

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 par.), 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 par.) 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. Haerchen (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 recollection 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 met if dependence of one document on an earlier source is 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 warming 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 *part.*), 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; 17.23), 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