

Finally, we should remember the place each of these authors gives to the theme of "life," found everywhere in the Hebrew Bible from its first appearance as the tree of life in the garden of Eden, but especially common in the wisdom literature. I suspect that "life" almost always carries some of the extra resonance already discernible in the symbol of the tree of life. This, of course, holds out for human beings the enticing prospect of immortality, an idea taken up directly by Greek Solomon when he promises *athanasia* to everyone who heeds the laws of wisdom (Wis. Sol. 6:15; cf. 1:12, 15; 4:1; 5:15; 6:18; 8:13, 17). The Odes of Solomon, claiming the authority of the same name, add a slightly different nuance by speaking of the "deathless life" that "rose up in the land of the Lord, and . . . became known to his faithful ones, and was given unpar- ingly to those who trust in him" (15:10; cf. 28:31; 38:3; 40:6). The promises of the Odes are more than matched by FE; there is no need to list the numerous passages in FG that guarantee eternal life to those who believe in Jesus. But John goes further. When Jesus says of his adversaries, the Jews, that they "search for life in the scriptures," he could well be speaking to the readers of Wisdom of Solomon, insofar as this book, as we have seen, sets out to encapsulate the whole biblical tradition. But, declares Jesus uncompromisingly, "I am the one to whom they [the scriptures] bear witness" (John 5:40; my italics). The scriptures are the hermeneutical key to Jesus, and Jesus is the hermeneutical key to the scriptures. There could be no more direct expression of the challenge Christianity poses to Judaism.

"I Am" or "I Am He"?

Self-Declaratory Pronouncements in the Fourth Gospel and Rabbinic Tradition

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In addition to the Johannine metaphorical "I am" sayings (for example, "I am the light of the world," John 9:5), two patterns of usage of the expression *egō eimi* are commonly identified in the Fourth Gospel (FG). Depending on whether or not a predicate can be supplied from the immediate context of the phrase, a differentiation is made between 1) "absolute" *egō eimi* declarations, in which Jesus uses the phrase "I am" without clearly identifying what it is he claims to be ("you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am," John 8:24; also 8:28, 58; 13:19); and 2) those declarations where the phrase is used for self-identification ("I am he," 4:26; also 6:20; 9:9; 18:5, 6, 8). This study will explore whether the Fourth Evangelist (FE) actually maintains a distinction between these two patterns of usage, and how *egō eimi* statements in FG's underlying Jesus tradition may have been appropriated. To assist this exploration, the Johannine evidence will be compared first with the rabbinic use of self-declaratory pronouncements, and then with the rabbis' interpretations of self-declaratory pronouncements from the Hebrew Bible.

The Rabbinic "I Am" as Self-Identification

A variety of traditions indicate that the phrase *egō eimi* can be employed as an identification formula to indicate that the speaker is the person under consideration ("I am that person"). According to 2 Samuel 2:20 (LXX), the question

posed by Abner ("Is it you, Asahel?") receives the affirmative response "It is I" (*egō eimi*). Such cases clearly cannot be ignored when attempting to elucidate some of Jesus' *egō eimi* statements in FG. In John 9:9, the blind man's use of the phrase following his neighbors' question ("Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?") identifies him as the person whose identity is being discussed ("I am that beggar"; cf. Mark 14:62; *Testament of Job* 29:4, 31:6). The Samaritan woman's remark, "I know that Messiah is coming," leads Jesus to announce, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you" (*egō eimi ho lalōn soi*; John 4:25–26). Jesus gives the same response to the posse during the arrest scene when asked if he is "Jesus of Nazareth" (18:5–8). It is certainly appropriate, at least in formal terms, to interpret Jesus' response, both to the woman and to the arresting party, as affirmation that he is the figure in question: "I am he, I am the person you are talking about."

Rabbinic traditions provide a number of illuminating parallels to this syntactic pattern. One such tradition (*b. Kerithot* 63a) describes the return of Rabbi Aqiba to the town of his father-in-law twenty-four years after the latter had made a vow that his daughter would not benefit from his estate after she became secretly betrothed to Aqiba. Without recognizing his son-in-law, the old man asks the now well-respected rabbi to invalidate this vow, thus prompting Aqiba to ask, "Would you have made your vow if you had known that he [your son-in-law] was a great man?" When the father-in-law concedes that he would not have established it had he known this, Aqiba declares, "I am he" (Aramaic: *'amā hū*), and his father-in-law falls to the ground, kisses his feet, and gives him half his wealth. In this case, the phrase attributed to Aqiba undoubtedly serves to disclose his identity, and its antecedent can be easily identified ("I am he, that 'great man' we were just talking about"). Admittedly, this and analogous examples appear in rabbinic materials that cannot be dated before the Amoraic period (second–third century C.E.), but it is unlikely that such declarations represent a linguistic phenomenon that only entered general parlance during the second or third century C.E. (Williams 2000, 185–186). This pattern is, indeed, already attested in biblical Aramaic, for one of Daniel's dream interpretations leads him to identify the king with its central image: "The tree that you saw, which grew great and strong . . . that is you (*'am hū*, O king)" (Dan. 4:20–22 [17–19]).

The well-documented use of *egō eimi* (and its Aramaic counterpart) as a vehicle for self-identification in a variety of Jewish traditions raises the question of the use of this expression in the traditional material available to FL. This is particularly the case because several source-critical analyses have sought to identify pre-Johannine material behind at least three passages where Jesus pronounces *egō eimi*: in his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:26); in his discussion with the disciples in the boat after walking

on the sea (6:20); and in his arrest in the garden (18:5). As seen in the following discussion, in each of these cases Jesus appears to use the phrase "I am" as a form of self-identification. The question to be asked for each is whether FE borrowed the phrase from the sources or traditions behind each story or inserted the phrase into those traditions.

The [Samaritan] woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you." (John 4:25–26)

It is possible that the "I am" statement at the conclusion of the story of the Samaritan woman is drawn from an earlier tradition in which Jesus affirms his messiahship (Bultmann 1971, 180; Link 1992, 283–291). If this is the case, in that tradition *egō eimi* was the means whereby Jesus identifies himself to the woman as the Messiah who will "proclaim all things to us" (John 4:25), that is, "I am that Messiah." This is also a plausible interpretation of Jesus' response in its present context in FG.

Many interpreters, however, draw attention to the statement's climactic role as the conclusion to the encounter at the well (John 4:7–26). Its form ("*egō eimi* the one who is speaking to you") closely parallels the wording of Jesus' earlier challenge to the woman to grasp the identity of "the one who says to [her]" (*tis estin ho lalōn soi*), "Give me a drink" (4:10). Since these two remarks hold the entire conversation together (Schadick 2000, 245–247), Jesus' *egō eimi* statement at the end encompasses all he has hitherto revealed to the woman about himself. In other words, Jesus does inform the woman that her messianic expectations are being realized in him, but he also transcends such expectations. He offers the living water that quenches all thirst and leads to eternal life (4:10–14), and the worship of the Father in Spirit and truth is made possible in and through him (4:23–24). Jesus' first *egō eimi* pronouncement in FG, therefore, discloses the true significance of his identity as the one who "proclaims all things" (4:25). He enjoys this status not only due to his extraordinary knowledge (4:29) but because he uniquely reveals God and makes available his offer of eternal life. Because the "I am" saying at 4:26 plays a key role in FE's christological presentation here, it is difficult to determine whether he borrowed the saying from the tradition or composed it himself.

When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." (John 6:20)

While the view that traditional material lies behind John 4:25–26 must remain a hypothesis, there is scholarly consensus that the account of the sea

crossing (John 6:16–21) is derived from an already existing source. The literary independence of the Johannine narrative in relation to its synoptic parallels, especially Mark 6:45–52, is strongly suggested by the significant degree of variation between them in terms of vocabulary, narrative perspective, and outcome. There seems to be a core tradition underlying both the synoptic and Johannine versions that described the stormy conditions experienced by the disciples, their fear when they encountered Jesus walking on the sea, and his words “It is I; do not be afraid” (*ego eimi me phobesthe*; Mark 6:50; Matt. 14:27; John 6:20). The fixed status of Jesus’ declaration in all the accounts confirms its pivotal role, but while *ego eimi* was probably understood in the broader tradition as an identification formula only (“It is me, Jesus”), it is possible that its epiphanic overtones were already recognized in the traditional version received by FE.

But several clues indicate that FE has shaped the traditional material in such a way that Jesus’ words in FG cannot be interpreted simply as a recognition formula. In the Synoptics, the disciples’ initial fear stems from their suspicion that the figure whom they see is a ghost (cf. Mark 6:49; Matt. 14:26), but in FG they are afraid because they actually recognize Jesus as the one who approaches the boat across the sea (6:19). If *ego eimi* does not serve here as a statement of identity (“It is I, Jesus”), its purpose must be to explain the significance of Jesus’ act of walking on water, for *ego eimi* is the vehicle whereby he makes himself manifest as the one exercising the power that the Hebrew Bible attributes to God alone (cf. Job 9:8; 38:16; Hab. 3:15). Self-revelatory declarations such as “I am the Lord” and “I am God” figure prominently in a variety of biblical traditions, but the pronouncement of *ego eimi* by God in its bipartite form occurs only in Deuteronomy 32:39 and Isaiah 41:4, 43:10; 46:4 (cf. 45:18; 52:6). In each of these cases, the LXX translators have used *ego eimi* to render the Hebrew expression *’ami hū* (“I am he”). A closer examination of FG’s sea-crossing account suggests, in fact, that Jesus’ words in the underlying tradition were interpreted by FE in light of Isaiah’s use of *ego eimi* as a divine self-proclamation, often accompanying the formula “do not fear” (see Isa. 41:10, “Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God”; also 41:4, 13; 43:1, 5, 10). The description of the sudden arrival of the disciples’ boat on the land “to which they were going” (John 6:20) demonstrates that Jesus’ self-revelation makes the sea crossable for his disciples and leads them ashore. This can be compared to the promise that God will bring about a new exodus by making a way for his people through the sea (Isa. 43:16; 51:10) and the assurance of his personal presence (“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. . . . Do not fear, for I am with you”). Isaiah’s image of God’s presence with his people may even have been the inspiration for the comment, phrased in characteristically Johannine language, that anti-

ipates both the imminent drawing near of Jesus (John 6:19) and the momentous effect of his presence: “It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them” (6:17bc). In the hands of FE, Jesus’ walking on the turbulent sea becomes the occasion for divine self-manifestation (“I am; do not fear”), thus enabling the disciples, by means of his presence, to move from the darkness (cf. Isa. 42:16) and reach the safety of the other side.

Since Jesus’ pronouncement in the sea-crossing account can be confidently ascribed to traditional material—subtly modified by FE in the light of OT usage to accentuate its theophanic significance—there are good reasons for viewing it as an important source, if not the basis, for the absolute *ego eimi* declarations that follow. Most commentators agree that the Johannine presentation of *ego eimi* as the object of belief (John 8:24; 13:19) and knowledge (8:28) finds its closest parallel in Isaiah 43:10, where Yahweh calls on Israel to act as witnesses “so that you may know and believe and understand that I am” (LXX *ego eimi*; MT: *’ami hū*). But other aspects of the use of *ego eimi* in Isaiah can also illuminate the significance attached to this expression in FG. The Septuagint translators of Isaiah sometimes distinguish between the two first-person pronominal forms used in the Hebrew text by rendering *’ami* as *ego* but *’anochi* as *egō eimi*. The latter translational device is applied on two occasions to divine statements where the phrase “I, I am he” (*’anochi ’anochi hū*) is rendered *ego eimi ego eimi*, “I am, I am” (Isa. 51:12; cf. 43:25). This distinctive doubling of *ego eimi* may well have prompted FE to interpret its second occurrence as a divine name: “I am ‘I Am’.” It would lead, moreover, to further reflection on other *ego eimi* passages from Isaiah that convey Yahweh’s uncontested claim to be the only true God.

Several thematic and structural parallels can also be identified that strengthen the case for arguing that FE has consciously reflected on both the setting and significance of *ego eimi* as a divine self-declaration in LXX Isaiah. Whereas Isaiah’s trial speeches are a popular vehicle for Yahweh’s assertion of his unique divinity (*ego eimi*) over against the pagan gods (cf. 41:1–5; 43:8–13), the juridical setting and language of these speeches find significant echoes in scenes from FG where Jesus pronounces *ego eimi* during confrontations with “the Jews” (John 8:24, 28). In addition, some of the arguments presented in Isaiah by Yahweh as proof that he alone is God bear striking resemblance to the context of Jesus’ *ego eimi* declarations in FG. Yahweh, “from the beginning” (Isa. 43:13), is the eternally active God (41:4; 48:12), the one whose timeless and absolute existence is accentuated in the Septuagintal rendering of his claim as *ego eimi*. With this compare John 8:58: “Before Abraham was, I am.” Further, Yahweh’s sovereignty is confirmed by his unique ability to foretell events before they take place (Isa. 43:9–10; 46:10–11), a motif applied to the Johannine Jesus when he predicts his imminent betrayal: “I tell you this

now before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am" (John 13:19; cf. 18:1–11).

"I Am" in Rabbinic Exegesis

As we've seen, some of the *ego enim* passages in FG appear to depend on the LXX rendering of the divine self-declaration *'ani hu'*. Rabbinic traditions that cite or expound the OT passages in question can therefore yield considerable insight into later interpretations of this Hebrew expression (Williams 2000, 114–178). Indeed, because of the status of biblical *'ani hu'* declarations as unequivocal expressions of monotheism, they are singled out in several midrashic traditions as decisive proof texts in defense of God's unity. These rabbinic usages may, in turn, shed light on FE's appropriation of the same language in those sections of FG that include "I am" sayings.

Two similar versions of a particularly illuminating tradition are recorded in the *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael* (*Shir'a* 4 and *Babodech* 5). The midrashic argument is set out as follows. The divine name appears twice, both in Exodus 15:3 ("The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name"; italics added) and in Exodus 20:2 ("I am the Lord your God"), because God can make himself manifest in a variety of guises. At the sea he appeared as a mighty warrior (15:3), but at Sinai he appeared as an "old man full of mercy" (24:10). The aim of this line of argumentation (with further proof adduced from Daniel 7:9–10) is "not to give an opportunity for the nations of the world to say, 'There are two powers.'" In other words, the objective is to show that the repetition of the divine name does not indicate God's being is somehow double. A series of exegetical elaborations and scriptural proof texts follows, presented as God's own defense of his own unity.

The second midrashic tradition, which appears at *Babodech* 5, reads,

I, in Egypt, I, at the Sea, I, at Sinai, I, in the past, I, in the future to come, I, in this world, I, in the world to come. As it is said: "See now that I, I am he" [Deut. 32:39]. And it says, "To old age I am he" [Isa. 46:4]. And it says: "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts, I am the first and I am the last" [44:6]. And it says: "Who has acted and worked? The one who calls the generations from the beginning, I, the Lord, am the first, and with the last, I am he" [41:4].

This rabbinic passage, presented as an innovative divine endorsement of the argument for the unity of God, has been carefully crafted. Seven parallel formulations, which highlight the all-encompassing presence of the one God, correspond numerically to the seven occurrences of the divine "I" in the cited

portions of the proof texts. The value of Deuteronomy 32:39 as a proof text is attested by the fact that in its context the initial doubling of *'ani* is immediately followed by a monotheistic assertion (32:39b): "there is no god besides me"), while the parallels from Isaiah (46:4, 44:6, 41:4) act as a prophetic explication of the twofold "I" by accentuating God's eternally active presence. A vigorous demonstration of divine unity is thus used to confront those who embrace a "two powers" heresy. The actual identity of the heretics in question is difficult to establish, but the tradition's intricate exposition of certain biblical theophanies (Exod. 15:3; 24:10; Dan. 7:9–10) suggests that Gentile Christians or Jewish apocalyptic-mystical groups are among those targeted. The Tannaitic dating of this tradition has been convincingly demonstrated, so that, before the middle of the second century C.E., rabbinic exegetes were citing biblical declarations that contain *'ani hu'* as expressing God's own claim to exclusiveness.

A further examination of the midrashic use of Deuteronomy 32:39 and analogous statements from Isaiah reveals that some rabbinic traditions interpreted God's utterance of *'ani hu'* as the vehicle for his eschatological self-manifestation. An exegetical tradition, probably of Tannaitic origin, in *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael* (*Pisha* 12) establishes the following innovative correlation:

In similar manner you interpret: "Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken" [Isa. 40:5]. And where did he [God] speak? "See now that I, I am he" [Deut. 32:39].

God's self-declaration as the "source" of Isaiah 40:5, due in all likelihood to its formal resemblance to Isaiah's *'ani hu'* statements, "I, I am he" is interpreted in this midrash as a self-revelatory formula linked to the future universal disclosure of God's glory. The eschatological perspective adopted for this divine pronouncement is then substantiated in *Pisha* 12 by linking together Isaiah 25:8 and Deuteronomy 32:39c ("I kill and I make alive" [LXX: *zēn poiōō*]), both widely cited in rabbinic sources as resurrection proof texts.

Biblical traditions in which God declares *'ani hu'* evidently served as important proof texts in rabbinic sources from a relatively early period. The midrashic citation of these divine pronouncements must, nevertheless, be assessed against the use of this Hebrew phrase and its Aramaic counterpart in other rabbinic traditions. As noted in the previous section, the phrase *'ani hu'* can be applied for the purpose of self-identification, with the antecedent to "he" provided by its immediate context (see *b. Kerubot* 63a). And in one of the rare rabbinic cases where *'ani hu'* is attributed to God in an interpretive statement rather than a scriptural citation, the expression is not self-contained, although the antecedent in question is none other than the tetragrammaton: "'The Lord, the Lord' [Exod. 34:6]. I am he before a man sins, and I am he after a

man sins and repents" (*l. Roah ha-Shanah* 17b). Such examples indicate that the decisive factors when attempting to determine the meaning and significance of *'ami hu* in rabbinic traditions are the way the expression is employed and the content of the claim(s) it seeks to convey. What the available rabbinic evidence does demonstrate is the lack of support for the theory that *'ami hu* was regarded by early sages as an exclusively theophanic formula, too sacred to be pronounced, or even as the Ineffable Name of God. This is not to deny that when the bipartite expression does occur in divine speech, either in a scriptural proof text or innovative exposition, it is recognizable as God's forceful assertion of his unique and eternal sovereignty.

Determining the meaning and function of self-declaratory pronouncements is also of decisive importance for understanding the Johannine use of *ego eimi*. While Jesus' utterance of *ego eimi* to the Samaritan woman (John 4:26) and to his disciples (6:20) could, on one level, be viewed as corresponding to its everyday purpose of self-identification ("I am that person"; cf. 9:9), perceptive readers or hearers of FG will recognize the various clues already provided on those occasions that point to the revelatory character of *ego eimi* to convey Jesus' true divine identity. This interpretive strategy, which amounts to an effective interplay of the possible meanings and import of *ego eimi*, becomes particularly apparent in the series of debates about Jesus' origin, destiny, and authority at John 8:21–59. The high concentration of misunderstandings in this episode accentuates the polarity between Jesus and his interlocutors (cf. 8:23), and it is the various levels on which Jesus' *ego eimi* pronouncements can be understood that accounts for the shift in the Jews' response from one of bewilderment (8:25) to a violent attempt to kill Jesus (8:59).

Early in this episode, Jesus confronts his dialogue partners with the decision of accepting or rejecting his claims: "You will die in your sins unless you believe that I am" (John 8:24). Those who respond positively to his self-revelation (*ego eimi*) will pass from death to life. But Jesus' interlocutors do not grasp the real force of his words. Their question, "Who are you?" (8:25a), indicates that they only adopt the surface meaning of *ego eimi* as a statement of mere identity, which they view as incomplete ("I am . . .") or as possessing an unidentifiable antecedent ("I am he"). Their rootedness in "this world" means that they miss the deeper significance of Jesus' self-declaration. His immediate reaction to their question (8:25b) is obscure, possibly intentionally so (Robert 1988, 282–287), although Barrett's proposed rendering "[I am] from the beginning what I tell you" (1978, 343) does accord with the theological claims that Isaiah associates with *ego eimi* (41:4, 43:10, 13) and anticipates Jesus' climactic words in John 8:58.

"The Jews" at first fail to comprehend that the key to Jesus' assertions about his identity is his unique relationship with God (John 8:26–27), thus leading

him to offer further clarification: "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me" (8:28). The "lifting up" of Jesus, whereby his oneness with God is truly made manifest, will demonstrate that he speaks and acts in complete obedience to the Father who is constantly present with him. This unit of dialogue concludes abruptly with the remark that "many" believed in Jesus (8:30), surprising in view of the repeated cases of misunderstanding (8:22, 25, 27). The next unit opens, however, by stressing that true disciples are those who continue in Jesus' word (8:31), whereas the immediate appeal to descent from Abraham reveals the unwillingness of Jesus' interlocutors to accept his offer of freedom (8:33) and his word (8:37, 43).

It is Jesus' own appeal to the patriarch, the witness who recognized that his hope of eschatological salvation was being realized in Jesus, that prepares the ground for the final claim: "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am" (8:58). This pronouncement is so distinctive in its form and content that a Jewish audience cannot fail to recognize its significance as a divine self-proclamation. The impossibility of identifying a predicate for *ego eimi* confirms its absolute meaning, and the adopted clause sequence echoes the poetic technique of "swapping" encountered in Isaiah's *'ami hu* declarations and adopted in their Septuagintal renderings (cf. 46:4: "To old age I am he"). Jesus thus lays claim to a timeless, absolute form of being (cf. John 1:1–3), contrasted with the time-bound existence of Abraham, who "was born" (*genethai*). So now, at the end of this extended discourse, "the Jews" are finally confronted with the real implications of Jesus' use of *ego eimi*, and they denounce it as blasphemy (8:59). In his self-declaration they perceive God's own claim to exclusive divinity and eternal sovereignty as attested in Deuteronomy 32:39 and Isaiah, passages which in later decades would be cited in rabbinic traditions as incontrovertible proof of the unity of God.

The interplay of the two-level significance of *ego eimi* finds its most dramatic demonstration in the narrative of Jesus' arrest (John 18:1–14). This episode contains Jesus' last two *ego eimi* pronouncements in FG (18:5, 8), both of which could reasonably be interpreted as everyday expressions of self-identification ("I am he, Jesus of Nazareth"). But the first utterance, which may have been drawn from traditional material (Dodd 1963, 75–76; Forman 1988, 150), is then highlighted by FE in a manner that suggests that the unexpected response of the arresting party (falling to the ground) results directly from Jesus' self-disclosure, *ego eimi*. This first declaration, by means of its formidable effect, exposes the utter powerlessness of the captors and of Judas, who "was standing with them" (18:5). Jesus could have resisted arrest, if that were his desire. It is Jesus' second utterance of *ego eimi* that reveals the real purpose of his earlier demonstration of divine power, namely to secure the freedom of

his disciples (18:8). But this intervention possesses more profound significance, as indicated by FE's remark that it fulfills Jesus' word, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me" (18:9). Since two of the sayings echoed here announce that Jesus' own will not be lost but will receive eternal life (6:39-40; 10:28), the physical deliverance of the disciples is intended as a symbolic anticipation of Jesus' ability to give life. This scene in the garden therefore displays Jesus' sovereign control over the events leading to his death and the salvific mission he is destined to accomplish in obedience to the Father's will (18:11). Indeed, Jesus' twofold pronouncement of *ego enim* during his arrest serves as a powerful exemplification of the claims he has made with the aid of this expression in earlier Johannine narratives and discourses, for it encapsulates Jesus' unique identity as the one in whom God is revealed and his saving promises are fulfilled.

Conclusion

New Directions

TOM THATCHER

This book, and the individual essays contained within it, have not attempted to write the definitive history of Johannine source criticism. Indeed, it should be obvious that the current volume has not aspired to be a "history" of any sort. Neither has it attempted to represent all the major voices on established issues, nor to promote one particular perspective or approach. Rather, the essays have pointed out that the many and complex problems associated with the composition-history of the Gospel of John are critical to its interpretation and therefore deserve renewed attention. Old questions must be approached in new ways; new questions must be asked and answered. This book is not offered as a review of the past but as a guidepost to the future.

The individual essays in this volume have highlighted the diversity of methods and perspectives that inform current study of the Johannine Jesus tradition and the composition history of the Fourth Gospel (FG). When viewed as a group, however, they also reveal broad contours of common concerns. These common concerns may be described in terms of five questions that underlie current attempts to reconstruct the composition-history of the Gospel of John. The answer to each question locates the study under consideration at a particular point on a spectrum between two interpretive options, some of which involve methods of study and some of which involve conclusions. In the sections that follow, I will briefly describe the issues involved in each question, the limits each places on current study of the Gospel of John, and means by which these limitations may be overcome in future research.