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The Fourth Gospel and the Jesus of History

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In the 'quest for the historical Jesus' it has become axiomatic that the Fourth Gospel, with a few notable exceptions (e.g. certain elements in the passion narrative), has little to offer attempts to trace the person and activity of the pre-Easter Jesus. A study of the Johannine presentation of the beginnings of Jesus' ministry, his relationship with the Baptist, the calling of disciples and his presence in the Jerusalem Temple, suggests otherwise. Given the Markan imposition of a 'framework' upon the Synoptic tradition, the Johannine tradition may more accurately recall those early events.

The rumblings of Reimarus, the work of the source critics and the first search for the historical Jesus, closed by Schweizer, all led to the rejection of the Gospel of John as a reliable source for words and works of the pre-Easter Jesus. The emergence of Form Criticism, the post-Second World War redaction critics, and the new quest for the historical Jesus, all strengthened the grounds for this rejection. The loss of interest in the historicity of the Fourth Gospel has, of course, been accompanied by an increasing insistence upon the Gospel as testimony for a robust early Christian theology, witnessed by the great commentaries of A. Loisy, M.-J. Lagrange, R. Bultmann, E. C. Hoskyns, C. K. Barrett, R. Schnackenburg and R. E. Brown.¹ More recent literary studies, from moderate aesthetic readings, through reader-response theory, into more radical contextually determined post-modern readings, do not bother to pose the historical question. As scholarship focuses more fully upon readership, interest in the world behind the text, although sometimes acknowledged in passing, is less central to the scholarly agenda.

The so-called 'third quest' for the historical Jesus, generated by the Jesus Seminar, and the response determined by the agenda of the Seminar, largely bypasses the narrative of the Fourth Gospel. The work of J. P. Meier is something of an exception to this tendency. In his general introduction to the use of the canonical books of the NT as sources for genuine historical data,² and throughout

his reconstruction of the Baptist material, the teaching, and the miracles of Jesus,³ Meier gives careful consideration to relevant material from the Fourth Gospel. He often decides in its favour.

The recent work of Derek Tovey and Paul Anderson has returned to the question.⁴ Tovey locates the Fourth Gospel within the theoretical model of narrative mediacy developed by E. K. Stanzel. Within this model he investigates the Beloved Disciple's role as a 'reflector-character', a reliable historical character who tells a 'history interpreted under the impress of a particular understanding of the historical Jesus'.⁵ Anderson focuses intensely upon John 6, a narrative which contains episodes which have parallels in the Synoptic tradition: the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the appearance of Jesus upon a stormy sea (6.1–24), Peter's confession and the prediction of Judas's betrayal (6.67–71). A thorough investigation of John 6.1–24 and 67–71 leads him to conclude that the Johannine version of the bread miracle and the appearance on the sea is a correction of the various Synoptic traditions, and that the report of Peter's confession is a further correction of the Petrine tradition. This corrective re-reading of early tradition is an indication of the Evangelist's 'reflective dialogue with his tradition', in which he continues to find meanings in the significance of Jesus' words and works.⁶

Using more sophisticated tools, these recent contributions arrive at conclusions similar to those reached by British scholars some two or three decades ago.⁷ This paper returns to a more traditional methodology. The case for some form of dependence of the Fourth Gospel upon one or more of the Synoptic Gospels is still strongly argued by commentators,⁸ and especially in the parallel – but often con-

3 J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Volume Two: Mentor, Message and Miracles* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994).

4 D. M. H. Tovey, *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel* (JSNTSup 51; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997); P. N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996).

5 Tovey, *Narrative Art*, 255.

6 Anderson, *Christology*, 261 (stress in original). For summaries of his conclusions, see pp. 256–7 (on John 6.1–24) and pp. 259–60 (on John 6.66–71).

7 See, for example, E. C. Hoskyns' classic treatment of the question (*The Fourth Gospel* [ed. E. N. Davey; London: Faber & Faber, 1947] 107–28); C. H. Dodd, 'The Portrait of Jesus in John and in the Synoptics', in *Christian History and Interpretation. Studies Presented to John Knox* (ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule and R. R. Niebuhr; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1967) 183–98; J. A. T. Robinson, 'The Use of the Fourth Gospel for Christology Today', in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament. In Honour of Charles Francis Digby Moule* (ed. B. Lindars and S. Smalley; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1967) 183–98.

8 For a sampling, see C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John* (London: SPCK, 1978) 42–54; T. L. Brodie, *The Quest for the Origin of John's Gospel. A Source-Oriented Approach* (New York: Oxford University, 1993); U. Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (THNT 4; Leipzig: Evangelische Mission, 1998).

1 See the brief remarks in F. J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (Sacra Pagina 4; Collegeville: Liturgical, 1998) 20–3.

2 J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Volume One: The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1991) 41–55.

flicting – analyses of M.-É. Boismard and E. Neiryck,⁹ but this paper takes as its starting point C. H. Dodd's work on the historical traditions behind the Fourth Gospel.¹⁰ Starting from the suggestion of Gardner-Smith that it is easier to explain the similarities between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic tradition *without* a theory of dependence, rather than to explain the differences between the two traditions *with* one, Dodd's carefully argued case has never been systematically dismantled.¹¹ The sheer number and complexity of the post-Dodd hypotheses, with no sign of a consensus, weighs against their being right.¹² Gardner-Smith's criterion still holds. Behind the Fourth Gospel lay independent traditions, often bearing a close relationship to those of the Synoptic Gospels. But, following the Dodd hypothesis, the fourth Evangelist is *never* directly dependent upon one or several of the Synoptic Gospels. It is possible, therefore, that some Johannine material may point back to genuine historical events from the life of Jesus.¹³

I wish, however, to make a further suggestion concerning a 'framework' for the life of Jesus.¹⁴ Is it possible that there are elements in the Fourth Gospel which might provide the skeleton 'framework' for the brief period which marked the public ministry of Jesus of Nazareth? I am aware of the maverick nature of this suggestion. I wish to test it by devoting some detailed analysis to the Baptist material (John 1.19–28, 29–34; 3.22–30),¹⁵ the vocation of the first disciples (1.35–51), and the so-called purification of the Temple (2.13–22). This initial suggestion con-

cerning the beginnings of the record of Jesus' ministry may pave the way for further investigations along these lines.

John the Baptist

There is universal agreement that John the Baptist exercised a preaching and baptizing activity in the period immediately before the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, and that he baptized Jesus.¹⁶ The exact nature of his preaching, the significance of his baptism and the places where he baptized are, as is to be expected, the subject of considerable scholarly reflection.¹⁷ C. H. Dodd identifies three elements which run across all the Johannine Baptist material: he was *not* the Messiah; he bore unique and privileged witness; and he brought others to Jesus. There is also an interesting link between his geographical situation in 1.28, 10.40 and possibly 3.23, depending upon one's location of the unknown Aenon near Salim. Dodd claims that these elements reach back to an original pre-Johannine tradition. Such a tradition, of course, does not necessarily mean that its reported events can be taken as 'historical'. The Baptist's witness to Jesus and the conscious presentation of Jesus to his disciples as the Lamb of God are surely the results of early Christian theologizing.¹⁸

Meier has shown, in a detailed analysis of the use of ἔρημος, that the Baptist's activities are to be located within the region of the Judean desert, and should not be limited to one fixed place. It is reasonable to accept that he was active on both the eastern and the western sides of the Jordan, and in the northern region of the desert (Aenon near Salim).¹⁹ It is possible that this impressive prophet-like figure may have been subjected to some form of interrogation by representatives of Jerusalem authorities (1.19b–23), however stylized this interrogation has become in its Johannine dress. Indeed, his activity may have been regularly punctuated by questions from those who came to him, asking about his relationship to the expectations of Israel. The eschatological nature of his baptism and his associated message has been submerged by the Johannine focus upon the messianic question.²⁰ But the Fourth Evangelist alone has a tradition that authorities from Jerusalem

9 The work of these two important scholars on the sources for the Johannine Gospel is best found in M.-É. Boismard and A. Lamouille, *L'Evangile de Jean. Synopse des Quatre Evangiles en Français III* (Paris: Cerf, 1977), and E. Neiryck, *Jean et les Synoptiques: examen critique de l'exégèse de M.-E. Boismard* (BETL 49; Leuven: Leuven University, 1979). On this complex discussion, see D. Moody Smith, *John Among the Gospels. The Relationship in Twentieth-Century Research* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 139–58.

10 C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1965).

11 Those who advocate a theory of dependence do not engage Dodd's detailed and carefully articulated argument. Dodd (*Historical Tradition*, 8 n. 2) points to the work of P. Gardner-Smith (*St John and the Synoptic Gospels* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1938]) as 'the turn of the tide' in these discussions.

12 For a good survey, see Moody Smith, *John Among the Gospels*, 139–76.

13 For a concise summary of Dodd's hopes in this regard, see *Historical Tradition*, 423–32.

14 The expression 'framework' is, of course, taken from the title of the work of one of the founders of form criticism, K.-L. Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu. Literarkritische Untersuchungen zur ältesten Jesusüberlieferung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964 [original 1919]). Schmidt's work put to rest the earlier hypothesis (established in 1863 by H. J. Holzmann) that the Gospel of Mark provided a historically reliable 'framework' for the ministry of Jesus.

15 I am immediately discounting the Baptist material in the Prologue (1.4–6, 15) and Jesus' words on the Baptist in 5.33–6. As Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 1.53 n. 22, points out, there is more likelihood of unearthing genuine historical reminiscence 'from the narrative part of the Fourth Gospel rather than from the sayings tradition'.

16 J. Marcus, 'Jesus' Baptismal Vision', *NTS* 41 (1995) 512, remarks: 'The fact of the baptism itself . . . is a bedrock of historical datum.'

17 For an encyclopedic survey of the discussions and critical conclusions with which I am largely in agreement, see Meier, *A Marginal Jew* 2.19–233.

18 Although Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 269–71, suggests that the title 'the Lamb of God', only found here in the Gospels, could have been used by the historical Baptist, 'or in a traditional account of his preaching'. Of the two, I suggest that the latter is more likely.

19 Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.43–6. J. Ernst, 'Johannes der Täufer und Jesus von Nazareth in historischer Sicht', *NTS* 43 (1997) 167–72, also suggests a moving activity. J. Murphy-O'Connor, 'John the Baptist and Jesus: History and Hypotheses', *NTS* 36 (1990) 363–5, insists that there was only one place.

20 But see below n. 26.

questioned him about his messianic status. If the Johannine portrait of the Baptist is simply as the witness *par excellence*, then why did 'the Jews' send 'priests and levites from Jerusalem' to interrogate him? Why bother with this figure if all he did was witness to a coming one who would do even more for the establishment of God's design in Israel than he himself was doing? It is always possible that this report comes from pre-Johannine tradition, and need not necessarily reflect *wie es eigentlich gewesen war*. But the Johannine account of the interrogation of John the Baptist may rest upon an authentic historical memory. It adds multiple attestation to the restless eschatological nature of the Baptist's call to conversion and new life, more thoroughly represented in the Synoptic tradition (see Matt 3.7–12//Luke 3.7–9, 15–18; Matt 11.2–9//Luke 7.18–35).

The link made between the practice of baptism and the Messiah and the messianic era in the question posed to the Baptist in John 1.25, *Τί οὖν βαπτίζεις εἰ σὺ οὐκ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς οὐδὲ Ἠλίας οὐδὲ ὁ προφήτης*, which has no sound first-century background, may simply serve the theological purpose of the author, who insists upon 'the Christ', 'Elijah', and 'the prophet' (see also John 1.20–1; Mark 6.15; 8.28–9). This serves the purpose of keeping the messianic question before the reader,²¹ despite the Baptist's exaggerated rejection of any association between the Messiah and his own person and mission (*ὠμολόγησεν καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσατο καὶ ὠμολόγησεν*).²² But there are two statements from the Baptist which tell first of his listeners' ignorance (v. 26, *μέσος ὑμῶν ἔστηκεν ὃν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἶδατε*) and then, surprisingly, of his own (v. 31, *καγὼ οὐκ ᾔδεν αὐτόν*). This piece of tradition may add to the historical portrait of John the Baptist. He was a charismatic figure, practising a baptism of conversion and preaching an eschatological message, but he had no precise knowledge of who the coming figure would be or how he would exercise his role. In the Synoptic tradition, the Baptist can only speak of *ὁ ἰσχυρότερος* (see Mark 1.7; Matt 3.11; Luke 3.16).²³ The many possible identifications of 'the stronger one' (Elijah, the Son of Man, the angel Michael, God) may only indicate that 'per-

haps... John never moved much beyond the general idea that he himself was not powerful enough to complete the eschatological task God had begun with him'.²⁴ We may again be dealing with pre-Johannine tradition, and not history, but the *Johannine Baptist* points to Jesus as the Lamb of God, the Son of God (John 1.29, 33–4, 35), while a *historical reminiscence* is perhaps found in his ignorance concerning the one who was to come after him.²⁵

The relationship between the tradition of a future pouring out of the life-giving spirit which would eclipse John's baptism, found in John 1.33 as well as Mark 1.8, Matt 3.11/Luke 3.16 (Q), confirms the results of careful study of the Synoptic tradition. John the Baptist was a disturbing figure whose presence generated much interest.²⁶ He, however, could only point beyond himself to an unknown coming figure who would administer the gift of the Holy Spirit, which would bring 'eternal life instead of destruction on the last day'.²⁷ Dodd's assessment of the historical worth of Johannine Baptist tradition is close. He suggests that it 'may have represented the Baptist, the last of the prophetic succession, as claiming an experience analogous to the prophets of the Old Testament'.²⁸

²⁴ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.35.

²⁵ Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 267–8, takes this as a reference to 'the hidden Messiah', suggesting that this notion was widespread in first-century Judaism, and thus probably an aspect of the preaching of the historical John the Baptist. Despite S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1959) 304–8, the notion of 'the hidden Messiah', however, is difficult to establish with any certainty. For the (second-century [but see John 7.27]) evidence, see R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (AB 29–29A; New York: Doubleday, 1966–70) 1.53. The suggestion that the expression *originally* reflected his ignorance, whatever literary and theological function John 1.26, 31 may have in the canonical Gospel, appears the more likely solution to this odd claim to 'not know' (John 1.31).

²⁶ Neither Dodd nor the many later considerations of the possible eschatological nature of the historical Baptist's message ever look at John 3.36: *ἡ ὁργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μένει ἐπ' αὐτόν*. I have argued elsewhere that John 3.31–6 is an earlier form of the highly Johannized passage of 3.11–21 (see F. J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word. Reading John 1–4* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993] 127–9). One of the several signs of the primitive nature of vv. 31–6 is the expression *ἡ ὁργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ*. This is the only appearance of *ἡ ὁργὴ* in the Fourth Gospel, but it is part of the Q material on the Baptist's message (see Matt 3.7//Luke 3.7). On this, see Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.29–32. It is the regular LXX translation of a number of Hebrew words used to describe God's anger. This is not to suggest that John the Baptist ever said anything like John 3.31–6. On the Johannine nature of 3.30–6 as a whole, see W. Loader, 'The Central Structure of Johannine Theology', *NTS* 30 (1984) 188–216.

²⁷ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.39. There are many who would claim that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is secondary, showing the superiority of Christian baptism. The Q version (Matt 3.10, 12) 'with fire' would be original. For this case, see Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 203–4. For the position taken above, arguing for a baptism in the Holy Spirit (see Ezek 36.26–7; Joel 3.1–5; Jub. 1.23; 1QS 4.20–2), see Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.35–40, 81–4.

²⁸ Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 261. The idea of the Baptist's being 'the last of the prophetic succession' has its resonances in Matt. 11.12–13; Luke 16.16. Along these lines, see Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.156–63.

²¹ See Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 48–63.

²² Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 298–300, rightly points to this exaggerated turn of phrase as an indication of the *Sitz im Leben* which gave birth to the Johannine Baptist material. Unlike the Synoptics (see especially Matt 11.12–13; Luke 16.16), the Baptist is the first to confess Jesus. Historically, he belongs to a period before any recognition of Jesus. See Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.156–63. Dodd helpfully suggests that the *Sitz im Leben* was 'one in which it was desired that persons who had followed the Baptist should be regarded as adoptive members of the Church'. He suggests that it may come from 55–57 CE. The question of the motivation for the Johannization of Baptist material will be discussed later in this paper, but Dodd's suggestion should be noted at this stage.

²³ A number of scholars (see G. Theissen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus. A Comprehensive Guide* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998] 199–204) suggest that the historical Baptist also spoke of 'the coming one' (*ὁ ἐρχόμενος*). For the purposes of this paper, I am limiting myself to *ὁ ἰσχυρότερος* in the light of Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.79 n. 76.

One detail from 1.19–34 remains uninvestigated: the indications in v. 27, ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος, and in v. 30, ὁπίσω μου ἔρχεται ἄνθρωπος, that the one to whom he was bearing witness was 'coming after him'. Given the presence of ὁπίσω μου in Mark 1.7 and Matt. 3.11, it has often been suggested that, historically, Jesus was a follower of John the Baptist (see Mark 1.16–20), and that the Baptist pointed to this follower as 'the more powerful one'. Meier argues against this being the case in the Markan tradition, taken over by Matthew and altered in Luke 3.16. He thus also excludes it as a possible meaning for John 1.27. For Meier, Jesus may have indeed been some sort of 'follower', but not in the sense that we might understand a 'disciple' as someone who belonged to the Baptist's retinue.²⁹ Despite his careful philological and redactional analysis, I suspect that Meier is influenced by his more important conclusion – argued across his study of the Baptist traditions – that the Baptist had no knowledge of the stronger one who would bring about a new era for Israel.

The two are not, however, mutually exclusive. It is possible that Jesus' following of the Baptist, and even the event of his baptism by John the Baptist, did not signal him out as someone special. The events which accompany the Synoptic reports of Jesus' baptism (Mark 1.9–11; Matt 3.13–17; Luke 3.21–2), and the Johannine Baptist's recollection of the descent of the Holy Spirit (1.32–4), are surely the result of the later Church's conviction that, on the basis of the *historical fact* that the paths of these two foundational figures eventually separated, something unique took place at this privileged moment. It can scarcely be questioned that Jesus received the baptism of John, but we cannot rediscover *what actually happened* at that moment, nor do we need to accept as historical that the superiority of Jesus over the Baptist was indicated at that event. What Jesus and John the Baptist made of that brief encounter in the waters of the Jordan lies outside the limits of our scientific control.³⁰ Indeed, the question the Baptist asks of Jesus, whose response receives no further reaction from the Baptist, most likely indicates that the Baptist went to his death not certain that his former follower, now exercising a ministry of his own, was ὁ ἰσχυρότερος (Matt 11.2–11, 16–19; Luke 7.18–23).³¹ At this stage of our argument, I would like to suggest that we remain open to the possibility that the

baptist looked to someone from those he had initiated with his baptism, and whom he could rightly but vaguely describe as ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος (see 1.27), to make that 'more powerful' step which was beyond his understanding of God's design.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate in detail the so-called 'rivalry' or even 'hostility' between the early Christians and those who 'only knew the baptism of John' (Acts 18.25) and who had been baptized 'into John's baptism' (Acts 19.3). Suffice it to note that I suspect that too much has been made of this. On the basis of Baldensperger's study of the Prologue, further extended by Bultmann's hypothetical source of proto-Mandean *Offenbarungsreden*,³² originally focused upon the Baptist, the theory of the early Church's need to counter exaggerated claims being made for the Baptist by his followers has almost become an accepted element in historical analysis.³³ These are flimsy grounds for such an important element in the analysis of the data, not strongly supported by Acts 18.24–19.6 where little or no hostility can be traced. Dodd's suggestion,³⁴ now thoroughly investigated by Christoph Niemand's study of John 13,³⁵ that the early Christians had difficulty over what to do with those who had been baptized either by the Baptist, or in his 'tradition',³⁶ best suits our available evidence.

The First Disciples

It is universally accepted that the Markan (Mark 1.16–20//Matt 4.18–22) version of the vocation of the first disciples is a highly idealized account, largely based upon the prophetic vocation, especially that of Elisha by Elijah (see 1 Kings 19–21),³⁷ and that the Lukan version of the same event (Luke 5.1–11) is a more developed presentation of the growing 'psychological' maturation of

²⁹ W. Baldensperger, *Der Prolog des vierten Evangeliums. Sein polemisch-apologetischer Zweck* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1898); R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971) 17–18.

³⁰ See, for example, Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.171–2.

³¹ See above, n. 22.

³² C. Niemand, *Die Fusswaschungserzählung des Johannesevangeliums: Untersuchung zu ihrer Entstehung und Überlieferung in Urchristentum* (Studia Anselmiana 114; Roma: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1993) 320–402.

³³ If indeed it was true that in Asia Minor (Ephesus) there were those who 'knew only the baptism of John' (Acts 18.25), others practising baptism in the tradition of the Baptist, recorded of Jesus in John 3.22–3, may have been reasonably widespread. Jesus may not have been the only disciple of the Baptist who proliferated baptism 'into the baptism of John' (Acts 19.3). If this was the case, there is no need to read John 3.22–4 as marking a dramatic 'parting of the ways' between Jesus and his mentor. Murphy-O'Connor ('John the Baptist and Jesus', 367–8) suggests that Apollos and those in Ephesus who knew only the baptism of John were baptized

²⁹ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.83 n. 97; 92 n. 149; 116–19.

³⁰ See the reflections of Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 211–13. Recently, however, Marcus, 'Jesus' Baptismal Vision', 512–21, has given five reasons why Luke 10.18 ('I saw Satan falling like lightning from heaven') might be the substance of Jesus' report of that event. An authentic saying of Jesus (for a reconstruction, see pp. 518–19), it was shifted from its original location because the early Church came to regard the death and resurrection as the moment of Satan's overthrow. Ernst, 'Johannes der Täufer', 162–7, insists on the baptismal moment as a turning point in Jesus' messianic self-understanding.

Simon Peter, resulting in the same promise and response. They will henceforth become 'fishers of men' (Mark and Matthew) or be 'catching men' (Luke) as they leave everything and follow him (Mark 1.17, 20; Luke 5.10–11). The radical demands of early Christian discipleship have played a large part in the formation of these narratives.³⁸ Despite widespread scholarly opinion that the Johannine account of the call of the first disciples (John 1.35–51) is used by the Evangelist to show an immediate acceptance of Jesus' messianic status, an alternative interpretation is possible. It appears to me that this alternative suggestion may be closer to 'what actually happened' than the highly charged narratives found in the Synoptic tradition.

The sequence of events in the Fourth Gospel, the encounter between the Baptist and Jesus followed by disciples of the Baptist becoming followers of Jesus, does not strain the imagination. It was suggested in the section dedicated to John the Baptist that Jesus was a follower of the Baptist in the serious sense implied by the use of ὁπίσω μου across two traditions (Mark 1.7//Matt 3.11; John 1.27, 30). There may have been a gradual separation of their ways, and this lies behind the episode reported in John 3.22–4.³⁹ There is nothing particularly 'Johannine' about a report that Jesus and his disciples went εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν γῆν while the Baptist continued his wandering baptismal ministry in the northern reaches of the Judean desert 'at Aenon near Salim'. What lies outside the data provided by our sources is whether or not John's baptism of Jesus (not directly reported in the Fourth Gospel) generated this duplication of ministries, or whether Jesus simply decided to practise his own ministry, much in the tradition of his mentor, John the Baptist, in Judea. I would hypothesize that something along the lines of the latter was the case.⁴⁰ The very Johannine response of the Baptist to the question about the respective baptisms in vv. 27–30 should not cloud the possibility that the concerns voiced in v. 26 did emerge: 'Παῖσι, ὃς ἦν μετὰ σοῦ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου ... ἴδε οὗτος βαπτίζει καὶ πάντες ἔρχονται πρὸς αὐτόν.⁴¹ It is not true to claim: 'He [Jesus] does not baptize

[John 3.22 is corrected in 4.2].'⁴² The comment from the Johannine narrator, inserted into v. 2, shows that the opposite was the case.⁴³ There was a time when both the Baptist and Jesus exercised a baptismal ministry.⁴⁴

The Baptist, along with his entourage, continued his ministry in the northern regions of the Judean desert, unsure of who the ἰσχυρότερος might be, and whether or not he had come. Indications are that this uncertainty remained with him till the end of his life (see Matt 11.2–3//Luke 7.18–19).⁴⁵ In the meantime, Jesus had begun a parallel ministry, along with an initial group of disciples (John 3.22: ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ), in Judea. In this reconstruction of a sequence of events, it is likely that Jesus' disciples had also earlier formed part of the entourage of the Baptist. This is the evidence of 1.35–51. In a fully Johannine sense, the Baptist indicates Jesus, as the Lamb of God, to two of his disciples (vv. 35–6). Andrew and the unnamed other disciple set out to follow Jesus (v. 37; see v. 40 for Andrew's name), and from that original core pair come further 'first disciples': Simon Peter (vv. 41–2), Philip (vv. 43–4), and Nathanael (vv. 45–9). It is impossible to claim historicity for the names of these men, ex-disciples of the Baptist and their friends, the first to follow Jesus.⁴⁶ There may be some substance to the tradition of their names, but they may also have been placed on this first page of the Gospel because of the later roles of these foundational personalities. There is not a great deal of evidence, one way or the other, and thus we cannot be certain. Although Simon Peter, Andrew and Philip (see 6.5–8, 67–70; 12.21–2; 14.8–9; 13.6–11; 18.10–11, 15–18, 25–7; 20.2–10; 21.1–2, 7, 11, 15–19) play cameo roles later in the Gospel, Nathanael disappears from the scene entirely, with the exception of his appearance among the fishing party in 21.2. This may indicate that he was one of those ex-disciples of the Baptist who accompanied Jesus when he began his separate baptismal ministry in Galilee (3.22). One can only speculate, but perhaps the presence of Nathanael in 21.2 is a hint of his leadership role in the Johannine church.⁴⁷

One further comment on John 1.35–51 is called for. It is a misreading of the Johannine point of view in this passage to see the disciples as rapidly moving to

⁴² Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 209 (parenthesis mine).

⁴³ See Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.121–3.

⁴⁴ For a somewhat imaginative reconstruction of that period, see Murphy-O'Connor, 'John the Baptist and Jesus', 362–6. The possibility of both Jesus and John the Baptist exercising a baptismal activity is rejected by Ernst, 'Johannes der Täufer', 172–6. He claims that we must only take the Synoptic data into account. He polemically claims that Murphy-O'Connor's study has 'neueren Überlegungen in Kommentaren und Spezialabhandlungen souverän Ignoranz vorgeworfen'.

⁴⁵ It is this reliable Q tradition which weighs against the event of Jesus' baptism by John as having been marked by remarkable events.

⁴⁶ But see Murphy-O'Connor, 'John the Baptist', 362.

⁴⁷ On John 21, and its relationship to John 1.1–20.31, see F. J. Moloney, *Glory not Dishonor*.

³⁸ Among many, see F. J. Moloney, 'The Vocation of the Disciples in the Gospel of Mark', *Salesianum* 43 (1981) 487–516. On Luke 5.1–11, its relationship with Mark 1.16–20, and its originality within the Lukan narrative, see L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Sacra Pagina 3; Collegeville: Liturgical, 1991) 87–91.

³⁹ For a similar reading of the Johannine material, see Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.119–23.

⁴⁰ Obviously, I am unable to provide any solid reason why the separation took place. I would not sensationalize it, but suggest that, in due time, Jesus of Nazareth decided to continue the practice of his mentor, joining other contemporary 'baptists', (see J. Thomas, *Le mouvement baptiste en Palestine et Syrie* [Universitas Catholica Lovaniensis, 2nd Series 28; Gembloux: Duculot, 1935]) but inspired by his baptizer.

⁴¹ Obviously omitting the words ὃ σὺ μεμαρτύρηκας, which look back to both 1.6–8, 15, and the

expressions of a correct messianic understanding of Jesus.⁴⁸ For the Fourth Evangelist, as the Prologue (1.1–18) has already instructed the reader, the determining principle is that Jesus is the 'Lamb of God' (vv. 29, 34) and the 'Son of God' (v. 34). *Never* do these first disciples approach such belief. As well as 'Rabbi', and other messianic terms (including Nathanael's 'son of God', set between 'Rabbi' and 'King of Israel' in v. 49),⁴⁹ they speak of Jesus as 'Jesus of Nazareth', 'the son of Joseph' (v. 45) and 'the King of Israel' (v. 49). It is for this reason that these first encounters between Jesus and the ex-disciples of the Baptist conclude with a correction of Nathanael's limited faith (v. 50) and a promise of the sight of 'greater things' (v. 51).⁵⁰ Behind this Johannine series of 'days', leading to the revelation of the δόξα 'on the third day' (2.1, 11), may also lie the authentic (and perhaps 'embarrassing') memory of the initial difficulties the first disciples had in coming to grips with their new leader. No doubt Jesus himself was working toward a clearer understanding and articulation of his response to God. The limited, culturally, historically and religiously conditioned response of the Johannine first disciples in 1.35–51 may be an elaborated, but basically historical, reflection of one side of the confusion. For the Fourth Evangelist, there are no limitations to Jesus' self-understanding (see vv. 42, 48, 50–1), but the disciples struggle to understand him correctly. Unlike the instantaneous *sequela* and the massive conversions recorded in the Synoptic tradition, the Fourth Gospel presents a better indication of what might have actually happened when disciples of the Baptist, who had gone to Aenon near Salim, followed Jesus into Judea (3.22–3).

The Episode in the Temple

The account of the two baptismal ministries, in different parts of the land, in John 3.22–3, closes with a throw-away remark which has no theological significance, and which is left hanging without narrative resolution in the Fourth Gospel. The narrator remarks: οὐπω γὰρ ἦν βεβλημένος εἰς τὴν φυλακὴν ὁ Ἰωάννης (3.24). John the Baptist is called as a witness to Jesus in 5.33–5, but there is no report of his imprisonment, nor of his death, in the Fourth Gospel. The Johannine narrative has no need for the information given in 3.24. This could be the key to a further piece of information which can be gleaned from the Fourth Gospel concerning the story of Jesus of Nazareth. Earlier we stated that it is impossible to decide what separated the two 'baptists', Jesus and John, as I suggested that Jesus initially prac-

tised a ministry parallel to that of his mentor. But at some stage, one cannot question, Jesus' understanding of himself and his ministry changed direction. There is no longer a focus upon the call to repentance, to avoid the terrors of the end time, but Jesus preaches the imminent coming, indeed the incipient presence, of the Kingdom of God.⁵¹ It is possible that the Johannine note in 3.24 is an indication of when and why this transformation began.⁵² For the Synoptic tradition, Jesus' baptism by John encapsulates the moment of messianic commissioning. The Fourth Evangelist, in his analeptic recalling of the moment of baptism in 1.33, has no need for any such commissioning. The descent of the Spirit seen by the Baptist (v. 34) merely confirms what was in place ἐν ᾧ ἔρχεται (1.1)

Yet the Fourth Evangelist reports that Jesus and the Baptist carried on baptismal ministries in two different locations before John was put in prison (3.22–4). Is it possible that the Baptist's imprisonment and death, understood by Jesus and many of his fellow-Jews as a martyred prophet,⁵³ was a turning point in Jesus' own career, and for this reason the totally irrelevant detail of John 3.24 has been preserved? How was Jesus to relate to God, *after* his mentor had been put in prison and slain (see 3.24)? Is it to 'psychologize' too heavily to suggest that the violent death of John the Baptist led to Jesus' self-reflection and eventual further development of the prophetic categories learnt from his master and mentor?⁵⁴ Is this the catalyst which began a process which led to his consciousness of a relationship with the traditional God of Israel, expressed his use of the expression אלהים (see Mark 14.36, and especially Gal 4.6 and Rom 8.15),⁵⁵ and, at some stage of his brief public career, his teaching his disciples to join him in addressing God in this way (Matt 6.9–13//Luke 11.2–4)?⁵⁶ I am not claiming that between the Baptist's death and Jesus' coming to Jerusalem for his first Passover he had taught his disciples to pray to God as אלהים. Such a sequence is impossible to establish, but unlike the

51 For a full and detailed discussion of contemporary debates, see Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.131–64, 399–404. These pages are dedicated to the establishment of what the historical Jesus said about the historical John. The continuity and the difference emerge strongly. What is not explained, however, is what generated the 'difference'.

52 This suggestion is rejected by Ernst, 'Johannes der Täufer', 176–7, on the grounds that it is part of the Johannine anti-Baptist polemic. But, on this, see above.

53 See Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.171–7; Ernst, 'Johannes der Täufer', 176–82.

54 Although clearly Markan in its present composition and temporal location, does Mark 1.14–15 reflect a memory of this turning point? On Mark 1.15, see Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.430–4.

55 Despite the many modifications that have been brought to his argument (see the resumé in Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 526–7), one should still consult J. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (SBT 5; London: SCM, 1967) 11–65. See also Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.358–9 n. 20.

56 For a reconstruction of the original prayer to the 'Father' (אבא), taught by the historical Jesus to his disciples, see Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.291–302. Full documentation of both classical and contemporary discussion of this issue can be found in the notes on pp. 353–66.

48 Such an interpretation is widespread. See, for example, F. Hahn, 'Die Jüngerberufung Joh 1.35–51', in *Kontinuität und Einheit: Für Franz Mussner* (ed. P.-G. Müller and W. Stenger; Freiburg: Herder, 1981) 172–90, and the majority of the commentators.

49 For discussion of Jewish use of the expression 'son of God', see Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 66 n. 49. On the recent further discussion of this issue in Qumran literature, see below, n. 57.

50 For a more detailed presentation of this case, see Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 50–63.

Matthean setting for the 'Our Father', strongly determined by the architecture and message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5.1-7.28), the Lukan setting for this Q material (Luke 11.1) is provided by a request from Jesus' disciples to be taught how to pray καθὼς καὶ Ἰωάννης ἐδίδαξεν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ. Is it possible that this Lukan setting is based on a request made of Jesus while the memory of the Baptist and his disciples was still fresh? The introduction of the Baptist in 11.1 certainly comes as a surprise. There can be, of course, no final solution to such questions.

There is no call for any 'divine' or uniquely 'filial' sense in this consciousness. Whatever early Christian tradition, and especially the Fourth Gospel, made of Jesus' relationship to God, Jesus' transcending of prophetic categories would start with a Jewish tradition, inspired by such biblical passages as Ps 2.7 and 2 Sam 7.14, now witnessed to in the Qumran documents (see 4QFlor 1.10-13; 4Q246 2.1).⁵⁷ The basis of the relationship would have been Jesus' decision both to continue and develop the activity of John the Baptist, a prolongation of unconditional adhesion to his understanding of the design of the God of Israel, whom he began to address as אֱלֹהִים, and to associate his disciples with him in such an approach to God.

The several question marks in the previous paragraph indicate the speculative nature of its claims.⁵⁸ What remains unexplained, because it is undocumented, is *why* the death of the Baptist led to Jesus' shift in focus. I can only hypothesize that the violent elimination of his mentor led Jesus to turn more single-mindedly to God. This hypothesis is *at least* the equal of suggestions made by others. For Hollenbach, Jesus' transformation was generated by the sudden discovery of a power, given by God, to overthrow demons (see Matt 12.28//Luke 11.20).⁵⁹ Sanders suggests that Jesus, equally convinced that the end was near at hand, transformed the Baptist's traditional call to repentance. He accepted sinners into fellowship without demanding the traditional signs of repentance: 'If the sinners had repented, they would not have been sinners.'⁶⁰ Freyne, followed by Murphy-O'Connor, proposes that he was moved by the abysmal social conditions in Galilee that he began to privilege a message about a gracious God over the obser-

vance of the Law.⁶¹ The criteria of dissimilarity, coherence and multiple attestation all support the historical possibility that Jesus developed his understanding of his relationship with God, and that he shared this with his disciples. The above suggestion speculates, however, on when and why this development took place.

If Jesus' awareness of his relationship with God was heightened by the death of John the Baptist, then the Johannine Jesus' description of the Temple in John as τὸν οἶκον τοῦ πατρὸς μου (John 2.16) reflects an earlier moment in the tradition than Mark 11.17 and in Q (Matt 21.13//Luke 19.46) where Jesus speaks of the Temple as ὁ οἶκός μου. Responding to the God he now calls 'Father', his very first visit to Jerusalem after the death of the Baptist (on the occasion of the Pilgrim Feast of Passover), he is outraged by certain practices taking place in the house of his Father (John). It is only later in the development of the Jesus-tradition that those who developed this traditional passage were able to make Jesus Lord of the Temple, and thus able to speak of 'my house' (Mark and Q).⁶² Perhaps the Fourth Evangelist also has the earliest and correct location for this event: at the beginning of Jesus' public career. In the debates concerning the correct location for this event in the life of Jesus, the Synoptic location generally wins the day as it is seen as the catalyst which generated the final plot against Jesus. But is this perhaps the very reason why the Johannine chronology should be given preference? It was Mark who invented the 'framework' of a ministry in Galilee, a single journey to Jerusalem, the events in the city which lead to his trial, death and resurrection. In such a 'framework' the episode in the Temple *must* take place at the end of the story. Not only was it impossible to fit this tradition in any earlier, but there was no need to do so. It admirably suited the Markan focus upon the death of Jesus, and the various events (Mark 11.1-25) and disputes (11.27-12.44) which led to it. Within this context, the highly symbolic 'sandwiching' of the purification (11.15-19) between the cursing of the figtree and material on faith and prayer (vv. 12-14, 20-5) adds further doubt to the authenticity of the Markan location.⁶³

Evidence of a fragment of early tradition (and nothing more can be claimed for John 2.16 within its present context of 2.13-22), a reasonable motive for the Synoptic placement of the episode, and the suggestion that Markan theology

57 See J. A. Fitzmyer, '4Q246: The "Son of God" Document in Qumran'. *Biblica* 74 (1993) 153-74, for a full presentation, photograph, reconstruction, commentary, and analysis of the importance of the Aramaic Apocalypse text.

58 A feature of the work of Dodd and Robinson (see above, n. 7) has been an insistence that the Johannine presentation of Jesus' relationship with God as 'Father' is primitive. It can be found in the Q-logion Matt 11.25-27//Luke 10.21-22, and in a parable about the Father instructing the Son, which probably has its origins in the historical Jesus, now found in John 5.19-20.

59 P. W. Hollenbach, 'The Conversion of Jesus: From Jesus the Baptizer to Jesus the Healer'. *ANRW* 2.25.1, 209-11.

60 E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985) 200-11. See esp. 206-7 (citation from 206).

61 This is Murphy-O'Connor's reading of Freyne's suggestion. S. Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323 B.C.E. to 135 C.E. A Study of Second Temple Judaism* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier/Indiana: Notre Dame, 1980) 155-207 (social conditions in the Galilee area) and 220-8 (Jesus); Murphy-O'Connor, 'John the Baptist and Jesus', 372-4.

62 This is not, of course, to detract from the crucial importance that 2.12-22 has in the final redaction of the Johannine narrative. On this, see F. J. Moloney, 'Reading John 2.13-22: The Purification of the Temple', *RB* 97 (1990) 432-52.

63 See the balanced assessment of M. D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to St Mark* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London: A. & C. Black, 1991) 261-6.

might be a determining influence, are not sufficient grounds to make this point. More is needed, and it is available. Late in Jesus' ministry in the Synoptic tradition (Mark 11.28–30, reworked by Matt 21.23//Luke 20.2), the chief priests, the scribes and the elders ask: 'By what authority are you doing these things (ἵνα ταῦτα ποιῇς), or who gave you this authority to do them?' (Mark 11.28). What are the ταῦτα referred to here and across the pericope (see also vv. 29, 33)? Meier asks whether it was Jesus' charismatic teaching or his actions that led, historically, to this question. He concludes: 'The emphasis on "doing these things" (vv. 28–29, 33), which serves as a leitmotif throughout the pericope, seems to favor the idea that some action or practice of Jesus is the occasion of the challenge – be it the temple cleansing, as in Mark, or some other well-known action of Jesus.'⁶⁴ Whatever the answer to that question might be in the Markan account, the Johannine reporting of the Temple episode contains the interrogation concerning Jesus' authority to do 'these things' (see 2.18, ὅτι ταῦτα ποιεῖς). The Synoptic tradition forges no obvious link between the episode in the Temple and the question concerning Jesus' authority, although the immediate context suggests that the religious leaders are referring to Jesus' Temple activities, among other things. Yet, in that tradition, Jesus turns to the leaders' understanding of the authority of John the Baptist in order to deflect their question (see Mark 11.29–33 and pars.). This question concerning the Baptist, possibly a genuine reminiscence of Jesus' words,⁶⁵ comes from nowhere, late in the Synoptic account of Jesus' life. Indeed, it leads almost directly into the passion. This appears odd. Would it not be better located, along with the report of the episode in the Temple, in close association with the death of the Baptist and the beginning of Jesus' public life? Indeed, the Synoptic tradition *does* raise the issue of Jesus' authority very early in the narrative (see Mark 1.27; Luke 4.36 [L?]).⁶⁶

The grounds for accepting the Johannine location of the event in the Temple are not without weight. It is possible that τὸν οἶκον τοῦ πατρὸς μου (John 2.16) reflects an older tradition than the Synoptic ὁ οἶκος μου. As Mark invented a Jesus-story with only one visit to Jerusalem, it had to be placed as a curtain-raiser to the passion. There are indications that the Johannine and the Synoptic (Markan) traditions independently reflect an interrogation concerning Jesus' authority to do 'these things' (John 2.18; Mark 11.28: ὅτι/ἵνα ταῦτα ποιῇς), but the introduction of John the Baptist into this discussion in the Synoptic account (Mark 11.29–33 and pars.) is surprising.

There are good reasons to suggest that shortly after the death of John the Baptist (see John 3.24), Jesus came to Jerusalem and created a scene in the

Temple.⁶⁷ When questioned by the leaders, and perhaps others,⁶⁸ concerning his authority to do such things, he avoided a direct answer to the question by looking back to his mentor. If the encounter between Jesus and the Jewish leaders, as we have it reported in Mark 11.29–33, took place early in the public career of Jesus, it is only logical that he was not yet able to articulate a clear response, and thus he looked back to the authority of his master and mentor. The inability of his interrogators to resolve the enigma of John the Baptist created a situation where there was no immediate need for Jesus, very early in his ministry, to resolve the enigma of Jesus of Nazareth.

Conclusion

If the reconstruction of a 'framework' for the early part of Jesus' ministry outlined above is correct, these various pieces fit together:

1. John the Baptist's preaching and baptismal ministry disturbed the Jerusalem leadership (John and the Synoptics).
2. Jesus was baptized by John (John [implicitly] and the Synoptics).
3. He became a follower of John (John and the Synoptics).
4. At a certain stage he began a separate baptismal activity (in Judea), while John continued his ministry elsewhere (in the northern regions of the Judean desert) (only John. See Acts 18.24–19.6 for the possibility that others proliferated the baptism of John.)
5. Departing from their original master, some disciples (John 1.35, μαθηταί) of the Baptist followed Jesus (v. 37: ἠκολούθησαν τῷ Ἰησοῦ) as he began his separate activity.
6. Within this new group there were tensions between the expectations of the followers and Jesus' own sense of his mission (only John).⁶⁹
7. The popularity of Jesus' activity created a problem for the Baptist and his disciples (only John), which he never resolved (only the Synoptics).

⁶⁷ It remains true that the Synoptic (Markan?) location of the Temple episode provides an excellent motivation for the decision to do away with Jesus. I suspect that Jesus' *regular* presence in the Temple City was *always* something of a nuisance for established religious leaders.

⁶⁸ Seldom is it suggested that a saying of Jesus remained alive in the tradition because he said basically the same thing to different audiences on a number of occasions. In my opinion, among many, Matt 19.12 is a case in point. See F. J. Moloney, 'Matthew 19.3–12 and Celibacy. A Redactional and Form Critical Study', *JSNT* 2 (1979) 42–60.

⁶⁹ When I say 'only John' here, I am aware that this tension, to my mind an understandable historical occurrence, becomes a major theme, exploited in different ways, and outstandingly by Mark, of the misunderstanding and failure of the disciples across the whole of the story of Jesus. But it is 'only John' who locates it in his account of the vocation (?) of the first disciples. It is strikingly absent from the Synoptic accounts of the same occasion.

⁶⁴ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.164.

⁶⁵ See *ibid.*, 2.164–8.

⁶⁶ Luke's reworking of Mark 1.27 is so heavy and so elegant that he may be using his own source.

8. The two parallel ministries continued until the Baptist was imprisoned and killed (only John).
9. This event, the violent death of a prophet-martyr, led to Jesus' development of his own ministry, a continuation of that of his mentor, but enlivened by the centrality of his concern with the Kingdom of God.⁷⁰
10. His preaching on the Kingdom of God impressed because he spoke authoritatively, indicating an immediacy with God, whom he was known (at least by his disciples whom he taught to address God in this way) to call כֹּהֵן (the Synoptics, Paul and John).
11. On his first visit to Jerusalem, on the occasion of the Pilgrim Feast of the Passover, Jesus was angered by certain practices in the Temple which he regarded as the House of God (and thus, 'my Father'). He objected forcibly and physically to them (chronology from John; episode in both John and the Synoptics).
12. As these events happened in the immediate aftermath of the death of the Baptist, when asked by what authority he performed 'these things', he was able to respond by looking back to the figure of the Baptist. He thus avoided the need to articulate his perhaps incipient understanding of his own authority to speak and act in response to the God of Israel whom he called 'my Father' (locating a Synoptic pericope within a Johannine chronology).

As with much reconstruction of the words, the events, and especially a sequence of events, which lie behind the theological proclamations of the Four Gospels, the above suggestions remain no more than that – suggestions. If we were to look for the 'criteria' which have been established to determine the possibility of historicity, then the parentheses in the sequence suggested above at least indicate that some material in the Fourth Gospel could claim the support of multiple attestation and coherence. The figure behind the sequence of events outlined also has serious claims to dissimilarity. While he was similar to many who looked for some eschatological resolution, and turned to the Baptist in his search, much to the embarrassment of the early Church, he is dissimilar to the Jesus who emerges in the Pauline letters and the Synoptic and Johannine Gospels. Perhaps the nearest a NT document comes to describing the Jesus sketched above is Hebrews: 'One who in every respect has been tempted as we are. . . . Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered' (Heb 4.15b; 5.8). This investigation and possible reconstruction of the earliest period in the public life of Jesus at least indicates that the Fourth Gospel cannot be dismissed out of hand as a possible source, as it has been by most who have been involved in the three quests for the historical Jesus.⁷¹

70 For an exhaustive – and right-headed – treatment of Jesus' use of 'the Kingdom of God', see Meier, *A Marginal Jew*. 2.237–506.

71 I am grateful to my colleague at The Catholic University of America, Professor Frank J. Matera, who read an earlier version of this paper and made some important and helpful remarks.

The Jesus-Tradition in Acts

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The infrequent use of the Jesus-tradition in Acts is seldom noted, but it has implications for the use of the Jesus-tradition in early Christianity. It is widely assumed that the Jesus-tradition served to justify and to legitimate changing Christian belief and practice. However, the church in Acts does not normally seek justification for its practices or beliefs from the teaching or example of Jesus. The assumptions of gospel criticism about the function of the Jesus-tradition need to be tested against the observable phenomena of the one writer whose interest spanned the life of Jesus and the life of the church.

I

Paul seldom makes appeal to the Jesus-tradition. The amount of literature dedicated to interpreting and explaining this fact is large and continues to grow.¹ Less frequently noticed, and barely discussed at all, is the parallel feature in the book of Acts. The author of Acts is as reluctant as Paul to make use of traditions about Jesus.² In the case of Acts, some of the reasons adduced to explain Paul's sparing use of the Jesus-tradition do not apply. It would be possible to surmise in the case of Paul, for instance, that he was ignorant of the traditions concerning the historical Jesus, or to suppose that his gospel was exclusively concerned with the Christ of faith. It could be argued that the Jesus-tradition was so fluid that *allusion*

¹ Significant recent studies on this subject include: G. N. Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1974); V. P. Furnish, *Jesus according to Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993); D. Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1995); M. and R. Zimmermann, 'Zitation, Kontradiktion oder Applikation? Die Jesuslogien in 1 Kor 7,10f. und 9,14: Traditionsgeschichtliche Verankerung und paulinische Interpretation', *ZNW* 87 (1996) 83–100; D. Horrell, 'The Lord Commanded . . . but I Have Not Used. Exegetical and Hermeneutical Reflections on 1 Cor 9.14–15', *NTS* 43 (1997) 587–603.

² One of the few references to the problem is C. K. Barrett, 'The Third Gospel as a Preface to Acts? Some Reflections', *The Four Gospels 1992: Festchrift Frans Neirynck* (ed. F. Van Segbroek et al.; BETL 100; Leuven: Leuven University, 1992) 1453–62. Barrett surveys 41 passages in Luke which seem to establish links with Acts, but notes (1461–2) how little *specific* material is drawn from the gospel into Acts.