

views about Jesus have been attributed to Jesus in his earthly mission, so the implied author's insights, especially about the events surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection, have been attributed to the Beloved Disciple as the ideal witness. Any known identity of this originating witness has been effaced in favour of the tradition that he authenticates. His anonymity has a further function. For later readers, the lack of a specific name to distinguish his identity sharply from theirs encourages identification with this unnamed character. It invites them to share in his perceptive witness and therefore also the implied author's point of view.

The discussion below on the composition of the Gospel and its relation to other Johannine literature will have more to say about the evangelist and the final editor whose work is attributed to the Beloved Disciple. But from what has already been said about this disciple's function in the narrative, it should be clear that it is highly unlikely that the writer of this Gospel had direct or immediate access to the events which his narrative recounts or that talk of the Beloved Disciple's eyewitnessing should be taken straightforwardly as actually guaranteeing the historical reliability of the narrative.

Further Reading

On the traditions about John, see R. A. Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000). On scholarly attempts to identify the Beloved Disciple, see J. H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1995), 127–224. For discussion of the role of the Beloved Disciple, see R. J. Bauckham, 'The Beloved Disciple as Ideal Author', *JSNT* 49 (1993), 21–44 and A. T. Lincoln, 'The Beloved Disciple as Eyewitness and the Fourth Gospel as Witness', *JSNT* 85 (2002), 3–26.

RELATION TO THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

The issue of John's relation to the Synoptic Gospels is a complex and intriguing one, about which there is no scholarly consensus. All that can be done in this Introduction is to survey the topic and the main types of explanation and to indicate, with a brief justification, the stance that will be taken in the Commentary. The common designations – the Synoptic Gospels and the Fourth Gospel – already reflect the perception that, because of the major similarities in the order and wording of their narratives, the first three canonical Gospels belong together in a way that distinguishes them from the fourth. This perception is not simply the result of modern critical studies. The well-known assertion of Clement of Alexandria, 'that John, last of all, conscious that the outward facts had

been set forth in the Gospels, was urged on by his disciples, and divinely moved by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel' (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7), was an early attempt to explain the obvious differences.

Any comparison of John and the Synoptics needs to do justice to both the similarities and the differences. We start, then, with some of those most frequently observed. Among the major similarities are the following. The Fourth Gospel, like the Synoptics, presents its message in the form of a narrative life of Jesus. Indeed its structural outline has similarities with that of Mark, with the preaching of John the Baptist near the beginning (1.19–36; cf. Mark 1.4–8) followed by a movement into Galilee (1.43; 4.3; cf. Mark 1.14–15). Near the centre of the public mission of Jesus there is the feeding of the five thousand (6.1–15; cf. Mark 6.34–44) followed by walking on the water (6.16–21; cf. Mark 6.45–52), which is in turn followed by a confession from Peter (6.68–9; cf. Mark 8.29–31). There is then a departure for Jerusalem (7.10–14; cf. Mark 10.1, 32) with an anointing (12.1–8; cf. Mark 14.3–9) and an entry into Jerusalem (12.12–15; cf. Mark 11.1–11), where John has reversed the order, followed by a last supper (13.1–30; cf. Mark 14.17–26). The basic outline of the ensuing passion story is also similar – an arrest leading to a Jewish trial (Mark) or an interrogation (John), which is sandwiched with the scene of Peter's threefold denial, and then a Roman trial, followed by crucifixion, burial and resurrection. Within this overall outline there are episodes closely related to those in the Synoptics, such as the incident in the temple (2.13–17; cf. Mark 11.15–17 part), though the chronology here is significantly different, and the healing of an official's son at Capernaum (4.46b–54; cf. Matt. 8.5–13; Luke 7.1–10). There are also sayings closely related to those in the Synoptics, such as that about losing one's life (12.25; cf. Mark 8.35 part) and that about receiving one whom Jesus sends being the same as receiving him and the one who sent him (13.20; cf. Matt. 10.40; Mark 9.37).

The greatest differences are to be found in the Fourth Gospel's portrayal of Jesus, where, unlike the Synoptics, he is presented as the Logos, as pre-existent and one with God, and where there is an explicit and full development of his sonship in relation to the Father. Part of this distinctive portrayal lies in Jesus' use of the divine self-identification, 'I Am', and the emphasis on the divine glory being revealed throughout Jesus' mission but especially in his death. Some of this distinctive depiction is conveyed through Jesus' own teaching. Here it is striking that whereas the chief content of Jesus' teaching in the Synoptics is about the kingdom of God, in John it is about himself. The statistics drive this point home. The term 'kingdom' is found on Jesus' lips 47 times in Matthew, 18 times in Mark, 37 times in Luke and only 5 times in John, while the pronoun 'I' is found on his lips 17 times in Matthew, 9 times in Mark, 10 times in Luke, but 118 times in John. The style of the teaching is

also significantly different. In the Synoptics this is characterized by pithy sayings, epigrams or parables, while in John it is characterized by long and involved discourses and disputes. Indeed the style and language of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel is closer to that of the evangelist and of the Johannine epistles than to the Synoptics. In regard to Jesus' deeds, the exorcisms, characteristic of the Synoptics, have disappeared in John and instead there are fewer and more remarkable 'signs'. Specific Synoptic episodes are missing, so that, for example, there is no account of Jesus' baptism, temptation, transfiguration, agony in Gethsemane, institution of the last supper, Sanhedrin trial, or cry of dereliction from the cross (as found in Mark and Matthew). Instead there are episodes unique to John, such as the wedding at Cana, the encounters and conversations with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, the raising of Lazarus, and the washing of the disciples' feet. Finally, some of the geographical and chronological differences should be mentioned. While in the Synoptics the focus for Jesus' mission is Galilee, followed by one climactic visit to Jerusalem, in John the focus is Judaea with movements back and forth between Galilee and Jerusalem. The resurrection appearances also have different settings. In Matthew it is Galilee (and this setting is also predicted in Mark) and in Luke it is Jerusalem, while John has appearances in both Jerusalem and Galilee. In the Synoptics Jesus' public mission appears to last for approximately one year, while in John it is for approximately three years. Whereas the temple incident constitutes Jesus' last public act in the Synoptics, in John it is found at the beginning as his second public act. The Synoptics have the last meal and crucifixion at the same time as the feast of Passover, while John has them one day earlier at the time of the preparation for Passover when the lambs were slaughtered.

How, then, are these sorts of continuities and discontinuities between John and the Synoptics to be explained? While not averse to attempts at some harmonization, the earliest interpreters of John generally held that the distinctive portrayals of Jesus represented by his Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels could not ultimately be harmonized and that, knowing the other Gospels, John chose to exercise a spiritual freedom in supplementing them, particularly in order to draw out the divinity of Jesus (cf. Wiles 1960: 13–21). With some slight variations, this became the dominant view of the relationship even among critical scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The twentieth century was, however, to see a remarkable shift in the scholarly consensus. In the English-speaking world this was brought about primarily through the brief work of P. Gardner-Smith, *St. John and the Synoptic Gospels* (1938), which was followed up by the more rigorous and comprehensive study of C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (1963). Both argued that the agreements between John and the Synoptics were better explained in terms of common oral tradition, which may have had points

of convergence at a pre-Synoptic stage, rather than literary dependence, and that the divergences were so great as to confirm John's independence and lack of knowledge of the written Synoptic Gospels. This view was accepted by some influential German scholars, such as E. Haenchen (his earlier acceptance is also reflected in his later commentary, 1984), and at the same time R. Bultmann developed in his commentary, first published in 1941, a hypothesis about the composition of the Fourth Gospel that had no need for the notion of dependence on the Synoptics. Bultmann held that the Fourth Gospel was dependent instead on a distinctive signs source, containing the miracles later taken up in the Gospel, a revelation discourse, and a passion narrative parallel to but not derived from the Synoptics, and that these had been adapted to express the evangelist's own theology. So, whether by emphasizing John's use of independent oral tradition or his use of his own sources, particularly the signs source, a new consensus emerged which held that John was not dependent on the Synoptics. This consensus was reflected in nearly all the major commentaries of the second half of the twentieth century, and in the English-speaking world the work of R. E. Brown in his commentary (1966, 1970) and other later studies (1979, 1994, 2003) was particularly influential in promoting such a view. Bultmann's hypothesis of a signs source also had its advocates in the English-speaking world, where this source has also been called a Signs Gospel. In particular, R. T. Fortna, in *The Gospel of Signs* (1970) and *The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor* (1988), attempted to set it on a firmer critical footing and saw the crucial stage of the Gospel's composition as involving the combination of the Signs Gospel with a passion narrative, and U. C. von Wahlde (1989) also produced his own somewhat different reconstruction of this signs source.

Among the major commentators on John, however, there was a notable exception to the prevailing view. C. K. Barrett (1st edn 1955, 2nd edn 1978) held out for the explanation that John knew and used the Synoptics. He has now been joined in this stance by a sizeable number of scholars, so that since the last decade of the twentieth century there can no longer be said to be a consensus on the matter. This resurgence of the older view in a variety of forms has been spearheaded by the work of F. Neirynck (1977, 1982, 1991) and his associates (cf. Sabbe 1991, 1992, 1994, 1995), who have also been joined by others (cf. Denaux (ed.) 1992). There are two main prongs to their attack on the earlier consensus. The first is to show that there are clear signs of John's dependence on the Synoptics in the resurrection narratives, the passion narratives and then elsewhere in the Gospel, which cannot be satisfactorily explained by other means. The second is to undermine the hypothesis of a signs source, which in any case has had only limited acceptance among Johannine scholars, due in part to the variety of its reconstructions. The major

problem with this hypothesis, however, has always been with establishing convincing criteria for isolating the source material from the Gospel as we now have it. Linguistic and stylistic criteria are particularly difficult to apply, since what can be seen as typically Johannine features are to be found distributed throughout the Gospel. This point was underlined in the thorough summary and critique of the signs source theory by G. van Belle (1994). In the absence of any new scholarly consensus, there have also been attempts to show that John was in fact a source for Luke's Gospel and even that John's Gospel or an earlier version of it may have been the first Gospel.

This historical sketch has indicated that a key issue is whether one looks to literary relationships or to use of oral traditions. This is also an important area of debate for the Synoptic problem itself. In treating the question of the relation of the Fourth Gospel to the other three canonical Gospels, it is sometimes assumed that, while this question remains open, the nature of the relationship among the Synoptics themselves is a relatively settled issue. Since they have so much material in common, the Synoptics must have a primarily literary relationship, whether the preferred view is that Matthew and Luke independently employed as sources Mark and Q (the two-document hypothesis) or that Mark was used by Matthew and then Luke used Mark and Matthew (the Farrer-Goulder hypothesis) or that Matthew was written first, then Luke was produced and then Mark produced a shorter version, employing the other two (the Griesbach hypothesis). Recently, however, there has been renewed emphasis on oral tradition, with a number of scholars claiming that the dominant theories have given too much attention to literary sources and suggesting that many of the similarities and differences among the Synoptics are better explained by aspects of oral tradition and its transmission. On this view, attention switches from editorial alteration of written documents to the stability of core sayings and incidents and the variation and flexibility entailed in their various oral performances. While this recent emphasis provides a healthy reminder that the Gospels were produced in a predominantly oral culture in which the vast majority of people were illiterate, it should not be used to create a polarization between oral and literary categories. The Synoptic Gospels were written versions of what may have been in large part prior oral performances and most of their recipients experienced them as they were then read aloud in a further oral performance. There is also no reason to think that once versions were written down and circulated, the process of oral transmission of parts of the tradition or of the longer versions suddenly ceased. At the same time, it remains obvious that, whatever our best guesses about how the oral traditions developed, our only access to such traditions is through the written documents, and in the case of the Synoptics these written documents both bear the marks of the arrangement and

distinctive thought and purposes of the individual evangelists and clearly have some literary relationship. Exploration of the latter relationship should not, however, be carried out in a rigid way that ignores the oral culture. So, if, for example, as appears highly likely, Matthew and Luke are dependent in a literary fashion on Mark, it cannot be ruled out that they may on occasion have reworked Mark in the light of their knowledge of oral traditions of some of the same material found in their source. Of course, the longer the period after the writing down of the source, here Mark, the more likely it is that that written version with its precise wording and stability will come to dominate over less precise, more fluid oral versions of material in the memory of individuals or groups.

This digression into the debate about Synoptic relationships has a number of purposes. First, the emphasis on the oral culture surrounding the written Gospels should remind us that the original recipients of John would have heard it read. When, therefore, the commentary talks of 'readers' of the Gospel, this should be understood, in the case of the original readers, as involving primarily the hearing of its message. Second, when it comes to exploring John's relationship to the Synoptics, it should not necessarily be assumed that the only form of dependence is the sort of strictly literary one in which a writer has the written sources before him as he writes or that, if this kind of close copying of material cannot be proved throughout the bulk of the narrative, then the only alternative is to view the Fourth Gospel as working with independent traditions about the life of Jesus. Third, it should be allowed in principle that there could be a mixture of dependence on other documents and use of independent oral traditions. Fourth, it is also necessary, when thinking about dependence, at least to allow for a mixture of forms of knowledge of other documents. The writer(s) of the Fourth Gospel may, for example, have known earlier Gospels both through having heard them performed orally several times and through having a copy that was available for consultation when necessary. In fact, from all we know about ancient scribal practice, writing desks were not in use until later and it would not have been possible to have a number of other documents spread out before one to consult as one composed. With the aid of an assistant, a scribe could have one other scroll held open before him for consultation or for reading out to him as he wrote but he could also draw on earlier or present reflection in which particular stories, phrases or emphases were remembered from previous readings or oral performances of texts and developed into fresh interpretations. Other Gospels would have been readily accessible to the fourth evangelist in this way. It is clear that, soon after they were written, the Gospels would have become widely available via the social network of early Christians by means of copying and oral performance (cf. e.g. Alexander 1998; Thompson 1998). To claim that the view that John employed the Synoptics is an anachronistic imposition by

modern scholars, who imagine him as having had Mark, Matthew and Luke spread out before him on his desk and picking from each a phrase here or a theme there, and to dismiss this view on such grounds, is to engage in caricature.

The preceding discussion has laid the foundation and set the parameters for the explanation of the stance taken in this commentary. Not every scholar can be an expert on all matters. Hence the dominance of the notion of a consensus in the earlier sketch of scholarship. Those who write more generally on John's Gospel, even those who produce commentaries, usually have to rely substantially on the work of those who have done detailed studies of particular aspects, and so to a certain extent have to presuppose the soundness of experts' studies on such a matter as the relation of John to the Synoptics. When, as now, there is no consensus among the experts on this matter, it is even more incumbent on a commentator to take responsibility for his or her own views and to provide some justification for them. When this writer started work on the commentary, he had been most influenced by those who saw John as independent of the Synoptics, but, as a result of keeping comparison with the Synoptics in view throughout, he has become persuaded that the Fourth Gospel provides evidence that its writer and editor not only knew Mark, to which it is most substantially indebted, but also knew and used both Matthew and Luke. Two major criteria need to be established. First, there have to be signs in the later document of knowledge of similar content, sequence, vocabulary or style from the earlier one. Second, there has to be a satisfactory explanation of the differences in the later document, plausible reasons why the earlier material has been adapted to take the form it now has. While there are some instances of similarities with Synoptic material, where an equally strong case for John's use of Synoptic-like independent tradition might be made, this commentary argues that in the majority of instances, on the basis of the above criteria, the much stronger case is that John knows the Synoptic Gospels themselves. The case becomes even stronger when not simply isolated pericopes are compared, as is frequently done, but when whole units of material or whole motifs are also taken into account, as will be indicated below.

Before then, some further clarifications need to be made. (i) The Synoptics are obviously not the only source material for the fresh interpretation in John. There is material that is unique to him which can be attributed either to his own creativity or to his use of traditions quite distinct from those found in the Synoptics or to a combination of both. (ii) A general stance that John knows the Synoptics themselves does not of course rule out the possibility that on some occasions he may also have used independent oral traditions which had at some point influenced the

Synoptics or been influenced by them. This would have to be established as the better explanation in an individual case. (iii) This is different from a general appeal to the use of independent oral tradition. While, as has been acknowledged, there may well have been multiple versions of sayings of Jesus and of stories about him in the oral tradition and these would not have ceased to circulate immediately the written Gospels were produced, to appeal constantly to such unknown or speculatively reconstructed versions as John's independent sources becomes unconvincing. This is especially the case when these sources are said to be 'very similar to Mark' or 'close to the version found in Luke' and when there is another, simpler explanatory option that works with the known rather than the unknown, namely, that John knew Mark or Luke. (iv) This option does not hold that John has worked with those accounts in the same way that Matthew and Luke worked with Mark, incorporating and making modifications to whole blocks of verbatim material. Instead he has treated such sources far more independently and creatively, a treatment that, as has been noted, would fall well within the scope of what might be expected of the writer of an ancient biography. The creative freedom of the Johannine tradition is evident and usually accepted when it comes to the discourses placed in the mouth of Jesus, where frequently on the basis of a saying to be found in the Synoptic tradition, which has been reworked into John's own idiom, an extensive monologue or dialogue is built up. Why should it be thought that the evangelist would exercise less freedom and independence when it comes to dealing with narrative material?

Readers will have to judge the plausibility of this commentary's general stance on John and the Synoptics in the light of its brief comparisons with the Synoptics in the discussions of individual pericopes. There is only space in this section of the Introduction for developing a few specific examples. The first comes from the passion narrative. One of the distinctive features of Mark's style is the literary device of intercalation, sometimes called the 'Markan sandwich'. In a given passage the beginning of one event is narrated, then the whole of a second event is narrated, and finally the narration of the first event is completed (cf. e.g. Mark 3.20-35; 5.21-43; 6.7-30; 11.12-21; 14.1-11). The point of the device is not simply stylistic but also theological. The two events are seen to be mutually interpretive and help to emphasize particular Markan concerns. Just such an intercalation is also found in Mark 14.53-72, which narrates a scene with Peter in the courtyard of the high priest's residence, warning himself at the fire, before moving to an account of Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin, and then returning to the scene with Peter, in which he denies Jesus three times. This produces an effective ironic contrast, in which Jesus gives faithful testimony, although this will lead to his death, while Peter fails to confess his relation to Jesus in order to avoid arrest. This does not represent the inevitable way of relating these episodes, as is made clear by

the fact that, although *Matt.* 26.57–75 follows Mark's arrangement, *Luke* 22.56–71 does not but has all of Peter's denials precede Jesus' giving of faithful testimony. The significance becomes obvious when we turn to *John* 18.15–27. John replaces Mark's Sanhedrin trial, having taken up its issues and verdict in 10.22–39 and 11.47–53, with an interrogation before Annas, retaining only the mention of Jesus being struck by a guard (cf. *John* 18.22 with *Mark* 16.65). But, more importantly, he does keep Mark's distinctive intercalation at this point, even following Mark's repetition of the mention of Peter warning himself. He not only keeps it but also intensifies it by having one of Peter's denials before Jesus' witness under interrogation and then returning to the other two after it. His main point is similar to Mark's – the contrasting models for witness of Peter and Jesus.

Lest this clear example of John's dependence on a characteristic Markan feature be thought to occur only in the passion narrative, it is worth considering *John* 6. The fact that the feeding of the five thousand is followed by the walking on the water in both *John* 6.1–21 and *Mark* 6.32–52 is often explained, because of the differences between the two accounts, as an instance of common dependence on the oral tradition. Yet John's differences from Mark in the narration of these two incidents can all be accounted for plausibly in terms of John's particular literary and theological concerns (see the commentary), and, once the whole block of material from *Mark* 6.32–8.33 is taken into account, the oral tradition explanation becomes less likely than the one that John knew well this section of Mark. The idea of following the feeding with a discourse on bread is not unique to John. It needs to be remembered that in *Mark* 8.1–10 there is a second feeding – of the four thousand – and this is followed by a discourse on bread in 8.14–21. That discourse with its questions addressed to the disciples underlines that they have not understood the significance of the feedings (cf. also *Mark* 6.52). More precisely, they have failed to understand the revelation that has taken place in the breaking of the bread. John's discourse develops this theme Christologically in terms of Jesus being the bread given for the life of the world. It includes a demand from 'the Jews' for a sign, despite the fact that Jesus has just performed one in the feeding (6.30). Similarly, Mark has the Pharisees ask for a sign immediately after the feeding of the four thousand (*Mark* 8.11–13). Shortly after the bread discourse Mark has Peter's confession (*Mark* 8.29) and John has the equivalent confession of Peter shortly after the bread of life material (6.68–9). When in *Mark* Peter takes offence at Jesus' subsequent teaching about the necessity of his suffering, he is rebuked as Jesus calls him Satan and contrasts the thinking determined by the divine realm and the thinking that is confined to human categories (*Mark* 8.31–3). Jesus' reply in John also links a disciple with Satan or the devil, but John makes this Judas rather than Peter. Peter's response to the

prediction of Jesus' suffering in Mark has its equivalent in John in those disciples who take offence at the necessity of believing that the Son of man's flesh is to be given for the world's life, and in this context John's equivalent to the contrast between divine and human ways of thinking is the contrast between Spirit and flesh, where the latter term indicates the response to the revelation in Jesus that remains on the merely human level (6.60–3). By far the most reasonable explanation of this sequence and its content throughout *John* 6 is that the evangelist is familiar with Mark's editorial arrangement in the similar sequence and content to be found in *Mark* 6.32–52 and 8.1–33.

John's knowledge of Matthew and Luke's editorial activity can also be shown. Here we can only provide one instance where knowledge of Matthew is indicated. In *John* 4.46–54 the healing of the official's son invites comparison with the similar healing at a distance of the centurion's servant or son in *Matt.* 8.5–13 and *Luke* 7.1–10. The major differences in John result from his characteristic concerns. As elsewhere where there are Synoptic parallels to the Johannine miracles, John intensifies the miraculous. Here he has Jesus heal not just from a distance within Capernaum but from the neighbouring town of Cana (4.46–7, 50a). His story is also moulded to deal with a theme treated elsewhere – the difference between believing on the basis of signs and believing simply on the basis of Jesus' word (4.48, 50b). None of the details of John's version appear to be more primitive than those in Matthew or Luke or to require positing an oral tradition earlier than the material Matthew and Luke have in common. And in fact John's closest agreements with their accounts is not with the material Matthew and Luke have in common but in the places where they diverge. At the beginning it is only *Luke* 7.2 and *John* 4.47 that have the sick person on the point of death and at the end it is only *Matt.* 8.13 and *John* 4.52–3 that stress the synchronicity between the hour of Jesus' word of healing and the hour the healing occurs. But there is a further significant detail in John's story that confirms dependence on Matthew. In *John* 8.52 the report is given that 'the fever left him'. This is the first time fever has been mentioned in the story and it is not mentioned in either of Matthew's or Luke's versions of the story. In fact, with only one exception, sick people in the Gospels are never reported as having fever. That exception is Peter's mother-in-law (*Mark* 1.31 par.), of whom it is also reported that 'the fever left her'. And Matthew alone places that statement immediately after his account of the healing of the centurion's servant (*Matt.* 8.14–15). John, then, almost certainly has to be familiar with Matthew's editorial arrangement.

The examples given so far have dealt primarily with events. But John also derives particular sayings of Jesus from the Synoptics. Many of the sayings prefaced by the double Amen formulation provide instances of this phenomenon. Sometimes the Synoptic sayings have been heavily

coloured by the Johannine idiom and sometimes they have been left relatively untouched before they are placed on the lips of John's Jesus. The first such saying, in 1.51, is an example of the former approach – 'You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.' The Synoptic text that has the three elements of the heavens being opened or shaken, seeing the Son of Man, and angels accompanying him is Mark 13.25–7. It has been reworked in the light of John's more realized eschatology and his use of Gen. 28.12 to refer to the present mission of Jesus. Similarly, the sayings in 3.3, 5 about not seeing or entering the kingdom of God unless one is born from above or born of water and the Spirit are Johannine reformulations of the single Amen saying in Luke 18.17 and Matt. 18.3. The saying about the necessity of eating the Son of Man's flesh and drinking his blood in 6.53 is a reformulation of the commands to eat and drink found only in the eucharistic words of Matt. 26.26–8. Jesus' assertion that he is the door in 10.7 is John's Christological interpretation of Matt. 7.13–14 and Luke 13.24. The sayings of 13.16, 20 are derived more straightforwardly from those in Matt. 10.24, 40 respectively, while 13.21, 36b are taken almost verbatim from the single Amen sayings in Mark 14.18 and Matt. 26.34 respectively. Later, in the farewell discourse, 16.20, 23 involve reworkings of Luke 6.21, 25 and Luke 11.9–10 respectively. Other double Amen sayings could be mentioned in this regard but these suffice to show that in some cases they have come from Mark, in others from Matthew and in still others from Luke, and in these examples there are no obvious indicators that John knew the sayings from some other source. Other examples of John's knowledge of and yet creative freedom with Jesus' teaching in the Synoptics could be given, but in one place a whole monologue appears to have been built up from such a base. The prayer of Jesus in 17.1–26 takes up the so-called 'Lord's Prayer' (Matt. 6.9–15; Luke 11.1–4), is closest to the Matthean version, adapts its clauses into the Johannine idiom and weaves them into its own distinctive portrait of Jesus (see the commentary on this passage).

Finally, John's creativity with his Synoptic sources can be seen not only in the way he has handled particular events or sayings but also in the way he has employed them to develop his own larger themes. Of these the relationship of Jesus as Son to God as Father is particularly dominant. In the Synoptics such a relationship comes to expression in the saying found in Matt. 11.27 and Luke 10.22 – 'All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.' Various aspects of this saying are taken up in the Fourth Gospel – the handing over of all things to the Son (3.35; 5.22; 17.2), the Son's knowledge of the Father (7.25; 8.55; 17.25), the mutual knowledge of Father and Son (10.14–15), and the knowledge of the Father by chosen

others through the Son's revelation of him (8.19; 14.7, 9; 15.15b–16a; 17.6, 26). But it is not just that there are specific references that reflect this saying. The evangelist has allowed its concepts to shape decisively and in a variety of ways much of the rest of his presentation of Jesus in the narrative. That presentation is based on the conviction that Jesus is the Son who has unique knowledge of his Father and has been given full authorization by him and therefore is in the position of being able to reveal God as Father in such a way that others can share in knowing God.

As noted earlier, another prominent way of shaping the narrative is through the cluster of juridical metaphors which, together with actual interrogations and trials, constitute the judgement or trial motif. In concluding this section, attention will be drawn briefly to a few instances of the creative use of the Synoptics in developing this motif (see Lincoln 2000: 307–26 for a more extensive discussion). The judgement motif in the Fourth Gospel, with its conviction that God's sovereign claim on the world is being established in Jesus, is a Johannine replaying of the Synoptic notion of God's kingdom or rule being inaugurated by Jesus. John presents Jesus as on trial before 'the Jews' throughout his public mission. In doing so, he takes up elements from the Synoptic account of the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin, which he distinctively omits from his own passion narrative, and shows clear knowledge of Mark and Luke. The accusation of false witnesses in Mark 14.58 that Jesus threatened to destroy the temple and build another in three days is turned into an assertion of Jesus himself in 2.19. The question and answer about Jesus as Messiah and Son of God and the issue of blasphemy found in Mark 14.61–4 are treated towards the end of the public mission in the trial scene with 'the Jews' in 10.22–39, and the role of the high priest in securing the agreement of the Sanhedrin to put Jesus to death in Mark 14.63–4 is taken up in 11.47–53 in the account of Caiaphas' decision, at a meeting of the Sanhedrin, that Jesus is to die. As in Luke 22.67–71, in 10.22–39 John separates out the two issues of whether Jesus is Messiah and whether he is Son of God, and the opening of his dialogue in 10.24–5 – '“If you are indeed the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe.”’ – corresponds most closely to Luke 22.67–8 – '“If you are the Christ, tell us.” He replied, “If I tell you, you will not believe.”’ John's story about the healing of a paralysed man on the sabbath in 5.1–18 leads into a trial scene, with the Jewish religious leaders interrogating Jesus about his identity in 5.19–47. For the healing story John has combined elements from Mark 2.1–12 about the healing of a paralysed man and Mark 3.1–6 about a healing on the sabbath, and Jesus' command to the man in 5.8 corresponds in wording to the command in Mark 2.9, 11. John, therefore, appears to know the controversy stories of Mark 2.1–3.6 but transforms such Synoptic controversies about the law, purity and table fellowship

with sinners into extended interrogation scenes where what is at issue is Jesus' witness to his relationship as Son to God as his Father.

In the farewell discourse the evangelist has combined material from two farewell settings in Mark – Mark 13.1–37, where Jesus talks of a future coming of the Son of Man, and Mark 14.17–31, where he speaks of the Son of Man's going – and has reinterpreted Jesus' departure and return from his own distinctive perspective. It is here that he also deals with the continuation of the judgement process after Jesus' departure, as both the Spirit of truth as Advocate and the disciples continue Jesus' witness in a context where the disciples will be hated and face death (15.18–16.4a). All these elements have been developed from Mark 13.9–13 in particular, where the disciples are told that because of their allegiance to Jesus they will find themselves handed over to councils, beaten in synagogues and standing before governors and kings to bear witness to them. When they are brought to trial, however, they are not to be concerned about what to say, but to utter whatever is given to them at the time, because it will not be they who speak but the Holy Spirit. This will also be a period when they experience betrayal and death through the opposition of other family members and 'will be hated by all because of my name'. The judgement or trial motif receives further elaboration in John's passion narrative, primarily through the evangelist providing a much more extensive version of the Roman trial account in Mark 15.1–15 and making this the centrepiece of the passion narrative. All the changes to Mark's account can be explained by John's knowledge of the Matthean and Lukan versions and by his own stylistic and theological concerns. Illustrative of the latter is the way in which the exchange about kingship from Mark 15.2 is reworked to make kingship subordinate to Jesus' role in God's process of judgement – 'Pilate therefore said to him, "So, then, you are a king?" Jesus replied, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."' (18.37).

What should be clear from the preceding discussion is that the fourth evangelist handles his source material from the Synoptics with a creative and imaginative freedom in order to promote his own theological and persuasive ends. He is so thoroughly familiar with these earlier versions of the story of Jesus that, in reflecting on them in his own setting and in the light of the issues with which it confronts him, he is able to weave parts of them into his fresh attempt to set the story in a cosmic context and to penetrate the implications of its protagonist's unique relationship with God. In many ways to adopt this perspective is to return to what ancient interpreters meant by calling John a 'spiritual Gospel' in relation to the Synoptics. The evangelist supplements the other Gospels not so much by providing additional historical information about Jesus but by enhancing their portrayal of him through a further narrative that makes more explicit the significance of his oneness with God.

Further reading

For an account of twentieth-century research on this topic, see D. M. Smith, *John among the Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992). For the view that John is independent of the Synoptics, see C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963). For a variety of essays espousing John's dependence on the Synoptics, see A. Denaux (ed.), *John and the Synoptics* (Louvain: Louvain University Press, 1992).

HISTORICITY AND TRUTH

So far it has been argued that the Fourth Gospel is a carefully crafted narrative whose story line is carried along by means of major themes and that it belongs to the genre of ancient biography, in which there was a wide range of mixes of more reliable and more legendary elements. In regard to the mix found in the Fourth Gospel, it has also been argued that it is highly unlikely that its traditions stem from an eyewitness author, such as John, the son of Zebedee. In addition, the previous section has claimed that in those cases where the material in the Fourth Gospel overlaps with that in the Synoptics, the most likely explanation is that this is because the fourth evangelist knew and adapted for his own purposes parts of the Synoptic Gospels and that in doing so he exercised considerable creative freedom. This too has a bearing on the matter of John's historicity. One of the attractions, for some, of the opposing view that John has independently used oral traditions that were also employed by the Synoptics is that this makes the Gospel more likely to contain its own reliable historical sources (cf. esp. Dodd 1963). But if John has used the Synoptics, this obviously means that he can no longer be treated as an independent witness to the material that they have in common.

But what then of the materials that are unique to John? How should they be evaluated in terms of their likely historicity? Certainly there should be no initial prejudice, based on the conviction that only the Synoptics have any value for reconstructing the life of the historical Jesus, against such materials, which need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. They can only be discussed briefly here and the commentary will provide somewhat fuller treatments of most of them in the appropriate places. It should also be remembered that conclusions about such matters will, of course, nearly always be in terms of greater or lesser probability. It should also be expected that, if ancient readers were both disinclined and frequently unable to disentangle the factual and the legendary, the paucity of evidence and sources and the lapse of so much time will make it a lot more difficult than is sometimes assumed for present-day readers

to distinguish these elements clearly, and so sometimes a conclusion may need to be that the evidence is inconclusive. Frequently, even the most positive conclusion that can be reached is that a particular episode or saying goes back to the earliest layer of tradition and in that form may also therefore have some degree of probability for the setting of Jesus' mission, as best we can reconstruct the latter's contours.

The discourses or dialogues of Jesus for the most part contain material that is unique to this Gospel. Sometimes they may be built up from or include a reformulated Synoptic saying. Sometimes some piece of otherwise unknown oral tradition may lie behind Johannine sayings. It is not implausible, for example, that 5.19–20 is based on an earlier proverb about an apprentice son, as some have argued, or that the sayings about sowing, reaping and the harvest in 4.35–7 or about a grain of wheat in 12.24 have a traditional background, since Jesus is known from the Synoptics to have used such agricultural analogies in his teaching. But the bulk of the words unique to Jesus in this Gospel consist of major assertions about his own identity and mission, assertions in which he claims to have a unique relationship with God, to be aware of his pre-existence, to have the Father dwelling in him, to embody life or light or truth and to give his flesh as life for the world. Again the seeds for some of these assertions may be implicit in the Synoptic tradition, but, with the notable isolated exception of the saying found in Matt. 11.27 and Luke 10.22, there is nothing in the Synoptics to compare with this teaching that makes the identity of Jesus its explicit focus. If the profound Christological claims of the Fourth Gospel really corresponded to the words of the historical Jesus, it is quite implausible that none of the Synoptic evangelists would have picked them up. Instead these are the developed post-resurrection convictions about Jesus which have become contentious in the evangelist's own time and setting and have been read back into the teaching of Jesus and the disputes of his day. This conclusion is decisive for the judgement that the material in 5.18–47; 6.25–65; 8.12–59; 10.1–18, 22–39; 13.31–17.26 is secondary and makes it unlikely that the content of the conversations with Nicodemus (3.1–21) and the Samaritan woman (4.7–30) have any claim to be reliable historical tradition.

In terms of historicity, then, can a distinction perhaps be made in the material unique to John between the presentation of Jesus' identity in the speech material and the events in the story line with their geographical and chronological framework? The Synoptics give the impression that Jesus' mission lasted for a year, while John has it spread over a three-year period. Is not John's information more reliable at this point? The issue, however, is not quite as straightforward as this. Mark (followed by Matthew and Luke) actually shows no interest in the length of Jesus' ministry but, in composing what has been called his 'passion narrative with an extended introduction', has clustered together parables,

conflict stories and miracles that may have happened over a much longer period in order to make them lead into the one visit to Jerusalem that he is interested in, namely Jesus' last one. He and his sources may well have assumed that, like other observant Jews, Jesus made other festival pilgrimages to Jerusalem, but he has no particular interest in these. The Q saying in which Jesus addresses Jerusalem and says, 'How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing' (Luke 13.34–5 and Matt. 23.37–8), strongly suggests that Jesus took his message to Jerusalem on more than just this one occasion. So it is highly probable that Jesus' mission lasted longer than a year, but this does not necessarily mean that John's account is therefore an accurate one. Since the first of Jesus' four visits to Jerusalem in the Fourth Gospel is to initiate the cleansing of the temple incident, which the Synoptics place far more plausibly toward the end of Jesus' mission as the catalyst for his arrest and death, this does not inspire confidence. And John does have a particular interest in the festivals, because he wishes to show that Jesus fulfils what they symbolize, and so it suits his purposes to have Jesus attend some of these in Jerusalem. The number of visits to festivals and the temple in John also produces its own problem for the plot. The hostile reception each time results in various unsuccessful attempts to kill, arrest or stone Jesus and in his unexplained escapes (cf. 5.18; 7.32, 45–6; 8.59; 10.31, 39), which appear rather contrived. Certainly the evangelist has a particular interest in Jesus' contacts with Jerusalem and he or his tradition have enough accurate topographical knowledge of the city to supply convincing settings for what may well be Johannine versions of Synoptic miracles in 5.1–18 and 9.1–12 (see the commentary on these passages). But, beyond the entirely plausible assumption that Jesus' mission lasted longer than a year, it is by no means clear that the chronological framework of the Fourth Gospel's narrative reflects more than literary and theological concerns at work.

Within the public mission of Jesus the first and the last signs – the turning of water into wine and the raising of Lazarus – are unique to the Fourth Gospel. Here it needs to be said that a negative historical evaluation on either or both of these incidents should not be dismissed as the result of bias against the miraculous. It is not inconsistent, for example, to believe in the resurrection of Jesus or to find it probable that he was able to heal miraculously and still to hold on literary and historical grounds that a particular account of some other miracle is unlikely to be reliable. In the case of turning water into wine, as the commentary shows in some detail, problems arise from the strangely allusive recounting of the actual miracle and the way in which the reactions of those involved are not reported and only the disciples, who were not involved and whose understanding of the occurrence is not explained, are said to have believed. In addition, almost all the key ingredients that make this story a sign belong

to specifically Johannine stylistic structures, literary motifs and theological themes. These include the mention of Jesus' address to and relationship with his mother, the pattern of request, rebuff and then response on Jesus' own terms, the motifs of the hour and of the ignorance of the origin of Jesus' gift, the theme of the fulfilment/replacement of the significance of Jewish religious observances, and the symbolism of the wine as the abundance Jesus provides for living and of the wedding at which Jesus is the true bridegroom. If one were to remove most of these, there would be very little indeed left of any underlying incident. More basically, the story's essential content depends on a belief about Jesus that arose only after the resurrection, namely, that he was a divine being who was able to transform one of the four elements. This accounts also for the closest parallels to and likely influences on the story coming from the traditions about Dionysus. This legendary story enables John to begin the mission of Jesus with the bold claim that the abundant life offered by this Jewish Messiah who is one with God not only surpasses the provision of the law but also the claims made on behalf of rival gods.

Some different factors have to be taken into account in assessing the story of the raising of Lazarus. This story is crucial to the Fourth Gospel's plot, because it, and not the temple incident, as in the Synoptics, precipitates the actions of the authorities leading to Jesus' death. It is far less historically plausible in this pivotal role than Jesus' symbolic action in the temple designed to disrupt the sacrificial system. The core action in the episode, the raising of a dead person, does, however, have attestation from the Synoptic tradition. The raising of Jairus' daughter and the son of the widow of Nain are found in Mark 5:21–43 par. and Luke 7:11–17 respectively, and the Q saying (Luke 7:22; Matt. 11:5), in the report of Jesus' ministry to be relayed to the imprisoned John the Baptist, mentions that 'the dead are raised'. Evidently reports about Jesus' power to raise the dead circulated from a very early stage. But the present form of John's story, with its particular figures and their characterization, its other literary features and its clearly Johannine theological themes in the dialogue, appears to be a skilful composition on the part of the evangelist, in which the named characters Martha, Mary and Lazarus have been taken over from Luke's Gospel (Luke 10:38–42; 16:19–31). John's narrative could well be a very extensive literary elaboration based on the general tradition that Jesus raised the dead or on one particular tradition of the raising of a dead man, which he has set in Bethany and associated with a family said to be close to Jesus, and whose miraculous character he has heightened by having the dead man already in the tomb for four days.

While the change in the Fourth Gospel's portrayal of John the Baptist from the Synoptic prophet of coming judgement to this Gospel's witness to its high Christology is clearly a secondary feature, its presentation of the early part of Jesus' mission as, unlike the Synoptics, having Jesus and John

the Baptist operating at the same time and Jesus also baptizing (3:22–36) is another matter. This feature of the account has been deemed historically accurate by a significant number of scholars. They suggest that Mark, followed by Matthew and Luke, has good literary and theological reasons for its clear sequence in which John the Baptist's mission is completed before that of Jesus begins. They then argue that, if the historical Jesus was baptized by John and held him in high regard, it would make sense that initially he would have spent some time with John and under his influence practised similar baptismal rites. One problem here is with the term 'similar'. Proponents of this view do not agree on what was entailed in Jesus' baptizing activity, with some considering that Jesus' baptism merely continued the significance of John's, others supposing that it had its own distinctive significance, and some holding that it was a temporary phenomenon (which is a conjecture, since the Fourth Gospel tells us no such thing) and others that it continued throughout Jesus' mission. Those who hold that it simply continued the significance of John's baptism also argue that the evangelist or his tradition would not have created an incident which suggests Jesus simply continued John the Baptist's baptism and its significance, because this would have been an embarrassment, as in the case of Jesus' baptism by John, where it is agreed that the latter is almost certain to be historical since it would not have been invented. But this argument appears to backfire. Given that the fourth evangelist had already gone to such lengths to show John's subordinate role and had suppressed Jesus' baptism by John in the process, it becomes extremely difficult to imagine that he would now include such a tradition if he understood it to involve Jesus simply carrying on John's baptism. If it is held, as other scholars do, that, for Jesus, baptizing constituted a sign that those baptized had accepted his new message about the kingdom of God, had entered into its reality and had become his disciples, then his baptism takes on a significance akin to the later Christian rite and it becomes almost incredible that the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel elsewhere fail even to hint that this was part of people's response to Jesus' message. If the origins of Christian baptism lay in a practice initiated by Jesus himself, which had a different meaning from John's baptism, it is extremely hard to see why there is no indication of this important link between the church and its founder in other early Christian writings. There are in fact no strong reasons to doubt that the Synoptics, which are substantially reliable in their other information about John the Baptist's mission, are right that that mission concluded with his arrest and imprisonment before that of Jesus began. At the same time, given John's pervasive rewriting of the Baptist tradition in order to establish Jesus' superiority, it is not hard to see why he would also have wanted to show that baptizing with water, which had become a major feature of Christian initiation, is not to be thought of as the earlier exclusive prerogative of John but that Jesus

and/or his followers had also engaged in this activity, which went back to the same period as John the Baptist's activity (see the discussion of 4.2 in the commentary). This enables the two baptisms to be juxtaposed within the narrative and a clear answer to be given from the mouth of John himself about which of the two is to be endorsed. The contemporaneity of the two missions also provides the appropriate setting for John's announcement, 'He must increase, but I must decrease.' The evidence about the early part of Jesus' career is meagre, but the above considerations should give pause to any confidence that the Fourth Gospel provides accurate information at this point and indicate that at best this account contains material of uncertain historical value.

If we move from the beginning of the Gospel to the end, what can be said about the material unique to John in the passion narrative? Does this have a greater claim to historical reliability? On such matters as the washing of the disciples' feet, the involvement of the Romans in Jesus' arrest and the interrogation before Annas, readers should consult the appropriate places in the commentary. Here we can only discuss briefly the major difference between John and the Synoptics on the date of the last supper and the death of Jesus. Despite the attempts of some to harmonize the two or to suggest reckoning according to different calendars, the most straightforward interpretation of their narratives is that Mark (followed by Matthew and Luke) presents Jesus' last meal with his disciples as a Passover meal and has Jesus die later on the same day, 15 Nisan, whereas John has the meal and the death on the preceding day, 14 Nisan, the day of preparation for the Passover. Mark 14.12-16 makes it clear that the preparations for the meal take place the preceding day, 'when the Passover lamb is sacrificed', and that the preparations are for the Passover meal. In Mark 14.17-25 the meal itself is set in the evening, at the beginning of the next day, when the Passover meal was supposed to be eaten, and, although the term 'Passover' is not now used (but cf. Luke 22.15), what is described is completely compatible with what readers have been led to expect. Mark's interest is, of course, in Jesus' words about his death and betrayal and in the interpretation he gives to the bread and the wine. A Passover celebration would have included interpretation of the various elements in the meal – the meat of the Passover offering, the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs. Jesus gives a new interpretation of the bread and adds to this an interpretation of the wine that would have accompanied the meal. The Hallel psalms (Pss 113-18) were supposed to be sung at Passover and Mark's account mentions the singing of one of these at the end of the meal. John's account is quite different. There is nothing in the account of the last meal to suggest that it is a Passover meal and there are no words of interpretation of bread and wine. Instead the chronological setting for the meal is 'before the festival of Passover' (13.1) and there is an indication in the account of this meal that the

Passover meal is still future (13.29). After Jesus is arrested later on the same day and eventually put on trial before Pilate, there are two further time references in regard to Passover. In 18.28 those who take Jesus to Pilate are said not to enter the praetorium because they did not want to become ritually impure but to be able to eat the Passover. Again the Passover meal remains a future event. The precise dating becomes clear in 19.14 – 'now it was the day of preparation for the Passover'. The dating is repeated in the crucifixion account in 19.31, where its significance for the interpretation of Jesus' death also becomes apparent, because, after the report that the soldiers did not break Jesus' legs (19.33), it is then stated in 19.36 that 'these things happened in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones will be broken."' This takes up texts about the Passover lamb (Exod. 12.46; Num. 9.12) and the righteous sufferer (Ps. 34.20). Jesus' death is to be seen as that of the true Passover lamb (cf. also 1.29, 36) and it takes place on the day of preparation, the time of the slaughter of the Passover lambs. Thereby it fulfils and replaces the significance of the death of the Passover sacrificial victims.

In theory, both accounts might be wrong, but, given that there is no reason to doubt that Jesus died around the time of Passover and assuming that one of the two earliest conflicting traditions is likely to be right, again a significant number of scholars hold that here it is John, and not Mark, who has the accurate dating. The arguments are, however, fairly evenly balanced. Those who prefer John's dating have three main arguments. The first is that the nature and amount of activities that Mark's account places on the day of Passover tell against it; the schedule is too packed and its activities would not have been permitted on this special feast day. The second is that, since the Christian Lord's Supper was seen in terms of the Passover, Mark or his tradition thought that the last supper should also be depicted as a Passover meal. The third argument claims that the theological interpretation in John's account – the synchronicity between Jesus' death and the slaughter of the Passover lambs – is not explained but works only through subtle allusion and therefore it does not appear that John has created the chronology on the basis of a prior theological conviction. None of these arguments is especially compelling. Presenting Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion within a twelve-hour period is a problem, but it is a problem for John as much as for Mark. The problem is simply shifted to one day earlier, and most of the activities that were usually not permitted on the day of Passover would also not have been permitted on the eve of a festival. But in any case the regulations appealed to are taken from the later Mishnah and may not have been in force earlier, and there were plenty of instances in which exceptional circumstances were allowed to override laws. As regards the second argument, if John's dating were right, Mark or his tradition would be erasing the clear symbolism of Jesus as the Passover lamb in order to create a link between Passover and the

celebration of the Christian eucharist, which was not at all necessary, since the eucharist was not tied to the annual Passover but observed far more frequently. The motivation for such a change would appear to require a far more convincing explanation. In addition, the tables can be turned at this point and it can be claimed about Mark what the third argument suggests about John. In Mark 14.17–25 the evangelist can simply assume the various elements of the Passover meal. If Mark was changing an earlier tradition or creating a new one, he would have made sure all the Passover aspects of the meal were more explicit. The third argument is the weakest. John does give very clear clues in order to alert his readers to the significance he is attaching to Jesus' death. His Jewish readers would not need any explanation that the day of preparation was the day of the slaughter of the lambs. But then John alone has added to his account of the crucifixion the report that the soldiers did not break Jesus' legs and an accompanying Scripture text to draw out the point he is making. Add to this that his account alone has the strange mention of hyssop (19.29), which recalls the hyssop used to sprinkle the blood of the Passover lamb on the doors of the Israelites' houses (Exod. 12.22), and it can be seen that he provides a variety of pointers to the meaning he wants to convey. What is more, this particular motif of Jesus' death as that of the true Passover lamb fits one of John's other major theological concerns, namely, to show Jesus as the fulfilment and replacement of the symbolism of the Jewish festivals. To say, as some do, that there are solid grounds for preferring John's dating is to make an entirely misleading claim. If anything, the previous observations about the way John's theological concerns have shaped his account outweigh anything that can be demonstrated about Mark's concerns and tilt the balance of probabilities in favour of the historicity of Mark's dating. And if, as we have argued, John knew and used Mark, then that too supports the view that John's dating is a modification, similar to others, introduced into the narrative for theological rather than historical purposes.

Enough examples have now been discussed to indicate that very little of the material unique to John can be said with any confidence to provide additional reliable historical information about the life of Jesus. The implication of such a conclusion is that, as regards historicity, for the most part the assessment of John's Gospel is dependent on the assessment of the Synoptic accounts that this Gospel has taken up, modified and embellished for its own purposes. If, as appears highly likely, the core of those Synoptic traditions of deeds and sayings, which have been creatively incorporated into the Fourth Gospel, provides reliable historical reminiscence about the mission of Jesus, then this Gospel's own retelling of the story has the same foundations. We are now in a position to appreciate more fully the force of the earlier discussion about genre. The Fourth Gospel, like many other ancient biographies, is a narrative which contains

a substratum of core events from the tradition with substantial claims to reliability, but one which is now shaped by an interpretive superstructure which contains a considerable amount of embellishment, including some legendary or fictive elements. More specifically, the Fourth Gospel's interpretive superstructure is determined by the evangelist's theological convictions arising from his post-resurrection faith and its development in particular circumstances. He allows his interpretive framework to pervade his life of Jesus far more extensively than do the Synoptic evangelists, who, of course, also shape their biographies according to their distinctive theological concerns.

In several places the Fourth Gospel reflects awareness of this narrative strategy. It indicates that the significance being attached to events is a result of the disciples' later remembrance in the light of their post-resurrection belief and accompanying fresh understanding of their Scriptures (cf. 2.17, 22; 12.16; 13.7). Frequently the moulding of the story of Jesus by the concerns of a later perspective is such that the two are collapsed together and Jesus, in the setting of his mission and in debate with his opponents, expresses the convictions of the evangelist and his community in their debates with opponents. One striking instance of this compression of the two perspectives is the account of the giving of sight to the man born blind (9.1–41), where the repercussions of the healing miracle very soon begin to reflect the repercussions of belief in Jesus in the later situation. This is clearly signalled in the central scene, in which the parents of the man born blind are said to fear 'the Jews', because the latter had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah should be put out of the synagogue (9.22). All the aspects of this description are anachronistic in respect to Jesus' earthly mission and pertain to the situation faced by later Johannine Jewish Christians. This sort of phenomenon has led to the Gospel being described as a 'two-level drama' (Martyn 1979: 60). Some have claimed that recent study has undermined the notion of the narrative working at two levels. It has done nothing of the sort. It has simply raised some questions about particular ways in which this insight has been developed by certain scholars. The narrative's clear merging of perspectives is attributed by the Gospel itself to the guidance of the Spirit. In the physical absence of Jesus, the Advocate continues his teaching role, enabling Jesus' followers to remember constructively his words and deeds in a way that makes the past contemporary and helps to form their future (cf. 14.26). The function of the Spirit is to witness to the significance of Jesus and its implications and thereby, as the Spirit of truth, lead believers into all the truth (15.26; 16.13). The evangelist's contemporizing interpretive narrative is part of this truth. And since the Spirit also takes what belongs to Jesus and declares it to his followers (16.14–15), from the point of view of the Gospel it is indeed Jesus who speaks in its narrative, not so much the earthly Jesus but the exalted Jesus who speaks through

the Spirit to his followers' present needs. In the Gospel's epilogue the evangelist's interpretive embellishment of the tradition is attributed to the witness of the Beloved Disciple and the final writer and his community endorse that testimony as true (21.24).

How are such truth claims to be related to the conclusions reached about the Gospel's historicity? The two matters are related but should not be confused, as has frequently been the case. It needs to be underlined that a claim to truth is specific to whatever genre is under discussion. There is the truth of a poem, of a historical monograph, of a scientific treatise, of a novel, or, in the case of the Fourth Gospel, of an ancient biography, since that is the form its witness takes. As has been discussed earlier, to judge the integrity or truth of such a biography on the basis of either ancient or modern historiography is simply to misunderstand the literary tradition of which it is a part and to make a category mistake. The question of the Fourth Gospel's truth is rather this: does it, through its mixture of tradition and creative interpretation, reliably draw out the significance of the life which it narrates? Such a question in fact coheres with this Gospel's own notion of truth, which, in its most general sense, stands for the reality of God's revelation in Christ. But, as has been noted earlier, the concept takes on a distinctive force through its association with the judgement or trial motif and its Scriptural presuppositions. As part of the latter, truth is frequently paired with righteous judgement or justice (cf. e.g. Isa. 42.3; 45.19; 48.1; 59.14). For God to judge justly is for God to determine, declare and demonstrate the truth. In the context of a trial, then, truth will stand for the whole process of judging, culminating in the verdict, and its specific content will be dependent on the particular issue at stake. According to 20.31, the issue in this Gospel is whether a particular Jew, Jesus of Nazareth, is the Messiah, the Son of God, and, from the rest of the narrative discourse it can be added, therefore one with God. The discourse's depiction of the relation between Jesus and God also justifies putting the issue the other way around. As it concerns God, it is whether God is the God who is now known in the crucified Jesus and whether through him God has effected a judgement that means life for the world. Truth is the affirmative judgement on these interrelated issues and can even be said to be embodied in Jesus. The notion of truth, then, is far more comprehensive than matters of historicity and the use of ancient biography as the vehicle for witnessing to this truth means that it was not confused with the factual accuracy of its narrative.

Once this is clear, the overlap between this truth and history can also be stressed. As with other ancient biographers, it is important for the fourth evangelist that his subject actually existed; in this case it is essential, given his claim that this was the Word who became flesh (1.14). It is also important that the broad contours of the life narrated cohere with what he and his readers would know from elsewhere about the subject – that,

for example, he was a Jewish teacher who attracted disciples, performed miracles, said things about God and God's relation to Israel and the world that provoked controversy and led to hostility towards him on the part of the religious authorities, was arrested, put on trial, crucified by the Romans and then raised from the dead. With this foundation of basic features from the historical tradition in place, the evangelist employs the other conventions of ancient biographies, such as embellishment and invention, to devote his narrative to drawing out the all-important truth of this particular life. When the final writer and his community confirm the truth of this witness, they do so, among other reasons, because they trust the perspective of the Beloved Disciple, because they find it plausible and in line with whatever they already know about the traditions of Jesus' life and death, and because this interpretation of the significance of that life and death provides a persuasive explanation of and vision for their experience of life in the world as a particular group of Christian believers. Later Christian readers gave a further, similar endorsement to the Fourth Gospel's truth claims as they acknowledged its canonical status.

Late-modern readers bring a distinctive set of concerns about history to their engagement with this Gospel. They are heirs of the Enlightenment preoccupation with what actually happened in the past and its accompanying series of quests for the historical Jesus. At the same time they share the more recent recognition that all historical 'facts' already involve interpretation and its accompanying perception that the writing of history is also the writing of narrative containing inevitable elements of fictionalization. It is inevitable and valid that such readers will continue to pursue historical criticism in a chastened fashion, as our earlier discussion has attempted to do with its talk of core historical traditions, material of dubious historical quality and legendary elements. The probable results of that criticism in regard to how much historical tradition and how much fiction-like embellishment this Gospel contains need not, however, provide any obstacle to a potential recognition of its truth. Indeed, as we have seen, in regard to the truth of the narrative in its own terms, the attempt to disentangle precisely how much of the detail is historically reliable and how much is fictive misses the point. Such attempts need to be pursued as rigorously as possible and will always be contested but they will not provide the determinative criteria of truth by which this Gospel is to be judged.

Further reading

For a very different, maximalist assessment of John's historicity, based on the Gospel's author being the disciple John, the son of Zebedee, see C. L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001). For a critical minimalist assessment, see M. Casey, *Is John's*

Gospel True? (London: Routledge, 1996). For a fuller discussion of truth and its appropriation in relation to the Fourth Gospel, see A. T. Lincoln, *Truth on Trial* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2000), esp. 354–454.

COMPOSITION OF THE GOSPEL AND RELATION TO OTHER JOHANNINE LITERATURE

The commentary attempts to make sense of the final form of the Gospel. Only in relation to the most obvious signs of editing, such as hymn-like material behind the prologue or the gloss in 4.2 or the second part of the farewell discourse in 15.1–16.31 or the epilogue in 21.1–25, does it refer to the history of the Gospel's composition. Yet, as these examples indicate, there are a number of awkward features of the narrative which provoke questions about how it was composed and what design or process lay behind it. But detecting signs of editorial work is one thing; reconstructing the process of composition with any precision is another. Even the attempt to sketch what might be its main stages involves inevitable guesswork.

Yet there is evidence that points to such a process. Much of this consists of perplexing or apparently faulty connections, which scholars call aporias. It might be claimed that some of these difficulties are in the eye of the beholder or can be plausibly explained without going behind the present narrative. But the latter type of explanations often stretch credibility too far and most of the following examples do require some hypothesis that takes into account the history of the text's composition. Within the prologue, for example, 1.15 ('This was he of whom I said...') is a strange introduction to a statement by John the Baptist, when there is no report of him saying anything earlier, and when the statement will be repeated later in 1.30. The healing of the official's son is called Jesus' second sign in 4.54, yet, after turning water into wine, Jesus had done other signs before this one (cf. 2.23). The transition between chapters 5 and 6 is extremely awkward geographically. The setting for chapter 5 is Jerusalem and then without any indication of Jesus leaving Jerusalem, 6.1 states that after this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. In 7.1–13 there is a discussion between Jesus and his brothers in which they urge him to go to Judaea and the upcoming festival in Jerusalem so that he can perform his miracles publicly. Again, however, Jesus had already been doing signs in Jerusalem (2.23–5; 3.2) and 5.1–18 reported another such miracle. Similarly, there is a discussion between Jesus and 'the Jews' in 7.19–24, in which Jesus attributes their hostility towards him to the 'one work' he has performed, namely, the healing on the sabbath. But this is reported back in 5.1–18 and, according to 6.1–7.1, Jesus had been involved in a range of activities in Galilee since then. The debate in

7.19–24 with Jesus' mention of the opposition's trying to kill him (7.19, cf. 5.18) looks as though it ought to follow on from the healing in chapter 5. At the beginning of the Lazarus story, his sister, Mary, is introduced in 11.2 as if her anointing of Jesus' feet in 12.1–8 had already taken place. After Jesus is said to have gone into hiding in 12.36b, he immediately makes a public proclamation in 12.44–50. Notoriously, 'Rise, let us go from here' in 14.31 brings Jesus' farewell discourse to an end, but that discourse then continues for two chapters, as though the words had not been uttered, and Jesus also offers an extended prayer in chapter 17 before 14.31 finds its natural continuation in 18.1. Similarly, the narrative appears to come to its conclusion with the statement of purpose in 20.30–1 but it then continues in chapter 21 with a further conclusion in 21.24–5.

Other awkward features could be mentioned, but why do they appear in what is otherwise such a carefully crafted piece of writing? Some have attempted to explain them by claiming that the original Gospel accidentally became disordered and then an editor attempted not very successfully to piece it together. A number of those who take this route then attempt their own elaborate rearrangements of the order, which usually also run into their own set of problems of coherence. Bultmann's outstanding commentary (1971) provides the classic example of this approach. Like a number of other proponents of this approach, however, he fails to explain the practicalities of displacement and rearrangement of an original written either on a papyrus scroll or in a codex. A better, and less speculative, explanation of the phenomena we have listed is that which posits a number of stages of composition and revision. The suggestion made here involves three main stages. The briefest way of outlining this approach and showing how it deals with the aporias is to set out the content of the first version that results from its analysis and then to indicate the revisions that must have been made in order to have produced the version we now have in 1.1–20.31. The addition of chapter 21 at a third stage will then be treated.

The first version of the Gospel would have begun with the material on John the Baptist and the gathering of disciples and then narrated Jesus' mission in Galilee and Samaria, with the two Cana miracles framing this Galilean period. This was followed by the conversation between Jesus and his brothers about going public and taking his mission to Judaea and Jerusalem. The narrative then moved to a period of mission in Jerusalem, in which two miracles – the healings of the paralytic and of the man born blind – frame various encounters between Jesus and the religious authorities. The material in our present chapter 10 followed, with vv. 40–2 providing an *inclusio* with the initial John the Baptist account and concluding the first half of this version. The second half then began with the entry into Jerusalem and the temple incident. The account of the latter in 2.13–22 in any case contains indications that it belongs to this

later context with its notion that Jesus' zeal will consume him, its use of the false witness statement from Mark's Sanhedrin trial, and the talk of the disciples remembering Scripture, which elsewhere is found only in the account of the entry into Jerusalem. After this came the decision of Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin to put Jesus to death. An anointing story followed, then the Johannine version of Jesus' Gethsemane prayer and a summary of his mission, as found in our present 12.36b–43. The narrative then moved to Jesus' last meal with the disciples and his farewell speech up to our present 14.31. Next came the passion narrative proper with accounts of the arrest, interrogation, Roman trial, crucifixion, burial and resurrection, and this first version ended with the present 20.30–1. Most of this material was substantially in its present Johannine form. As has been observed, Johannine style and thought is so pervasive as to make it virtually impossible to find earlier layers of tradition by stripping it away. For this reason also it makes good sense to see the subsequent revisions and rearrangements being made by the same person who composed the earlier version.

The second main stage of composition involved this sort of reworking. The first version had begun with the wording of 1.6 – 'there was a man sent from God, whose name was John' (cf. the introduction of the Samson and Samuel stories in *Judg.* 13.2; 1 Sam 1.1). Its place is now taken by the prologue, with its exalted poetic style and its treatment of the Logos who became flesh. But instead of simply displacing the original opening, the revision incorporates part of this within the prologue (1.6–8, 15) along with the writer's own comments on the hymnic material. He also decides that he will introduce the theme of Jesus as the new temple much earlier and moves the temple incident so that it now follows on from the first sign of turning water into wine. This is part of a major new literary strategy in which the public mission will be structured around a number of journeys to Jerusalem for the major festivals. It means also that the material about Jesus' signs and the encounter with Nicodemus can be introduced here, with the latter providing an appropriate counterpoint to the encounter with the Samaritan woman. The evangelist has developed material on the feeding of the five thousand connected with an extensive midrashic interpretation of Jesus as the bread of life. This he inserts into the Jerusalem period of the first version, placing it after Jesus' extended defence of his healing of the paralytic, because this concludes with a reference to Scripture witnessing to and Moses writing about Jesus, and the bread of life discourse provides a showcase example of how they do so. The discussion between Jesus and his brothers that had led into the Jerusalem period of the earlier version is moved so that it comes after the new Galilean episode of chapter 6 and introduces instead another visit to Jerusalem for a festival. Since the temple incident has been switched to near the beginning of Jesus' mission, this leaves a gap in the plot. Its

function is replaced by the Lazarus story, which is now inserted before the entry into Jerusalem and made the major factor provoking Jesus' arrest and death. The story has to be integrated into the surrounding material from the first version. This is accomplished by making the Sanhedrin decision the immediate aftermath of raising Lazarus and by associating the anointing story with the Bethany family. The effects of the Lazarus story are also made to spill over into the account of the entry into Jerusalem. As a result of these changes, the first half of the second version now ends with the material in chapter 12, where a summary of Jesus' mission on his own lips is added at the end. There is far less scope for change with the second half of the first version. The sequence is fixed, but within that sequence new material can be added, and so the further teaching on discipleship in the form of the discourse in chapters 15 and 16 and of Jesus' prayer in chapter 17 is inserted after the ending of the original discourse.

Like the first version, the second version ended with the statement of purpose in 20.30–1. It is unlikely that the epilogue of chapter 21 was part of the second stage of revision. Despite its continuities with the second version, this chapter also introduces some major tensions and discontinuities (see the commentary for details). Among the discontinuities are some differences of style and these suggest not just a later addition but also a different hand. So, while the first version and its revisions can be substantially attributed to the same writer, the evangelist, chapter 21 would be the work of a final editor. It is in this chapter, of course, that authorship of the Gospel as a whole is attributed by the final editor to the Beloved Disciple, and it may be that the literary device of the Beloved Disciple, based on a revered teacher in the community who has now died, was introduced and integrated into the earlier part of the narrative at this late stage. In regard to the Beloved Disciple materials in the Gospel, there are two main possibilities. One is that the evangelist responsible for the first and second versions was someone other than the Beloved Disciple but had been influenced by this teacher and had already begun to employ him as the idealized Beloved Disciple in the interpretation of the passion and resurrection accounts. This process would then have been continued by the final editor, who also attributes the authority for the whole tradition lying behind the narrative to the Beloved Disciple. The second possibility is that it was this revered teacher, the Beloved Disciple himself, who was responsible for the composition of 1.1–20.31. His work was completely anonymous and the final editor, who composed chapter 21 and attributed the Gospel to the Beloved Disciple, was the one who also added the earlier references to the Beloved Disciple as part of his further editing of the whole narrative for broad circulation. These additions to the earlier narrative, which make the Beloved Disciple the ideal witness and author, would then have served to bolster this teacher's authoritative interpretation of the life of Jesus in the bulk of the Gospel.

The details of this hypothesis would need further justification, but if its broad features are anywhere near right, it would mean that thematic considerations related to changing circumstances were most influential in the evangelist's revision of his work. The minor anomalies in details of chronology and geography introduced by the revisions, if they were noticed at all, were obviously of far less importance than the theological points that needed to be made through the addition of fresh material and the new structuring of Jesus' public mission. The final editor's work was limited to additions, primarily chapter 21, minor glosses and possibly material about the Beloved Disciple. He clearly did not see fit to do any radical revisions that might have eliminated the anomalies produced by the second version. In favour of this reconstruction is that it accounts for the main aporias without becoming over-complicated. It also fits with the conclusions arrived at independently and on other grounds about the Gospel's relationship to the Synoptics and historicity. The suggested use of the Synoptics holds for both main versions, and, interestingly, the structure of the first version looks very much like the framework of Mark's narrative. The reshaping of the public mission around journeys to Jerusalem was dictated by literary and theological reasons rather than by the evangelist at a very late stage being in receipt of traditions with additional historical information. The emphases of the new material supplied in the second version also fit with the most likely view of the developments in the evangelist's community that are reflected in the narrative as a whole. There is an insistence on the reality of Jesus' flesh and on his suffering in the flesh (in the prologue and in chapter 6); there is an indication of worsening relationships between Jewish Christians and the synagogue (especially in 15.18–16.4a); there is a heightening of the theme that Jesus now fulfils and replaces the institutions and symbols of Judaism (through the moving of the temple incident and the restructuring of the public mission); and there is an underlining of the need for unity (in chapter 17). The section on Setting below will take the discussion of these developments further. It remains only to suggest approximate dates for the various versions of the Gospel. Since the first version already reflects the issue of the break with the synagogue through expulsion, it would appear to have been written in the mid-80s and the revised version would have followed in the early 90s with the addition of the epilogue before circulation towards the end of that decade.

What materials the evangelist and his community had before the composition of the first version and before their acquaintance with the Synoptics has to be the subject of even more speculation. We are probably safe in assuming at least the following. They were heirs of oral traditions about the basic Christian gospel message of the saving significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus, including some knowledge of the Pauline version of this message. They would also have been familiar

with the same sort of traditions about the life and teaching of Jesus that lie behind Mark and are represented in the Q source. They had already begun to reflect on both types of tradition in the light of their own circumstances and of their own knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures, finding fresh links and interpretations. Finally, the distinctive style of the Johanneine discourses would have already begun to emerge, so that pronouncements in the name of Jesus, expressed in their own idiom and offering insight into their own setting, would have been features of their own assemblies. Both inspired utterances and more extensive homilies using this mode of direct address from Jesus would have been attributed to the working of the Spirit in prophets and teachers, among them the evangelist in particular.

In relation to the composition of the Gospel, interpreting the traditions about Jesus for present circumstances, through knowledge of the Synoptics and in the light of the Scriptures, has been seen to be the work of at least two and possibly three people – the Beloved Disciple and the evangelist, who may or may not have been the same person, and the final editor. It was common for an influential teacher to have followers who continued his mode of teaching. It is usually held that the deutero-Pauline letters were produced by followers of Paul who continued his method of communicating the message to his churches after his death. It is likely that from such a group associated with the Beloved Disciple came not only those involved in the composition of the Gospel but also those who produced the other Johanneine literature in the New Testament – the three Johanneine letters and possibly Revelation. Traditionally, since the time of Irenaeus (e.g. *Haer.* 3.11.1; 4.20.11), the Gospel, the epistles and Revelation were all thought to be by one author, the apostle John. Only Revelation claims to be written by a John (1.1, 4, 9, 22.8), and 2 and 3 John are by an unnamed elder, but once the tradition that the Gospel was written by John, the son of Zebedee, was in place, and given the similarities among the writings, it appeared a natural move to identify the evangelist, the elder and the seer as the same person, the apostle John.

Defenders of the common authorship of all five documents (whether by the apostle or by the elder) can still be found, but this is very much a minority view in recent scholarship, which prefers to explain similarities and differences by positing that the writings come from the group of teachers associated with the original Beloved Disciple, sometimes loosely called a 'Johanneine school', or from a common church context in Asia Minor. The Gospel's closest links are with the epistles. Whatever the order in which these letters were written, there are no strong reasons for doubting that they were both composed by the same person, the elder of 2 John 1 and 3 John 1. There are, however, stronger reasons for doubting that this person was also the evangelist. On the one hand, as has been observed earlier, the style and language of the Johanneine Jesus are closer to those of these epistles than they are to the Jesus of the Synoptics. The

clear similarities between the Gospel and the epistles include use of the same major themes of light, life, death, testimony, truth, love, abiding, and an ethical dualism, in which the world is seen as the sphere of unbelief and as hating believers. On the other hand, there are also subtle differences of style, with more grammatical obscurity observable in the epistles, and different uses of shared themes, so that some concepts associated with Jesus in the Gospel are associated with God in the epistles and, in contrast to the Gospel, the Spirit is not designated as the Paraclete in the epistles, whereas Jesus is (though Jesus as Paraclete is also an implication of John 14.16). In contrast to the dominant realized eschatology of the Gospel, the eschatology of the epistles is future-oriented and includes an expectation of Jesus' imminent return (1 John 2.28; 3.2-3). Terms such as 'glory' and 'seek', which occur frequently in the Gospel, are absent from the epistles; key terms in the epistles, such as 'antichrist', 'anointing' and 'fellowship', are not found in the Gospel. It is particularly striking that the epistles contain no citations from or mention of Scripture and only one reference to a scriptural character – Cain (1 John 3.12). There are also no hints of the conflict between Jewish Christians and the synagogue and instead conflict is within the church. In the first two epistles there is talk of those who, from the point of view of the writer, have seceded from the churches because they have a defective understanding of Jesus that denies his humanity has importance for salvation (1 John 2.18-23; 4.2-3; 2 John 7) and a defective notion of ethics in which they boast of fellowship with God while continuing to sin and denying such sin (1 John 1.6, 8, 10; 2.4-6; 3.6-8). These two errors could well have been related, so that if Jesus' life in the flesh was unimportant, what they themselves did in the flesh also would not matter. In the brief and enigmatic third epistle the conflict is between the elder and a certain Diotrephes. A plausible explanation of the references is that, in a situation where church structures had been informal, Diotrephes, seeing the need for authoritative leaders in order to combat false teaching, had earned the disapproval of the elder by arrogating too much authority to himself.

Though some hold that the epistles (or at least 1 John) precede the Gospel and some that their relationship is one of building on common Johannine tradition, most scholars consider that the situation they address is one that derives from different understandings of the thought contained in the Gospel, especially the implications of its portrayal of Jesus, and that they were written later. What is deemed false teaching appears to be incipiently docetic, moving towards the view that Christ only appeared to be human. The Gospel's depiction of a Jesus who has come from above and who at times has divine rather than ordinary human characteristics could have given rise to this tendency when taken up by those, perhaps Gentle Christians, who did not share the original presuppositions of the Gospel's writer. It is also possible that the second version of the Gospel

was being completed at roughly the same time as the issues reflected in 1 and 2 John were emerging, since it appears in places to have their situation in view, and that the final redaction of the Gospel coincides with the emergence of the issues reflected in 3 John, since in chapter 21 it too has an eye on matters of ecclesiastical authority. In any case, the epistles originated from a leader within the same group of churches with which the evangelist and the final editor of the Gospel were also associated.

The Gospel's relation to Revelation is a far more disputed matter. Critics of the view of common authorship can be found from early on, such as Dionysius and Eusebius in the third and fourth centuries. The author of Revelation does not refer to himself as an apostle and appears to distance himself from the apostles, who are seen as figures of the past, part of the church's foundation (21.14). Nor, for that matter, does he designate himself 'the elder'. Instead, the seer thinks of himself as a prophet (1.3; 22.6, 7, 9, 10, 19). Clear differences in style and content have been enough to convince most that the 'John' of Revelation is not the writer of the Gospel. The quality of his Greek usage is much inferior and the way he employs the Jewish Scriptures diverges markedly from that of the Gospel. Although he is steeped in the Scriptures, his use of them is always by means of allusion with no actual citations. Some words characteristic of one document do not appear in the other, so that, for example, 'truth' and 'joy', which are common in the Gospel, are absent from Revelation and, conversely, 'endurance' and 'wisdom', which are found in Revelation, are absent from John. The obvious major difference of content is in the area of eschatology. While there are a few elements of future expectation in the Gospel, for the most part traditional Jewish and early Christian hopes have been extensively reinterpreted in terms of a 'realized' eschatology. It is difficult to imagine that the same person who had engaged in this reshaping of the tradition would also write an extended work so pervasively focused on future expectation and with so much use of the conventions of Jewish apocalyptic writings. In principle, it is certainly not impossible for one author to employ two quite different genres, here ancient biography and apocalypse, but it would be extremely strange that it is precisely the apocalyptic material to be found in the Synoptics' lives of Jesus that this author had chosen to omit or to reinterpret radically in his ancient biography.

Although common authorship is highly unlikely, there are, nevertheless, some striking similarities between the Gospel and Revelation, despite their different genres. They do have major themes in common, such as witness and martyrdom, salvation through judgement, life, death, the notion of conquering in a spiritual sense, invitations to those who are thirsty to drink of the water of life. Revelation has an ethical dualism, similar to that found in John, in which the world's political powers are hostile to believers and negative references are made to the synagogue

(2.9; 3.9). It too can picture Jesus as both shepherd and lamb (7.17) and call him the Logos (19.13). It has direct addresses of the risen Christ to the churches and in places these sound very similar to the way Jesus speaks in the Gospel, particularly his 'I Am' sayings (1.17–18; 2.23; 22.13, 16) and his talk of receiving authority from the Father (2.28). The only places in the New Testament where Zech. 12.10 is applied to the crucifixion of Jesus are John 19.37 (through citation) and Rev. 1.7 (allusively) and both writers exhibit a fondness for the number seven in the way they arrange material.

What might account for such similarities? Revelation is clearly linked to the seven churches in Asia Minor. If the Gospel and epistles also came from the Ephesus area, one could then claim that all these writings had a common church context. The problem is that the tradition about Ephesus as the place of origin of the Gospel and letters is late second century and there is nothing in those documents themselves to support this claim (see further under Setting below). In order to do justice to the similarities and to keep the association between Revelation and the other Johannine literature, some have suggested that Revelation represents an earlier product of the Beloved Disciple that was revised and circulated at a later date by one of his followers and that other followers were responsible for the Gospel and its final editing and for the epistles. This suggestion does not specify to what situation the original version of Revelation was addressed and in what ways it was revised for a later situation, and its speculation is not compelling. Given that there is so little sound external evidence available, one should probably be content with the more reasonable but also more general conclusion that the similar features of the Gospel and Revelation stem from extended contact at some point between the itinerant prophet who composed the latter and the Johannine churches and their teachers. On this view the seer and prophet of Revelation has a rather more distant relationship to the Beloved Disciple, the evangelist, the final editor, and the elder than they have to each other.

Further Reading

For discussion of issues of composition, see J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), esp. 76–101, 160–204. For a major and influential treatment of the relation of the Gospel to the Johannine epistles, see R. E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 14–35, 69–115. For opposing views on the relationship between the Gospel and Revelation, see E. S. Fiorenza, 'The Quest for the Johannine School: The Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel', *NTS* 23 (1977), 402–27 and S. S. Smalley, *Thunder and Love: John's Revelation and John's Community* (Milton Keynes: Nelson Word, 1994).

THE GOSPEL'S PERSPECTIVE ON CHRISTOLOGY AND THE RELATION TO JUDAISM

Clearly this is not the place for anything like a comprehensive discussion of the theology of the Fourth Gospel. Limitations of space mean that it is necessary to be highly selective and to focus on two topics that have been to the forefront of recent interpretation of the Gospel and of both positive and negative evaluations of its theological contribution, namely, its presentation of Jesus and its stance towards Judaism. Here the attempt will be made to set out briefly the Gospel's own perspective on these matters. The following two sections of the Introduction will explore the setting that produced such emphases and highlight the questions they raise.

Christology

As would be expected from an ancient biography, the Fourth Gospel's focus is on its subject, Jesus of Nazareth. What would not necessarily be expected from an ancient biography, but what immediately becomes clear, is that its subject is so closely related to the God of Israel that the focus on Jesus of Nazareth also becomes a focus on this God. What are reflected in the narrative's actions and symbols are convictions not only about Jesus but about God, so that Christology and theology are intimately interwoven.

Whatever the tensions between the Gospel's genre of ancient biography and its distinctive view of its subject, it is important to appreciate that the two are held together. The evangelist takes for granted that he is interpreting the life of a fully human figure. In doing so, as will be seen, he emphasizes Jesus' divine qualities, so much so that these overshadow his subject's human traits. One scholar in particular has argued that the resulting portrait of Jesus takes 'the form of a naive docetism' in which 'John changes the Galilean teacher into the God who goes about on earth' (Käsemann 1968: 26, 27). Though overstated, this depiction has a point. Certainly the emphasis on Jesus' sovereign knowledge and control over his own mission means that he sometimes appears to act without normal human sympathies and limitations. Yet, even in the Lazarus story, where Jesus shows a strange form of love by waiting for Lazarus to die in order to be able to demonstrate his glory (11.5–6) and where he prays, not because he needs to but for the sake of the crowd (11.41–2), he can also be portrayed at his most human as he weeps and becomes angry (11.33, 35, 38). Jesus' humanity is not stressed elsewhere, however, because this would have been common ground in the disputes that the narrative