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John and the Synoptics

A cursory reading of the Gospels reveals that very few episodes in John occur in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Characters and events common to all four include John the Baptist, Jesus feeding the five thousand, a woman anointing Jesus with oil, and the passion narrative. Even when John narrates parallel stories, however, many of the details differ. For example, the Fourth Gospel never says that Jesus was baptized, and Jesus does not institute the Eucharist at the Last Supper. Moreover, in John's gospel, Jesus never teaches in parables or performs exorcisms; such words and deeds are commonplace in the Synoptics. Finally, in terms of time and space, John narrates multiple trips back and forth between Galilee and Jerusalem over a two-year period (there are three Passovers in the Fourth Gospel), whereas the Synoptics mention only one trip to Jerusalem for a single celebration of Passover, coinciding with the passion. Readers have observed all of these differences since the second century, and scholars have imagined wide-ranging possibilities concerning John's knowledge, use, and opinion of the Synoptics. This chapter sketches the history of these investigations.¹

1. This *Forschungsbericht* is intended to be representative rather than exhaustive; for a much more

The First Seventeen Hundred Years

In the mid-second century, Tatian constructed a harmony of the four gospels called the *Diatessaron*. Thanks to Louis Leloir's painstaking numbering, we can observe Tatian's process of incorporating Johannine narratives.² The *Diatessaron* opened with a quotation from John's prologue (§1) before turning to Matthew's and Luke's nativity stories. After relating Jesus' baptism and temptation, Tatian included the wedding at Cana in John 2 (§12). Tatian later harmonized the feeding of the 5000 in John 6 with synoptic accounts (§34), Matthew's in particular. Thereafter, Tatian worked back to Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4 (§37). Tatian also included the Sabbath controversy in John 5 (§39) as well as Jesus' celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles in John 7 (§47). Tatian later presented Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus in John 3 (§56), which—along with the remainder of the Fourth Gospel—Tatian relocated to passion week. Throughout the passion narrative, Tatian harmonized John and the Synoptics; for example, at the crucifixion (§73) Jesus said not only "Father forgive them" (Luke 23:34) but also "Woman, behold your son" (John 19:26). The *Diatessaron* included only one Passover, and so Jesus' ministry would have comprised less than one calendar year. Overall, Tatian recognized extensive disagreements among the Gospels, and he resolved them of contradiction by rewriting one harmonious narrative. The *Diatessaron* gained wide popularity and was most likely the earliest form of the gospels in the Syrian church, given the name *Mepharreshe* for the "separate" old Syriac translations of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130–c. 200) is the earliest extant author to list the names of the evangelists as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and Irenaeus considered John one of Jesus' disciples (*Haer.* 3.11.1). Irenaeus

extensive review of modern scholarship, I heartily recommend D. Moody Smith, *John among the Gospels* (2d ed.; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001).

2. Louis Leloir, "Le Diatessaron de Tatien," *OrSyr* 1 (1956): 208–31, 313–34. For a *Forschungsbericht* on *Diatessaron* studies, see William L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 25; Leiden: Brill, 1994); see pp. 314–18 for Petersen's description of Leloir's "unrivaled" contribution.

was also the first Christian to insist that the Church use all four of these gospels—no more, no less. Irenaeus argued that just as there are four zones and four winds in the earth, so there are four gospels as pillars of the church (*Haer.* 3.11.8). He did not explicitly acknowledge the differences between John and the Synoptics, yet his argument would disallow Tatian's harmony, which would destroy the fourfold form of the gospel (*Haer.* 3.11.9). Roughly contemporaneous with Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215)—in a famous one-liner recorded by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7)—described John's gospel as spiritual (πνευματικόν) and the Synoptics as corporeal (τὰ σωματικά).

Origen (c. 185–c. 254), Clement's successor at the Catechetical School in Alexandria, most significantly advanced the early study of John's relation to the Synoptics. Origen's *Commentary on John* honestly assessed the disagreements among the gospels: "If someone carefully examined the Gospels with regard to the historical disharmony that each one shows . . . , then the person would surely become dizzy from trying to confirm the Gospels as true" (*Comm. Jo.* 10.3). Accordingly, Origen argued that the four canonical gospels cannot always be true in a historical sense; instead they must be true in a spiritual sense. Origen concluded:

I do not condemn . . . (the four evangelists) for how they alter in different ways what happened historically—these differences being useful for some mystical objective. So they refer to what happened in one place as happening in another, or something at this time as happening at another, and something announced in such-and-such a way has been reproduced with some alteration. For the Gospels set out to tell the truth spiritually and corporeally [that is, literally] at the same time, where it was possible; but where it was not possible to do both, they prefer the spiritual to the corporeal—often preserving the spiritual truth in a lie, so to speak. (*Comm. Jo.* 10.5)

Origen did not deny the gospels' literal discrepancies, which he knew could cause some readers to deem the gospels false or unreliable or uninspired (*Comm. Jo.* 10.3). Origen attempted to defend the inspiration, reliability, and veracity of the gospels by privileging spiritual truth over historical truth.

The Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry (c. 232–c. 303) read the four gospels, noticed their differences, and reached the opposite of Origen's conclusion.³ Porphyry did not distinguish between two kinds of truth, and if the gospels contradicted each other anywhere, then they were unreliable everywhere. For example, during the crucifixion Jesus uttered the cry of dereliction according to Matthew (27:46) and Mark (15:34); Jesus commended his spirit to the Father according to Luke (23:46); and Jesus said "it is finished" according to John (19:30). Porphyry suggested that these discordant (ἀσύμφωνος) accounts reflected either the deaths of several men or the death of one man that was inaccurately recorded by several people (*apocr.* 2.12). According to Porphyry, inconsistencies about Jesus' death cast doubt on everything else written in the Gospels. Porphyry wrote during a century of empire-wide persecution of Christians, and he was a towering intellectual in his epoch. Subsequent Christians could not ignore such thoroughgoing polemic.

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–340) was not only the first to respond to Porphyry but also the first to assert that John wrote his gospel after having read the Synoptics.⁴

So then, first let it be agreed: the Gospel according to (John) has been read in all the churches under heaven. For indeed, let it be clear in this way that it was truly reasonable to the ancients that it be counted in fourth position relative to the other three. The previously written three had already been distributed unto everyone, even to (John). He accepted the three, they say, and testified to the truth in them. The only thing lacking in the previous writing was the narrative about what had been done in the earliest times and at the beginning of the preaching by Christ. And indeed the word is true. (*Hist. eccl.* 3.24.2)

Eusebius also said that the Synoptics mainly recorded "what had been done by the Savior after the confinement of John the Baptist in prison"

3. I consider Porphyry the most likely polemicist in Macarius Magnes's *Apocriticus*; for discussion, see Pieter W. van der Horst, "Macarius Magnes and the Unnamed Anti-Christian Polemicist: A Review Article," in *Jews and Christians in Their Graeco-Roman Context: Selected Essays on Early Judaism, Samaritanism, Hellenism, and Christianity* (WUNT 196; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 181–89.

4. T. Scott Manor ("Papias, Origen, and Eusebius: The Criticisms and Defense of the Gospel of John," *VC* 67, no. 1 [2013]: 1–21) has argued persuasively that Eusebius, in opposition to Origen, most likely inserted the testimony about John receiving and approving the Synoptics.

(*Hist. eccl.* 3.24.8), whereas John wrote “what also had been done by the Savior throughout the time passed over in silence by the earlier evangelists” (*Hist. eccl.* 3.24.11); Eusebius added that “to those who understand this, the Gospels no longer seem to disagree with one another” (*Hist. eccl.* 3.24.13). However, Origen had already shown the inadequacy of this argument (*Comm. Jo.* 10.3). John’s gospel clearly states that John the Baptist identified Jesus as the lamb of God on two consecutive days in Bethany (1:29, 35–36), that the next day Jesus returned to Galilee (1:43), and that three days later Jesus attended the wedding at Cana (2:1). These six days in no way allow for the forty-day temptation, which Mark (1:12) says immediately followed Jesus’ baptism. Eusebius’s conclusion was far too simplistic to refute Porphyry’s criticisms.

A century after Porphyry had died, his polemic still necessitated the extensive treatise by Augustine (354–430), *On the Harmony of the Gospels*. Augustine attempted to prove that the gospels do not contradict each other, because his unnamed adversaries had denied the accuracy of the four gospels. Consequently, some people decided not to become believers, and some believers doubted their faith (*Cons.* 1.10). Augustine assumed that John knew all three written Synoptics (*Cons.* 1.4), yet Augustine recognized how little material the Fourth Gospel had in common with the Synoptics; he listed the testimony of John the Baptist, the feeding of the 5000 and walking on the Sea of Tiberias, the anointing at Bethany, and the passion (*Cons.* 4.19). On these occasions, Augustine referred to John as coming back down to earth to join Matthew, Mark, and Luke (*Cons.* 4.15), for John had left the synoptists on the earth and peered into heaven to depict Jesus’ divinity (*Cons.* 1.7).

Augustine readily acknowledged John’s differences. For example, in the Synoptics, Simon of Cyrene carried Jesus’ cross, and in John’s gospel Jesus carries the cross himself. Augustine nonetheless believed both accounts to be historically accurate: Jesus carried the cross initially, but along the way Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry it (*Cons.* 3.10). Similarly, since John places the temple incident at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry and the Synoptics narrate it in the course

of passion week, Augustine concluded that Jesus must have disrupted the temple on two separate occasions (*Cons.* 2.129).⁵ In contrast with Origen, then, Augustine insisted on the historical and literal truth of all four gospels despite their discrepancies. According to Augustine, the gospels did not contain any real contradictions, and so—*contra* Porphyry—all four provided reliable histories.

For the most part, one or another patristic testimony would be employed down to the eighteenth century. Augustine's philosophical characterization was that the Synoptics appeal to the mind's active virtue, whereas John appeals to the contemplative (*Cons.* 1.8; 4.20); Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) quoted Augustine's active/contemplative distinction in the prologue to his commentary on John. Augustine also described the Gospel of John as loftier than the Synoptics (*Cons.* 4.19), and Martin Luther (1483–1546) once wrote that "John's Gospel is the one, fine, true, and chief gospel, and is far, far to be preferred over the other three and placed high above them."⁶ In the preface to his commentary on the Gospel of John, John Calvin (1509–1564) echoed Clement of Alexandria in saying that the Synoptics show Christ's body while John shows his soul. In the mid-eighteenth century, Henry Owen accepted Eusebius's testimony that John, son of Zebedee, had read all three Synoptics and intended to supplement them.⁷ Although these writers were aware of John's many differences from the Synoptics, these scholars rested on centuries of tradition asserting the non-contradiction of the gospels.

Deism challenged traditional assumptions. Peter Annet (1693–1769) paid especially close attention to the gospels' discrepancies.⁸ For example, according to Mark (15:47; 16:1) and Luke (23:55; 24:1), Mary Magdalene and at least one other woman saw where Jesus was buried

5. In less significant chronological discrepancies (e.g., when precisely Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law), Augustine suggested that the evangelists narrated events in the order they recollected them (*Cons.* 2.51).

6. E. Theodore Bachmann, ed., *Luther's Works*, Vol. 35: *Word and Sacrament I* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1960), 362.

7. Henry Owen, *Observations on the Four Gospels: Tending Chiefly to Ascertain the Times of Their Publication and to Illustrate the Form and Manner of Their Composition* (London: T. Payne, 1764), 107.

8. For discussion of Annet, see William Baird, *History of New Testament Research*, Vol. 1: *From Deism to Tübingen* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 49–52.

on Friday, and on Sunday the women returned to anoint Jesus' corpse with spices. However, John (19:39) says that Jesus had already been buried with a hundred pounds of spices—something the women would have known if they had actually seen him buried. According to Annet, John contradicts the Synoptics here, and their respective accounts cannot be reconciled.⁹ Annet further concluded that the Gospels defy harmonization:

For the witnesses, as they are called, do not all agree, in any one circumstance which they relate concerning it; but palpably contradict one another in every particular they give us of it. I wonder what harmony all the evangelists would make . . . compared with one another, seeing the four we have are so harmonious!¹⁰

Like Origin, Annet honestly assessed the gospels' contradictions. Unlike Origin, Annet assumed no spiritual truth to contemplate in historical falsehood.

The Last Two Hundred Years

Deism stimulated the development of the historical-critical method, and source-critical study of the gospels became much more rigorous as scholars proposed new models of literary dependence and raised new questions concerning oral tradition. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a new consensus began to emerge: John knew Mark and Luke, but not Matthew. Ferdinand Christian Baur (1847) concluded that John had a literary connection to Mark and Luke, whereas John's Matthean parallels derived from oral tradition.¹¹ Similarly, Theodor Zahn (1909) determined that John was acquainted "especially with Mark, apparently also with Luke."¹² Benjamin Bacon (1910) held that

9. Peter Annet, *The Resurrection of Jesus Considered: In Answer to the Trial of the Witnesses* (London: 1744), 35; moreover, according to Annet, the repeated attempts to anoint Jesus' corpse shows that no one expected Jesus to rise from the dead, thereby implying that Jesus never predicted his resurrection.

10. *Ibid.*, 69.

11. Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Kritische Untersuchungen über die kanonischen Evangelien: ihr Verhältniß zu einander, ihren Charakter und Ursprung* (Tübingen, 1847), 280; see 239–80, *Das Verhältniß zu den synoptischen Evangelien*.

12. Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. M. W. Jacobus, et al. (3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1909) 3:254–98, ch. 67: "The Relation of the Fourth Gospel to the Earlier Gospels"; the German edition was published 1897–99.

John based his gospel on Mark while also using Luke a great deal; in John, "Matthew is practically ignored."¹³ B. H. Streeter (1925) demonstrated John's use of Mark and Luke, but Streeter found no conclusive evidence that John used Matthew.¹⁴

Against this backdrop, Hans Windisch (1926) reasserted John's use of all three Synoptic Gospels.¹⁵ However, Windisch was more concerned with authorial intent than literary dependence. In other words, he questioned what John really thought of the Synoptics. Windisch offered a taxonomy of four answers to this question, and he concluded that John had wanted to supplant the Synoptics altogether. (1) According to the supplemental theory (*Ergänzungstheorie*), John wrote to fill in the gaps of the Synoptics, and John sometimes overlapped with, and corrected, synoptic narratives; since the patristic era, this had been the predominant explanation of John's motivation. (2) According to the independence theory (*Unabhängigkeitstheorie*), John's gospel preserved accurate, eyewitness testimony without having read the Synoptics; this hypothesis placed more emphasis on John's differences, yet it maintained a theologically conservative position regarding the gospels' historical reliability. (3) According to the interpretation theory (*Interpretationstheorie*), also known as the surpassing theory (*Überbietungstheorie*), John offered a deeper theological meaning than is found in the Synoptics; this hypothesis is associated with the Tübingen School, which regarded John as a "higher synthesis."¹⁶ (4) Windisch argued for the replacement hypothesis (*Verdrängungshypothese*), which he also referred to as substitution (*Ersatzhypothese*) and elimination (*Beseitigungshypothese*); he concluded

13. Benjamin W. Bacon, *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate: A Series of Essays on Problems concerning the Origin and Value of the Anonymous Writings attributed to the Apostle John* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1910), 368; see 356–84, ch. 14: Johannine Treatment of Synoptic Material. See also idem, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1900), 264, regarding John and the Synoptics on the feeding of the five thousand: "The relation of our Gospel to (Matthew?), Mark, and Luke could hardly receive more convincing illustration."

14. Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins: Treating of the Manuscript Tradition, Sources, Authorship, & Dates* (London: Macmillan, 1925), 393–426, ch. 14: "The Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics."

15. Hans Windisch, *Johannes und die Synoptiker: wollte der vierte Evangelist die Älteren Evangelien ergänzen oder ersetzen?* (UNT 12; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1926), 42–54; for a highly commendable discussion of Windisch's work, see Smith, *John among the Gospels*, 19–43.

16. Windisch, *Johannes und die Synoptiker*, 24.

that “John adhered to the one gospel principle, and *his* gospel should have been *the* gospel.”¹⁷ Windisch agreed with centuries of scholars who thought that John had read all three Synoptics, but Windisch strongly disagreed with the longstanding assumption of the Fourth Gospel’s compatibility with its predecessors.

Windisch’s solution did not gain wide acceptance, because New Testament scholarship took a sharp turn: oral tradition soon took precedence over literary dependence. If John had heard general Synoptic tradition rather than having read particular Synoptic Gospels, then John could not have attempted to eliminate Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Percival Gardner-Smith’s 100-page *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (1938) marks this “turn of the tide.”¹⁸ Gardner-Smith returned to the “more cautious” and practically unanimous opinion that John had used Mark and Luke.¹⁹ Yet Gardner-Smith found this view unconvincing, resting on two main problems: previous studies had not given nearly enough attention to the role of oral tradition in the first century; neither had they adequately explained John’s differences from the Synoptics.²⁰

Gardner-Smith succeeded in raising doubts about literary dependence, thereby shifting the burden of proof—even in cases of very close parallels. For example, when a woman anoints Jesus according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, she uses an alabaster container of ointment; in Mark and John, it is “expensive, genuine nard ointment” costing “three hundred denarii,” and to the woman’s detractors Jesus says that “the poor, you (always) have with you, but me you do not always have” (Matt. 26:11; Mark 14:7; John 12:8).²¹

17. *Ibid.*, 132.

18. Percival Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938; repr. 2011). The “turn of the tide” statement vis-à-vis Gardner-Smith comes from C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 8 n. 2; for a careful reception history of Gardner-Smith’s book, see Jos Verheyden, “P. Gardner-Smith and ‘The Turn of the Tide,’” in *John and the Synoptics*, ed. Adelbert Denaux (BETL 101; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 423–52.

19. Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels*, vii.

20. *Ibid.*, x–xi.

21. ἀλάβαστρον μύρου (Matt. 26:7; Mark 14:3; Luke 7:37); μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς πολυτελοῦς/πολυτίμου (Mark 14:3; John 12:3); θηναρίων τριακοσίων/τριακοσίων θηναρίων (Mark 14:5; John 12:5); γὰρ τοὺς πτωχοὺς . . . ἔχετε μεθ’ ἑαυτῶν . . . ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ πάντοτε ἔχετε (Matt. 26:11; Mark 14:7; John 12:8); John

Despite verbatim agreement of seventeen Greek words between Mark and John, Gardner-Smith asserted, "All these . . . are of a kind very easily remembered, striking in character, and therefore likely to become stereotyped in oral tradition."²² Ironically, then, some of the strongest evidence for John's literary dependence on the Synoptics could be claimed just as easily in support of oral tradition.

Several of the most influential Johannine studies of the twentieth century followed Gardner-Smith. Rudolf Bultmann held that John drew upon oral tradition rather than written gospels, although an ecclesiastical redactor occasionally aligned the final edition of the Fourth Gospel with the Synoptics.²³ C. H. Dodd painstakingly argued that John's sayings and narratives lack strong enough connections for establishing literary dependence on the Synoptics; Dodd argued instead for John's use of Synoptic tradition.²⁴ Citing Dodd approvingly, Raymond Brown and Rudolf Schnackenburg likewise concluded that John did not use any of the Synoptic Gospels.²⁵ At the same time, C. K. Barrett maintained that John knew the texts of Mark and Luke.²⁶ Also, albeit in different ways, M.-É. Boismard and Frans Neirynck reasserted John's use of all three Synoptics.²⁷ Despite these notable exceptions, the consensus had shifted to Johannine independence.

Current scholarship explains John's relation to the Synoptics in a

includes "always" in both clauses, and Mark also says with regard to the poor, "and when you want, you can do good to them."

22. Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels*, 49.

23. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971); the first German edition was published in 1941. See also D. Moody Smith, *The Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel: Bultmann's Literary Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).

24. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*, 9.

25. Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (2 vols.; AB 29–29A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966–70), 1:xliv–xlvii; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, trans. Kevin Smyth, et al. (3 vols.; HTKNT 4; New York: Herder & Herder; Seabury; Crossroad, 1968–82; repr. New York: Crossroad, 1990), 1:26–43, ch. 2: Relationship to the Synoptics; the German edition was published from 1965–75.

26. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 15–17; 1st ed. published in 1955.

27. M.-É. Boismard et al., *Synopse des quatre Évangiles en français: avec parallèles des apocryphes et des pères* (3 vols.; Paris: Cerf, 1965–77); see also Frans Neirynck et al., *Jean et les Synoptiques: Examen critique de l'exégèse de M.-É. Boismard* (BETL 49; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1979); Maurits Sabbe, "John and the Synoptists: Neirynck vs. Boismard," *ETL* 56, no. 1 (1980): 125–31. I will discuss Boismard and Neirynck further in the following chapter, because they are exceptional in defending John's use of Matthew and their arguments are methodologically significant.

variety of ways. To be sure, scholars such as Craig Keener maintain Johannine independence.²⁸ Yet other explanations abound. Frank Schleritt renews the attempt to reconstruct a pre-Johannine Passion Narrative as a hypothetical source mediating John's synoptic parallels.²⁹ Contesting the long-held assumption that John was written last, Mark Matson and others argue for Luke's literary dependence on John.³⁰ Paul Anderson posits even earlier and ongoing reciprocal influences between Johannine and Synoptic traditions.³¹ Other recent studies situate John in the context of oral culture, oral performance, and memory studies.³² Different questions often yield different answers—sometimes reaching an impasse. The same Johannine details (for example, Jesus' washing his disciples' feet and having his side pierced) can be claimed as either very early tradition or very late redaction.³³ In the end, it remains far easier to identify synoptic parallels in John than to explain convincingly how they got there.

As consensus has evaporated, scholars have increasingly reclaimed John's indebtedness to one or more of the Synoptics. Richard Bauckham holds that John intended his gospel to complement Mark's;³⁴ Bauckham also considers the Fourth Gospel a record of eyewitness testimony.³⁵ Udo Schnelle has argued for John's use of Mark and Luke.³⁶

28. Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:40–42.
29. Frank Schleritt, *Der vorjohanneische Passionsbericht: Eine historisch-kritische und theologische Untersuchung zu Joh 2,13–22; 11,47–14,31 und 18,1–20,29* (BZNW 154; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007).
30. Mark A. Matson, *In Dialogue with Another Gospel? The Influence of the Fourth Gospel on the Passion Narrative of the Gospel of Luke* (SBLDS 178; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001); see also F. Lamar Cribbs, "A Study of the Contacts that Exist between St. Luke and St. John," *SBL Seminar Papers*, 1973 (2 vols.; Cambridge, Mass.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), 1:1–93; idem, "The Agreements that Exist between Luke and John," *SBL Seminar Papers*, 1979 (2 vols.; Missoula, Mont.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1979), 1:215–61; J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); Barbara Shellard, "The Relationship of Luke and John: A Fresh Look at an Old Problem," *JTS* 46, no. 1 (1995): 71–98.
31. Paul N. Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus: Modern Foundations Reconsidered* (London: T&T Clark, 2006).
32. E.g., Anthony Le Donne and Tom Thatcher, eds., *The Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture* (LNTS 426; London: T&T Clark, 2011); see especially James D. G. Dunn, "John's Gospel and the Oral Gospel Tradition," in *Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture*, 157–85; see also Mark Jennings, "The Fourth Gospel's Reversal of Mark in John 13,31–14,3," *Bib* 94, no. 2 (2013): 210–36.
33. For a brief comparison of von Wahlde and Schleritt, see my review of Frank Schleritt, *Der vorjohanneische Passionsbericht*, CBQ 74, no. 2 (2012): 397–98, here 398.
34. Richard Bauckham, "John for Readers of Mark," in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (ed. Richard Bauckham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 147–71, here 170.
35. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 358–468.

In separate studies, Thomas Brodie and Steven Hunt have attempted to demonstrate John's use of all three Synoptics.³⁷ Similarly, commentaries by Ulrich Wilckens, Hartwig Thyen, and Andrew Lincoln presume that—in addition to oral tradition—John made use of all three Synoptics and that John expected his readers to make comparisons with the synoptic parallels.³⁸ Also, according to Urban C. von Wahlde's reconstruction, the Gospel of John's third and final compositional stage reflects knowledge of all three Synoptics.³⁹ In my estimation, these studies collectively signify a demurrer to Windisch's and Gardner-Smith's conclusions. *Pace* Windisch, John's limited use of, and differences from, the Synoptics need not entail John's attempt to eliminate them. *Pace* Gardner-Smith, while it may not be possible to explain satisfactorily all of John's differences from the Synoptics, literary dependence seems just as likely as oral tradition.

John's Relation to Matthew

Michael Bird recently considered John "literarily independent" of the Synoptics, yet Bird qualified, "At some point (John) has come across Mark, perhaps Luke, and, who knows, maybe even Matthew."⁴⁰

36. Udo Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (2d ed.; THKNT 4; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2000), 13–17. See also idem, *The History and Theology of the New Testament Writings*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 496–502; there he concluded that John knew Mark and perhaps Luke as well, but Schnelle also included a few instances of John's use of Matthew, for example, Matthew's binding and loosing saying (18:18) and John's forgiving and retaining sins logion (20:23).
37. Thomas L. Brodie, *The Quest for the Origin of John's Gospel: A Source-Oriented Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Steven A. Hunt, *Rewriting the Feeding of the Five Thousand: John 6.1–15 as a Test Case for Johannine Dependence on the Synoptic Gospels* (StBibLit 125; New York: Peter Lang, 2011).
38. Ulrich Wilckens, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (NTD 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 4; Hartwig Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium* (HNT 6; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 4; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John* (BNTC; London: Continuum, 2005; repr. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006), 32–33.
39. Urban C. von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (3 vols.; ECC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 1:370; by my count, von Wahlde only claims one example of John's use of Matthew, which I examine in the following chapter.
40. Michael F. Bird, *The Gospel of the Lord: How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 213. Jörg Frey ("Das Vierte Evangelium auf dem Hintergrund der älteren Evangelientradition: Zum Problem: Johannes und die Synoptiker," in *Johannesevangelium—Mitte oder Rand des Kanons? Neue Standortbestimmungen*, ed. Thomas Söding et al. [QD 203; Freiburg: Herder, 2003], 60–118, here 113) similarly concluded that John's use of Matthew cannot be ruled out, although it is less probable than John's use of Mark or Luke.

Commentators have similarly pointed out that a connection between John and Matthew is improbable or at least very difficult to demonstrate;⁴¹ for example, Schnackenburg simply concluded, “Special contacts between Matthew and John are rare and unimportant.”⁴² Nevertheless, there is a long history of identifying these agreements. In the fourth century, Eusebius of Caesarea compiled the earliest extant list of John–Matthew parallels.⁴³ John’s contacts with Matthew in the passion narrative also figure prominently in separate studies by Nils Dahl, Peder Borgen, Anton Dauer, and Josef Pichler.⁴⁴ These four scholars argue for oral tradition rather than literary dependence, although they allow for the possibility that Matthew’s written gospel influenced ongoing oral tradition. Taking into account this long history of research, Table 1.1 lists the sixteen most prevalent John–Matthew parallels.⁴⁵

41. E.g., D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 51; Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 43; Ben Witherington III, *John’s Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 7.

42. Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St. John*, 1:30.

43. Eusebius’s Canon VII consist of John–Matthew parallels. NA²⁷ includes the Eusebian canons and sections on pp. 84*–89*, with introduction on p. 78*; for discussion, see David Laird Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem: The Canon, the Text, the Composition, and the Interpretation of the Gospels* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1999), 108–11.

44. Nils A. Dahl, “Die Passionsgeschichte bei Matthäus,” *NTS* 2, no. 1 (1955–56): 17–32; Peder Borgen, “John and the Synoptics in the Passion Narrative,” *NTS* 5, no. 4 (1958–59): 246–59; Anton Dauer, *Die Passionsgeschichte im Johannesevangelium: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche und theologische Untersuchung zu Joh 18,1–19,30* (SANT 30; Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1972); Josef Pichler, “Setzt die Johannespassion Matthäus voraus?” in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. G. van Belle (BETL 200; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), 495–505.

45. In addition to previously cited works by Borgen, Brodie, Dahl, Dauer, Lincoln, Schnelle, Streeter, Wilckens, and Windisch, the following studies have contributed to this list: Rosel Baum-Bodenbender, *Hoheit in Niedrigkeit: Johanneische Christologie im Prozeß Jesu vor Pilatus (Joh 18,28–19,16a)* (FB 49; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1984), 176–218; Gilbert Van Belle and David R. M. Godecharle, “C. H. Dodd on John 13:16 (and 15:20): St John’s Knowledge of Matthew Revisited,” in *Engaging with C. H. Dodd on the Gospel of John: Sixty Years of Tradition and Interpretation*, ed. Tom Thatcher and Catrin H. Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 86–106; Bruno de Solages, *Jean et les Synoptiques* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), 99–113.

Table 1.1 John–Matthew Parallels		John	Matthew
1	Jesus calls Simon Peter the son of John/Jonah.	1:42	16:17
2	Jesus says either I am or you are the light of the world.	8:12	5:14
3	Zechariah 9:9 is quoted when Jesus enters Jerusalem.	12:15	21:5
4	Jesus says that slaves are not greater than their masters.	13:16	10:24
5	Jesus commands a disciple to put away his sword.	18:11	26:52
6	Caiaphas is specified as the high priest.	18:13, 24	26:3, 57
7	Releasing a prisoner at Passover is customary.	18:39	27:15
8	Soldiers put a crown of thorns on Jesus' head.	19:2	27:29
9	Pilate sits on the judgment seat (βῆμα).	19:13	27:19
10	Jesus' name is inscribed on the <i>titulus</i> .	19:19	27:37
11	Joseph of Arimathea is called a disciple.	19:38	27:57
12	Jesus is buried in a new tomb.	19:41	27:60
13	Mary Magdalene is <i>not</i> going to anoint Jesus' corpse.	20:1	28:1
14	An angel or two appear(s) to Mary Magdalene.	20:12	28:2–3, 5
15	The risen Jesus sends Mary Magdalene to his “brothers.”	20:17	28:10
16	John's forgiving and retaining sins logion parallels Matthew's binding and loosing saying.	20:23	18:18; cf. 16:19

As this chapter has shown, currently there is no firm consensus for explaining John's relation to the Synoptics. As has been the case for the last two hundred years, however, scholars still consider Matthew the least likely gospel that John would have read. At the same time, previous scholarship has generated a fairly long and impressive list of agreements between the two gospels, and these require a detailed explanation. The time has come to reinvestigate the relationship between John and Matthew.