspired prophetic words delivered with self-authenticating authority and power, probably within a church whose worship was charismatic?

The portrayal of Jesus promising to send the Spirit-Paraclete also forms an intelligible background for what we read about the work of prophets inspired by the Spirit in Revelation and the Epistles of John. Is the Gospel of John therefore earlier than Revelation and the Epistles? I think so, at least in the case of the Epistles, which seem to presuppose something very much like the Gospel, although they do not quote it.¹⁴ As for Revelation, I do not know. Although ancient tradition puts it late in the first century, in the period of the Emperor Domitian, this is less than certain. It could be earlier, and also earlier than the Gospel of John.¹⁵ Certainly its futuristic eschatology suggests a time earlier than the Gospel, reflecting an urgent apocalyptic expectancy (e.g., 22:20) that the Gospel modifies or corrects (cf. John 11:25; 14:22; as well as 21:23).

In the farewell discourses of the Gospel Jesus speaks to disciples who cannot yet understand him because they have not yet attained the post-resurrection, eschatological knowledge they will have when Jesus is glorified and they have received the Spirit (7:39). Thus Jesus says things that he understands and the reader who is a Johannine "insider" can understand. But the disciples are not yet in a position to understand. One might say that John has created a literary fiction in the sense that he has portrayed the disciples as they would have been before the glorification of Jesus and Jesus as he was after his glorification. (Actually this is an example of the two levels in John.)

¹⁴ On the priority of the Gospel of John over the Epistles, see Brown, *Epistles of John*, 32-35, whose summation (34-35) I find persuasive. Nevertheless, some commentators before and after Brown are not convinced, most notably recently Georg Strecker, *The Johannine Letters*, trans. Linda M. Mahoney and ed. Harold Attridge, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) xxxv-xlii, 4, and *passim*.

¹⁵ Aune, *Revelation*, lvi-lxx, shows that the evidence for dating Revelation is mixed, and that while the final edition appeared at the end of the first century (Trajan), there was likely an earlier edition to be dated in the 60s, if not earlier. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), conjectures that the Apocalypse has quite ancient roots that go back to the Son of Thunder, i.e., John the Son of Zebedee (Mark 3:17), who may have himself composed apocalyptic works (133-34; also cf. 62).

In the Apocalypse of John, however, we see the process the Gospel presumes as future actually at work. That is, Jesus and the disciples are in the same time-frame. The exalted Christ speaks words to the churches that are delivered by the Spirit with the help of the prophet who writes these things down. The work of the Spirit is then a factor of fundamental importance holding the Johannine books together. Yet the Gospel, Epistles, and Revelation represent different perspectives, problems and issues.

In the Apocalypse the Spirit is not named the Paraclete, but appears to fulfill the function or role of delivering words of Jesus. In the Epistles also the Spirit-Paraclete is not mentioned and neither is anything said about such a role. Jesus himself is the Paraclete or Advocate. In fact, the Spirit plays a somewhat different role in the Epistles, although the doctrine or concept is there (see 1 John 3:24, 4:13), doubtless corresponding to the experienced reality of the community. Probably the anointing that teaches and provides knowledge is the Holy Spirit (2:20, 27).¹⁶

In the First Epistle the abiding of Jesus with believers is contingent upon their obeying his commandments (1 John 3:23), as in the Gospel (e.g., John 14:13-21). The Spirit is then the source, or channel, of the believer's assurance (3:24). So 1 John clearly knows the Gospel or at least its substantive theological content with respect to the Spirit. This knowledge is certainly present, and its importance not denied. Yet the principle and practice of spiritual authority has led to a problem, which is articulated in 1 John 4:1-6. Before getting into that, however, it is important to note that the discussion of the problem that has arisen is framed within an acknowledgement of the work of the Spirit, called in the Fourth Gospel the Paraclete, of course.

Whether or not 1 John knows the Gospel in its present, canonical form, a similar concept of the work of the Spirit is assumed, and this seems to be the basis of the warning given in 4:1-6. The situation addressed here is clear enough. First, the false prophets who have gone into the world are mentioned (4:1). Apparently they utter words that they claim to be Spirit-inspired, but in the author's view only those who confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh are inspired

¹⁶ After a finely nuanced discussion, Brown (*Epistles of John* 342-48) concludes that "it is likely that the author was referring to an anointing with the Holy Spirit, the gift from Christ which constituted one as a Christian" (348).

by the Spirit of God (vs. 2). Those who do not make this confession are not of God (vs. 3). Rather, they give utterance to the spirit of the antichrist (vs. 3) and of error (vs. 6). How does one distinguish? By their doctrinal content, of course.¹⁷ The false prophets who are inspired by the spirit of the antichrist or of error apparently do not confess that Jesus is come in the flesh (vs. 2). Thus they do not confess Jesus (vs. 3). There is an alternative (vs. 3) reading: "does away with Jesus" or "dissolves Jesus" (λύει), which is attractive, since it implies the docetism that is evidently the issue here, but is not strongly attested and is probably not original.¹⁸

In 2 John also the same christological issue is raised and here the denial that Jesus has come in the flesh is, explicitly said to be the work of deceivers who have gone out into the world (vs. 7). Such a person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Whether 1 John or 2 John is the earlier, the setting or problem situation seems on the face of it to be the same.

Despite the fact that the term antichrist (ἀντιχριστός) is often used to designate the manifestation of the traditional eschatological enemy of God and the Messiah, it actually occurs only in these two Johannine letters in the New Testament, and aside from the passages just noted, only in 1 John 2:18 and 22.¹⁹ In 1 John 2:18-27 his role as the eschatological enemy is made clear. The antichrist is the one who denies Jesus as the Christ (2:22). It does not say "denies Jesus has come in the flesh," although that is probably meant (as in 2 John 7). Jews, indeed, everyone except the early Christians denied that Jesus was the Christ—if they thought about the matter at all. A specific confession, or lack of confession, by a specific person or party is apparently in view. The emphasis falls on Jesus rather than Christ: "... that Jesus is the Christ."

That such a denial of the fleshliness, and therefore the humanity, of Jesus is in view is supported by the prologue of 1 John, which is

¹⁷ On the problem of spiritual authority in the early church see also 1 Cor 15:3 and *Did.* 11:7, as well as 1 Thess 5:19-21.

¹⁸ Although Brown argues for its originality (*Epistles of John*, 494-96), and thus agrees with Bultmann and Schnackenburg, most recently Strecker (*Johannine Letters*, 136) rejects it: "It may have entered the text rather late, under the influence of the christological conflicts." He cites also the article of Bart Ehrman, "1 John 4:3 and the Orthodox Corruption of Scripture," *JNW* 79 (1988) 221-43.

¹⁹ For the traditional eschatological enemy, see 2 Thess 2:3-4; Mark 13:5-6, 21-22; Rev 20:7-10. Many other examples could be cited. Apparently, the term Antichrist appears only in Christian literature in antiquity.

obviously modeled on the prologue found in the Gospel.²⁰ As is now commonly observed, "the beginning" (ἀρχή, 1:1) is no longer the primordial beginning, but as is immediately evident, the beginning of the Christian tradition, namely, Jesus. Clearly 1 John echoes the Gospel as the Gospel echoes Genesis, but the narrowing down upon Jesus is evident, particularly if this statement is to be understood in light of 4:2-3 and 2 John 7, as it should be. (This interpretation may be circular, but sometimes circularity makes for good interpretation rather than bad.) "What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands" is not a pre-existent word, or even the word of historical revelation in general, but the word made flesh (John 1:14). What is next said about the life which was with the Father being revealed (vs. 2) alludes to the Gospel's prologue; but then to have seen and born witness points to the historic manifestations of Jesus, as does the subsequent reference in v. 3 to having seen and heard.

As the letter takes an ethical turn the meaning of this beginning in the prologue becomes even clearer (2:3): "Now by this we may be sure that we know him [Jesus] if we obey his commandments." Again, the indissoluble connection of knowledge of Jesus and obedience to him echoes the farewell discourses of the Gospel (14:18-24). Then there is a specific reference to Jesus' commandment that differs strikingly from the Gospel's: "Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard" (1 John 2:7 RSV). Yet this "old commandment" is also new (1 John 2:8 RSV): "Yet I am writing you a new commandment, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining." The author plays upon "old and new," because he and his readers clearly know the new commandment found in the Fourth Gospel (13:34; 15:12). But it has now become important to say first of all that it is old. Why?

Because it comes from Jesus himself. "Whoever says, 'I abide in him,' ought to walk just as he walked" (2:6), that is, "in his steps" (cf. 1 Pet 2:21). The old commandment is the one the followers of Jesus have had from the beginning (ἀρχή again), which they have

heard (1 John 2:7). The commandment is of course to love one another (3:11): "For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." This summation picks up on the initial statement of 1:5: "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all." Walking in the light is walking as Jesus walked (2:6), following his example, as well as obeying the command of love: "We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another" (1 John 3:16; cf. John 15:12). Not to follow Jesus' command is to walk in darkness (1:6), no matter what one may say or claim (2:9-10): "Whoever says, 'I am in the light,' while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness. Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light. . . ." Jesus' commandment is "that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us" (3:23). In this last statement the subject is really God, but the command clearly comes from Jesus, so closely do God and Jesus coincide—in the Epistle even more than in the Gospel. (No wonder commentators cannot agree on whether the antecedent of a pronoun in 1 John is Jesus or God!)²¹ At this point (3: 24) the Spirit is mentioned as the one who assures believers of their abiding—in Christ and God. Then follows the warning we have just dealt with about false prophets and the spirit of error (4:1-6).

Later there is a second affirmation of the work of the Spirit (4:13)—"By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit." These positive Spirit words frame the warnings about false prophets and their claims. But finally, John returns to the historical Jesus.

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. (1 John 4:14-15 RSV)

Note the emphasis on having seen and testifying. One could say instead of "testify," "bear witness." I like "bear witness," for it implies in English, as it seems to have in Greek, that one sees and reports

²⁰ Brown argues that the Epistle's prologue is not only modeled on the Gospel's, but would scarcely be intelligible apart from it (*Epistles of John* 176-80).

²¹ Brown's discussions are precise and finely nuanced, as he repeatedly attempts to determine with precision what the antecedent in any given case may be (cf. on 3:23-24 p. 464) and maintains that "regularly 1 John attributes commandments to God." Strecker (*Johannine Letters* 127) sees, I think correctly, that precision is scarcely to be attained.

on what one has seen. Thus in the RSV of John 1:34, John (the Baptist) says, "And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." Or even in the prologue (1:8): "He was not the light but came to bear witness (NRSV "testify to") the light." Again in 3:11: "Truly, truly I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen. . . ." (RSV). In 1 John the apostolic seeing and testifying means reporting on what one has seen.

Perhaps it has now become evident why the Spirit is not called *παράκλητος*, the Paraclete, in 1 John. That title is reserved for Jesus, the exalted Jesus who pleads to the Father (2:1). He is the Jesus of the past, who has been seen, and of the present, but now he is with the Father. (The same construction, *πρός* with the accusative, is used in 1 John 2:1 and John 1:2: "The Word was with God.") The idea of advocacy is clearly present, but place is also important, as in the Gospel. Jesus Christ the righteous is still with the Father. What he did and said and continues to do are of utmost relevance. But what he had to say to the church he has already said to his disciples. It is essential that he be remembered and obeyed and that his reality and word not be distorted. Thus the author of 1 John declines to bestow the title of Paraclete (Counselor or Advocate) upon the Spirit, or anyone else. (The Evangelist of course knows that Jesus was the original Paraclete, for he introduces the Spirit of truth as another Paraclete.)

In this connection, we should observe that 1 John does not quite close the circle we have attempted to draw here. Nowhere in 1 John (or in the Johannine Epistles) is it said that the prophets in question give utterance to words of Jesus himself. Obviously, the prophets who do not confess that Jesus has come in the flesh (1 John 4:3; 2 John 7) claim the authority of the Spirit, and therefore of God, and presumably of Jesus Christ. If we are on target so far, there is a common charismatic milieu and dimension of the Gospel, Revelation, and Epistles of John. But only in the Gospel and Revelation is Jesus himself represented as speaking through the Spirit. This is promised in the Gospel and attested in Revelation, but missing in the Epistle(s). I do not know why it is missing in the Epistles, particularly 1 John, but one can make an educated guess.

Possibly the epistolary author simply does not know, or know of, such Spirit-conveyed words of Jesus. Yet if they are charismatic phenomena characteristic of the Johannine community, this would seem unlikely. Probably he was familiar with the Spirit-inspired utterance

of such words. Why then would he not mention them? Although they were a part of his community's worship and practice, he sees a danger inherent in them. Rather than denounce the practice itself, he denounces the false doctrine that has been produced. At the same time he also withholds the title Paraclete from the Spirit, reserving it for Jesus, who *is* our Advocate *with* the Father and *was* present with us. The effect would have been to put the brakes on such Spirit-inspired production of words of Jesus, which nevertheless belonged to the history, tradition, and practice of his community, on which his own theological understanding was based. Thus it became important for him to reiterate that Jesus' command, to love one another, was old, as well as new. That is, it goes back to the earthly Jesus and was delivered during his historic ministry.

John's quest for Jesus has a dual focus, the present and the past. In the Gospel emphasis lies on the present, that is, the presence of Jesus in the church. In the Epistles, especially 1 John, emphasis returns to the past. In the Gospel there is ample evidence that the presence of Jesus is regarded as an extension of his past historical reality. John takes seriously the factuality of Jesus and the trustworthiness of the witness on which the Gospel is based. The question is how does the past reality of Jesus, and the witness to him, extend into the future and thus into the church's present. What are the limitations? Are there criteria? There must be. In 1 John doctrine becomes an essential criterion or test of whether Jesus, or the Spirit of truth, is speaking.²² This is put succinctly in 1 John 3:23: "And this is his commandment, that he should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he commanded us." Thus for 1 John particularly, while faith is believing in—trusting—there is also an irreducible kernel of believing that. There is a givenness of revelation that follows from its historical character. Who Jesus is cannot be separable from who Jesus was, even as who he was can never be isolated from who he is to the believer, and even to the historian. John seems to know this. Moreover, believing, to be meaningful, is inseparable from obeying.

There is then a real and significant sense in which the Epistles, particularly 1 and 2 John, emphasize the continuing necessity of

²² Strecker has a most helpful discussion of the docetist heresy against which 1 John apparently struggles (*Johannine Epistles* 69–76), although he is unwilling to see in 1 John an "early Catholicism" that has equated truth with dogma (244–49).

turning again and again to the past, to what was, from the beginning, namely Jesus, in order to understand Christian revelation. To understand is then to obey: to obey Jesus and in doing so to obey God.

We began thinking about the so-called quest of the historical Jesus, a modern undertaking, but one that finds some ancient precedent. Such quests, whether ancient or modern, are seldom, if ever, without some agenda, often theological. Perhaps the Fourth Gospel's approach to Jesus is too self-assured—or Spirit-assured—to best be described as a quest. Moreover, the Fourth Evangelist claims to have a witness, or to be a witness worthy of great confidence. It is of course of fundamental importance to him that the word became flesh and dwelt among us (1:14 RSV).²³ Yet for John the pressing issue is how the pre-existent and glorified, exalted Jesus imposes himself on the present, on us. Fundamentally, the answer is given in the coming of the Spirit-Paraclete, as we have seen. This John presses Jesus into the present and (from Jesus' perspective) the future.

If 1 John is later than the Gospel, as I, along with many commentators, suspect, its author seems deliberately to ignore this process. The Jesus who is, and will be, is still subject to the Jesus who was. The Evangelist would not, of course, have denied the was-ness of Jesus, but his interest was shifting forward. The epistolary author, however, wants to emphasize the continuing and normative function of who Jesus was. Thus the new commandment is also the old commandment which the disciples, the church, have had from the beginning (1 John 2:7–8).

There has been in the history of Christianity, as already in the New Testament, a predisposition to look back, to the beginning, for criteria and norms. "The old is better," says Jesus in Luke 5:39 according to some MSS. Probably that is not the original reading, but it reflects a classic Christian theological disposition. Finally Jesus

²³ To what extent is John 1:14 to be seen against the background of docetic denial of Jesus' humanity, and therefore 1 John's explicit antidocetism? In his famous monograph, Käsemann rejected traditional concepts of incarnation, including Bultmann's, as inappropriate to the Fourth Gospel (Käsemann, *Testament of Jesus*, 9–12, *et passim*) and described the Gospel as "naively docetic" (26, 66, 70). On this whole problem see Marianne Meye Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), republished as *The Incarnate Word* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993). The historical interest and validity of the Fourth Gospel are reconsidered in D. Moody Smith, *John among the Gospels*, rev. ed. (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2001) 195–241, "John, an Independent Gospel."

is the norm against which what follows—even the claim to speak in Jesus' name—must be judged. Getting back to Jesus is not as easy an undertaking as one might think, or hope. More than two centuries of Jesus research have taught us that. But the impulse to turn back toward Jesus is a very ancient one, one that is reflected in the Johannine literature. While the Gospel sees Jesus in the present, and the Apocalypse sees him in the future as well, 1 John insists on his pastness. The quest of the historical Jesus—or should I say the original Jesus?—has an obvious New Testament basis.

Obviously this fact does not warrant everything that has happened under the aegis of "the Quest" or of "Jesus research." It does, however, make it understandable theologically. And it shouldn't surprise us that we can detect theological agendas at work. I suppose no "purely historical" quest will be willing to admit to such a theological agenda. On the other hand, no Christology can dispense with any or all historical agendas. Faith in Jesus looks to the past, as well as the present and future.

In his significant work on the Johannine literature Peder Borgen has often illumined these texts by looking outward, to their broader cultural and religious milieux, an essential historical task. In this essay in his honor, I have looked inward, to inner-Johannine relationships, a task that is also historical, and hopefully will also be useful to exegetes, as Peder's work continues to be.²⁴

²⁴ This article, in slightly expanded form, was delivered as the Kenneth W. Clark Lectures in Duke Divinity School, March 5 and 6, 2002.