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The Gospel of JOHN

J. RAMSEY MICHAELS

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

I take great pleasure in introducing this commentary on John's Gospel to the larger Christian community of scholars and students. In one of my earliest years in the role of editor of this series, I had opportunity to visit Professor Leon Morris at his home in Melbourne, New South Wales, who was at that time in his ninetieth year. He agreed to work on a revision of his commentary that had first appeared in 1971. The revised edition appeared in 1995. But for a number of reasons the "revision" turned out to be much more cosmetic than substantial. So after his passing, I approached my former colleague and longtime friend, J. Ramsey Michaels, as to whether, in keeping with what was happening elsewhere in the series, he would like to offer a replacement volume. The present superb exposition of the Gospel of John is the end product of his agreeing to do so.

It is a special personal pleasure to welcome Ramsey's contribution to this series, since our own relationship dates to 1974 when Andrew Lincoln and I joined him and David Scholer on the New Testament faculty at Gordon-Conwell Seminary in Massachusetts, where the four of us (and our spouses) spent five wonderful years together. I had taught the Gospel of John at Wheaton College before moving to Gordon-Conwell, and it was this move that also shifted my primary New Testament focus from John to Paul, since the Johannine material was in Ramsey's very good hands. So I owe Ramsey a personal debt of gratitude for this move, which turned out to mark most of the rest of my New Testament career (apart from a commentary on the Revelation due out in 2010).

Whereas one might well question whether the scholarly/pastoral world needs yet another commentary on this Gospel, anyone who takes the time to read or use this work will easily recognize that the answer is "yes." Here is a substantial, truly original, work of extraordinary insight and helpfulness to pastor and scholar alike, which should have a considerable life span well after both author and editor have gone to their eternal reward. What

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the careful reader and user of this commentary will recognize is the large number of insights into this Gospel, which, for want of a better term, must be judged as "new." But that does not mean "eccentric"; rather they are the result of many years of focused labor — and love — for John's Gospel. I am therefore pleased to commend it to one and all.

GORDON D. FEE

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This commentary represents a second effort, building to some extent on the first (1984 and 1989),[1] but attempting a far more detailed exposition of the text. I used to tell my friends that I keep trying until I get it right. The charm of the enterprise, of course, is that one never quite "gets it right." Moreover, as I get older I am increasingly conscious of the mortality rate among some who have written on John's Gospel. Edwyn Hoskyns's commentary had to be finished and edited by F. N. Davey (1947), R. H. Lightfoot's by C. F. Evans (1956), J. N. Sanders' by B. A. Mastin (1968), and Ernst Haenchen's by Robert W. Funk and Ulrich Busse (1980). Yet I am encouraged by the example of C. H. Dodd, who completed his first great work on the Gospel of John, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel,* in 1953 at the age of 69, and his second, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel,* ten years later.

It may help readers to know from the start what this commentary will provide and what it will not. First, I have not begun to monitor all the publications on the Gospel in the seventeen years that have passed since I first signed the contract with Eerdmans (I may even have missed a few from before that!). Rather, I have tried to immerse myself in the text itelf, while interacting repeatedly with the major commentators, past and present, such as Bultmann, Schnackenburg, Brown, and Barrett (the first tier, more or less), and a number of others from whom I have learned a great deal, including Leon Morris, my predecessor in the NICNT series, Westcott, Hoskyns, Lindars, Lincoln, Carson, Beasley-Murray, Keener, Moloney, and my own younger self. The list could go on and on. To my surprise I found Rudolf Bultmann's commentary the most useful of all, a work widely admired for all the wrong reasons. Bultmann's theories of source, redaction, and displace-

1. See my *John: A Good News Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984) and *John,* NIBC 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989). The latter differs from the former only in being based on the NIV rather than the TEV, or Good News Bible.

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ment have not survived and should not, yet his eye for detail is unsurpassed, and his close reading of the text as it stands — even when he discards it — perceptive and illuminating. It is only a slight oversimplification to say that Bultmann interprets the Gospel correctly (more or less), finds it unacceptable, and then rewrites it. His greatness lies in the first of those three things. To a degree, I have also dealt with the relevant periodical literature, but for something close to an exhaustive bibliography the student will have to look elsewhere. Keener's 167 pages (!) is a good, up-to-date place from which to start.[2]

Second, I have not spent a great deal of time on the "background" of the Gospel (whatever that might mean), whether in Judaism, Hellenism, Hellenistic Judaism, Qumran, Gnosticism, or whatever. It is customary to do this in relation to the Gospel of John but not to any great extent in relation to the other three Gospels, because of the assumption that this Gospel somehow has a unique "background" not shared by the others. I am not so sure that this is true. I am more sure that its background, like that of all the Gospels, is mixed, that its main ingredients are the Jewish Bible, Second Temple Judaism (both Palestinian and Hellenistic), and primitive Christianity, and that the interpreter should have an eye open for relevant parallels (be they background or foreground) in Gnosticism as well. "Background," to my mind, is better assessed in relation to particular passages than in generalities.

Third, and consequently, I have kept the Introduction relatively short, at least in relation to the size of the commentary as a whole. Not only the Gospel's historical and cultural background, but its use of sources, its relationship to other Gospels and other New Testament documents, its literary style, its christology and theology, all of those issues are as well, or better, addressed as they come up in connection with the relevant texts than at the outset, before one has even started reading. Leon Morris's introduction ran to almost sixty pages, Raymond E. Brown's to well over a hundred,[3] C. K. Barrett's to almost 150, Schnackenburg's to just over two hundred — and Craig Keener's to 330 pages! Yet, by contrast, Bultmann's commentary in German had no introduction at all, and when Walter Schmithals added one for English readers in 1971, it took up a modest twelve pages! So I will not apologize for a comparatively short introduction centered largely on the question of authorship. In any event, I have always suspected that the so-

2. See Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 2.1257-1409.

3. This is not quite fair to Brown, inasmuch as his introduction was expanded after his death into a 356-page book (Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John: Edited, Updated, Introduced, and Concluded by Francis J. Moloney,* Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 2003).

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called "Introduction" should come *after* the Commentary proper, not before. I wrote it last, and it would not be a bad idea to read it last.

Finally, I have given the priority to understanding the text in its present form, just as it has come down to us, rather than tracing the history of how it came to be. The sources of John's Gospel, whether one or more of the other Gospels, the oral traditions behind them, or a putative "Signs Source," or "Revelation Discourse," are of secondary interest, often consigned to footnotes. I do not assume that something in the Gospel which is there by default, as it were, having been taken over from an earlier source, is necessarily *less* important to the writer than the editorial work the writer has brought to it. In the current jargon, the approach taken here is synchronic, not diachronic. I have assumed that the Gospel of John as we have it is a coherent literary composition, and I have attempted to read it as such — even while alerting the reader to the supposed difficulty of doing so in certain places.[4] Sometimes I am asked, "Does the Gospel of John put words in Jesus' mouth?" My answer, which will become evident in the Commentary, is "Perhaps so, though not as often as some might think," and when I conclude that it does, my job as a commentator is to leave them there.

Given the choice of using the NIV (or TNIV) translation, or making one of my own, I chose the latter course. I prefer not to use up space either defending or quarreling with the peculiarities of a given English version. My own translation is painfully literal, deliberately so, sometimes almost to the point of unintelligibility. Its sole value is to give the reader without knowledge of Greek some idea of the structure and syntax of the original. It is not intended to stand on its own, and it should never ever be made to do so! As for the text, I have generally followed the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament (26th and 27th editions, depending on what I had available). When I departed from it (for example, at 1:15 and at 12:17), I have indicated why, sometimes at considerable length.

This second effort of mine has been largely carried out during retirement years, yet it is the product of a half-century in the classroom, at Gordon Divinity School, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Andover Newton, Missouri State University, and in retirement Fuller Seminary in Pasadena and Seattle, and Bangor Seminary in Portland, Maine. I am grateful to the students in all those places whom I taught and who taught me a thing or two.

4. That is, certain so-called *aporias,* or awkward transitions, prompting theories of displacement (for example, the proposed reversal of chapters 5 and 6), theories of two farewell discourses separated by "Rise, let's get out of here!" (14:31), and attempts to separate certain passages from the Gospel proper, either as later additions by a different hand (for example, chapter 21, or 6:52-58), or as earlier and more primitive formulations (for example, parts of 1:1-18 and the so-called "Signs Source").

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Three of them — Ben Witherington (1995), Rod Whitacre (1999), and Craig Keener (2003) — have written fine commentaries of their own on the Gospel of John. So has Homer A. Kent Jr., professor and later president of Grace Theological Seminary (*Light in the Darkness: Studies in the Gospel of John,* 1974), who in the Spring of 1953, as I recall, introduced me to John's Gospel in the classroom. To them I dedicate this volume. Homer's lectures were very well organized, but what I remember best were twenty-one assigned "problem texts" he gave us to deal with, one to a chapter. That, with the help of Westcott's commentary on the English text and Merrill Tenney's *John: The Gospel of Belief,* was what got me started.

In more recent years, I benefited from interaction with colleagues, including Gordon Fee at Gordon-Conwell (now my General Editor), Charlie Hedrick at Missouri State, and the late David Scholer at Fuller. Still more recently — down the "home stretch," as it were — I had a lot of encouragement from a clergy support group in New Hampshire consisting of six or seven pastors of small American Baptist churches (my own pastor among them). We worked together mostly on case studies, giving me a sense of what the rural and small city pastor has to deal with, outside the orbit of the megachurch. I am grateful for their prayers, and I hope the commentary meets their expectations, for they are fairly typical of the audience for which I am writing.

And of course there is my wife Betty, who has loved me and whom I have loved ever since that Spring of 1953 when I first got acquainted with the Gospel of John.

J. Ramsey Michaels

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.
APOT	*Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament,* edited by R. H. Charles. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913
ASV	American Standard Version (1901)
BDAG	Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.* 3d ed. revised and edited by F. W. Danker. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000
BDF	Blass, F. and Debrunner, A. *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,* edited by R. W. Funk. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961
BibSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CEV	Contemporary English Version (1995)
DJG	*Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992
Douay	Holy Bible: Douay Version (1956)
ERV	English Revised Version (1881)
ESV	English Standard Version (2001)
FC	Fathers of the Church: A New Translation. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1947-63
GCS	*Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte*
GNB	Good News Bible (1976)
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
ISBE	*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979-88
JB	Jerusalem Bible (1966)

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JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Supplements to Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KJV	King James Version (1611)
LCL	Loeb Classical Library. Harvard University Press.
LSJ	H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* revised by H. S. Jones. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996
LXX	The Septuagint, or Greek Version of the Old Testament.
NA^{27}	Nestle-Aland. *Novum Testamentum Graece.* 27th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001
NAB	New American Bible (1970)
NASB	New American Standard Bible (1977)
NEB	New English Bible (1961)
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIV	New International Version (1978)
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible (1999)
NLT	New Living Translation (1996)
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version (1989)
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OTP	*Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* edited by J. H. Charlesworth. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983-85
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
RB	*Revue Biblique*
REB	Revised English Bible (1989)
RHPR	*Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuse*
RSV	Revised Standard Version (1952)
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SNTS	Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas
Strack-Billerbeck	Strack, H. L., and Billerbeck, P. *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch.* 6 vols. Munich: Beck, 1922-61
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-83
TEV	Today's English Version
TNIV	Today's New International Version (2005)
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*

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INTRODUCTION

I. THE NATURE OF JOHN'S GOSPEL

God, according to Emily Dickinson, is "a distant — stately Lover" who woos us "by His Son." A "Vicarious Courtship," she calls it — like Miles Standish sending John Alden to court "fair Priscilla" on his behalf in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famous poem. "But lest the soul — like fair Priscilla," she adds, mischievously, "choose the Envoy — and spurn the groom," He "vouches with hyperbolic archness, 'Miles' and 'John Alden' were Synonym — ."[1] The avid reader of the Gospel of John may detect here an echo of John 13:20 ("the person who receives me receives the One who sent me"). Jesus is indeed God's Envoy in this Gospel, as in the others (see Mt 10:40; Lk 10:16), but in no other Gospel is he so unmistakably "One" with the Father who sent him (10:30), the "I Am" who existed before Abraham (8:59), and the "Word" who was with God in the beginning, and was himself "God the One and Only" (1:1, 18). Jesus in the Gospel of John is an unforgettable figure, so much so that God the Father becomes, in the eyes of some, the "neglected factor" in New Testament theology, particularly in this Gospel.[2] It is in fact tempting to "choose the Envoy and spurn the groom," but it is a temptation to be resisted, and it is resisted, resolutely, on virtually every page of the Gospel. Over and over again, Jesus reminds his hearers that the Son does nothing on his own, that his words are words the Father has given him to speak, and his works only what the Father has given him to do. His authority rests not in himself but in his total obedience to the Father's

1. See *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (ed. T. H. Johnson; Boston: Little, Brown, n.d.), 169-70. Interestingly, Dickinson wrote this poem in 1862, only four years after Longfellow wrote *The Courtship of Miles Standish.*

2. See Marianne M. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), who seeks to correct this misunderstanding.

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will. Perhaps because of this intriguing mix of self-assertion and humility, equality with God and submission to the Father, Christian readers through the centuries have fallen in love with the Jesus of the Gospel of John, and consequently with the Gospel itself.

Not all readers of the Gospel have felt the same way. It is not everyone's favorite Gospel. As to its style, the translators of the NAB complain that

> The Gospel according to John comprises a special case. Absolute fidelity to his technique of reiterated phrasing would result in an assault on the English ear, yet the softening of the vocal effect by the substitution of other words and phrases would destroy the effectiveness of his poetry. Again, resort is had to compromise. This is not an easy matter when the very repetitiousness which the author deliberately employed is at the same time regarded by those who read and speak English to be a serious stylistic defect. Only those familiar with the Greek originals can know what a relentless tattoo Johannine poetry can produce.[3]

To which David Daniell, no stranger to good English style, replies, "Any stick, it seems, will do to beat the Gospel of Love."[4] No consensus here.

As to content, some hear only Jesus' self-assertion in the Gospel, and none of his humility. In the face of its programmatic assertion that "the Word came in flesh and encamped among us" (1:14), there are those who have asked,

> In what sense is he flesh who walks on the water and through closed doors, who cannot be captured by his enemies, who at the well of Samaria is tired and desires a drink, yet has no need of drink and has food different from that which his disciples seek? He cannot be deceived by men, because he knows their innermost thoughts even before they speak. He debates with them from the vantage point of the infinite difference between heaven and earth. He has need neither of the witness of Moses nor of the Baptist. He dissociates himself from the Jews, as if they were not his own people, and he meets his mother as the one who is her Lord. He permits Lazarus to lie in the grave for four days in order that the miracle of his resurrection may be more impressive. And in the end the Johannine Christ goes victoriously to his death of his own accord. Almost superfluously the Evangelist notes that this Jesus at all times lies on the bosom of the Father and that to him who is one with the Father the angels descend and from

3. *The Catholic Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), "Preface to the New American Bible First Edition of the New Testament."

4. *The Bible in English* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 754.

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> him they again ascend. He who has eyes to see and ears to hear can see and hear his glory. Not merely from the prologue and from the mouth of Thomas, but from the whole Gospel he perceives the confession, "My Lord and my God." How does all this agree with the understanding of a realistic incarnation?[5]

Likewise, in the face of the Gospel's classic declaration that "God so loved the world that he gave the One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not be lost but have eternal life" (3:16), Adele Reinhartz, a Jewish New Testament scholar, comments that the gift offered here

> is the promise of eternal life through faith in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God. From the implied author's perspective, this gift is not a casual offering that I as a reader may feel free to take up or not, as I please. Rather, it is for him vitally important — for my own sake — that I accept the gift by believing in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God. Accepting the gift leads to eternal life; rejecting it leads to death. . . . The Beloved Disciple's strong interest in my response is conveyed also in the continuation of the passage in 3:19-21, which reframes the gift in ethical terms. . . . Thus the Beloved Disciple judges me as "evil" if I reject his gift, that is, if I refuse to believe in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God. Conversely, he judges me as "good" if I accept his gift through faith in Jesus as savior. The universalizing language of this passage, which views the coming of the Son of God into the world as a whole, stresses that this gift is offered to me and all readers who have ever lived or ever will live. At the same time, I and all other readers are to be judged according to our response to the gift, and are subject to the consequences of our choice.
>
> The Beloved Disciple, as the implied author of the Gospel of John, therefore takes his offer with utmost gravity and urges his readers to do the same. It is a matter of life and death, good and evil. . . . The Gospel, and therefore also its implied author, recognizes two types of people, those who come to the light and those who do not, those who do evil and those who do not, those who believe and those who do not, those who will have life and those who will not. The Beloved Disciple as implied author exercises ethical judgment with respect to his readers by separating those who do good — who believe — from those who are evil. In doing so, he also aligns one group with himself, as the one whose witness is conveyed through the medium of the Gospel itself, and consigns all others to the role of "Other."[6]

5. Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 9.

6. Adele Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 24-25.

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Coming from one who gladly embraces for herself the role of "Other,"[7] this is a remarkably perceptive account of what the Gospel of John is all about, reminding us that understanding and acceptance are not necessarily the same thing. But sometimes they do go together, as in this comment by Robert Gundry, a Christian New Testament scholar who views John's Gospel as the word of God and yet understands it, in much the same way as Reinhartz, as "countercultural and sectarian":

> John not only leaves the world outside the scope of Jesus' praying and loving and of believers' loving. He also describes the world as full of sin; as ignorant of God, God's Son, and God's children; as opposed to and hateful of God's Son and God's children; as rejoicing over Jesus' death; as dominated by Satan; and as subject to God's wrath, so that God's loving the world does not make for a partly positive view of it. Rather, God loved it and Christ died for it in spite of its evil character. What comes out is the magnitude of God's love, not a partly positive view of the world.[8]

While this Gospel was without question "countercultural," even "sectarian," in its own time, not all would agree that it is any more so than the other three Gospels, or any Christian community in the first century.[9] Yet in our day and age it is, as Gundry recognizes, both countercultural and sectarian.[10] It cuts against the grain of both liberal and conservative versions of Christianity. Against those who value "inclusion" above all else, and watch their churches grow smaller even as they become more "inclusive," it offers a rather "exclusivist" vision of a community of true believers, "born from above" and at odds with the world. And even though one of its legacies is the

7. Reinhartz explores four ways to read the Gospel of John: a "compliant" reading, with the beloved disciple as "Mentor"; a "resistant" reading, with the beloved disciple as "Opponent"; a "sympathetic" reading, with the beloved disciple as "Colleague"; and an "engaged" reading, with the beloved disciple as "Other." The last she acknowledges, from her Jewish perspective, as the closest to her own (see *Befriending,* 131-67).

8. Robert H. Gundry, *Jesus the Word According to John the Sectarian* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 63-64.

9. See, for example, *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (ed. Richard Bauckham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), in particular the essay by Bauckham, "John for Readers of Mark," 147-71. See also D. A. Carson's brief but conclusive demonstration that the Sermon on the Mount (and Matthew's Gospel generally) is no less "sectarian" than the Gospel of John (*John, Jesus, and History,* Volume 1 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007], 157).

10. Gundry makes this point at some length in the third chapter of *Jesus the Word According to John the Sectarian,* "A Paleofundamentalist Manifesto for Contemporary Evangelicalism, Especially Its Elites, in North America," 71-94.

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expression "born-again Christian" — a phrase that has become in some quarters a code word for a certain kind of political activist — it offers little encouragement to such activism. In sharp contrast to Jesus and his disciples in this Gospel, most "born-again Christians" (though not all) are very much at home in the world. Though aware of some of its shortcomings, they value it enough to want to change it in ways that would never have occurred to the writer of this Gospel. The point is not that they are wrong to do this; the point is that their activism has little to do with being "born from above" in the Johannine sense. Most of them express — quite sincerely — a deep appreciation, even love, for John's Gospel, yet in too many cases it is fair to say that their appreciation exceeds their understanding.

In light of all this, the task of writing a commentary is a very specific one. The commentator's job is not to "sell" or market the Gospel of John — that is, persuade people to like it. Many Christian believers are already quick to identify it as their favorite Gospel, and those who are not committed believers will not necessarily like it better the more they understand it. Quite the contrary in some cases. It is not a matter of liking or disliking. Believers and unbelievers alike need to be confronted with John's Gospel in all its clarity, so that they can make up their minds about the stark alternatives it presents — light or darkness, truth or falsehood, life or death — and its extraordinary claims on behalf of Jesus of Nazareth. Quite simply, Is it true? The short answer, the Gospel of John's own answer, is "Yes, it is true!" At the end of it we read, "This is the disciple who testifies about these things and who wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true" (21:24). The claim echoes Jesus' own claims within the narrative: "There is another who testifies about me, and I know that the testimony he testifies about me is true" (5:32), "Even if I testify about myself, my testimony is true" (8:14), and "I was born for this, and for this I have come into the world, that I might testify to the truth" (18:37). The Gospel writer — and those who vouch for him — is no less confident than Jesus himself of the "truth" to which he testifies. But who is he, and what reason is there to accept his truth claim?

II. THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE GOSPEL

It is commonly assumed by biblical scholars, though not by most readers of the Bible, that all four Gospels are anonymous — even while continuing to call them "Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John"! "John" in fact is often viewed as somehow *more* anonymous than the other three, by those who prefer to speak of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and "the Fourth Gospel." But are any of them in fact anonymous? Yes and no. Yes, in the sense that none of their authors

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reveal their names anywhere in the written text, as Paul does so conspicuously at the beginning of each of his letters, or like Peter, James, and Jude in their letters, or John in the book of Revelation. No, in the sense that the author of "Luke" speaks of himself in the first person as if known to his readers, and even names the person to whom he is writing (Lk 1:3), while the author of "John" is identified at the end of the Gospel, not by name but as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (see 21:20-24). And no, in that every known Gospel manuscript has a heading or superscription: "According to Matthew," "According to Mark," "According to Luke," and "According to John" respectively.[11] While it is generally acknowledged that these headings were not part of the Gospels as they came from the pen of their authors, they are without question part of the Gospels in their "published" form as a fourfold collection, probably as early as the middle of the second century. The presumption was that there was one "gospel," or good news of Jesus Christ, preserved in four versions "according to" *(kata)* the testimonies of four named individuals. For this reason it was assumed (almost unanimously) in the ancient church that "the disciple whom Jesus loved," who was said to have written the Gospel we are discussing, was named "John."

A. "JOHN" IN ANCIENT TRADITIONS

The cumulative testimony of the church fathers to "John" and his Gospel is impressive. **Theophilus of Antioch** in the late second century, in agreement with the superscription to the Gospel, attributes at least its opening lines to "John," whom he names as one of the "spirit-bearing men" whose authority ranks with that of "the holy writings."[12] He does not, however, further identify "John" either as "son of Zebedee," or "apostle," or "disciple of the Lord." His testimony could have been simply taken from the superscription, "According to John."

Irenaeus, near the end of the century, after recounting the traditions about the other three Gospels, concluded, "Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia."[13] The mention of "Ephesus in Asia" is consistent with the book of Revelation, where someone named "John" writes

11. "According to" is κατά. This is commonly judged to be the earliest form of the heading, as witnessed by the two fourth-century manuscripts, Vaticanus (B) and Sinaiticus (ℵ). Most later witnesses (and even the very early P^{66} and P^{75} in the Gospel of John) have the slightly longer form εὐαγγέλιον κατά . . . ("A Gospel According to" Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, respectively).

12. *To Autolycos* 2.22 (see ANF, 2.103).

13. *Against Heresies* 3.1.1 (ANF, 1.414).

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to seven churches in Asia which he obviously knows well, beginning with an oracle directed to the church at Ephesus (see Rev 1:4; 2:1). Irenaeus's phrase, "the disciple of the Lord," is further explained by the words "who also leaned upon His breast," echoing the account in the Gospel itself in which "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was first introduced (see 13:23). Irenaeus is telling us that this "disciple of the Lord" was in fact named "John." It is natural to assume that he was referring to John the son of Zebedee, the only one of the twelve apostles named John (see Mt 10:2//Mk 3:17//Lk 6:14). This John, with his brother James, was one of the first four disciples to be called, according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke (see Mt 4:21//Mk 1:19//Lk 5:10), along with two other brothers, Peter and Andrew. Almost always, James and John (in contrast to Peter and Andrew) are seen together in the Gospel tradition. In the Gospel of John itself they are mentioned only once, and not by name but simply as "the sons of Zebedee" (21:2). In Mark, Jesus even gives the two of them one name in common, "Boanerges," interpreted as "sons of thunder" (Mk 3:17). They even speak in unison, as when they ask permission to send fire from heaven on a Samaritan village (Lk 9:54), or ask to sit one on Jesus' right and one on his left in his glory (Mk 10:37). They are both present (never only one!) with Peter (and, sometimes, Andrew) at the raising of Jairus's daughter (Mk 5:37//Lk 8:61), at the transfiguration (Mt 17:1//Mk 9:2//Lk 9:28), on the Mount of Olives (Mk 13:3), and in the garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26:37//Mk 14:33). Only once in the entire Gospel tradition does John son of Zebedee speak or act alone — when he tells Jesus, "Master, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we prevented him because he was not following with us" (Lk 9:49; see also Mk 9:38), and is told, "Do not prevent [him], for whoever is not against us is for us" (Lk 9:50; see also Mk 9:40). Even here, the verb "we saw" *(eidomen)* seems to include his brother James as well. In the book of Acts we do see him without his brother, but still not by himself but with Peter, who speaks for both of them (see Acts 3:4-6, 12-26; 4:8-12, 19-20; 8:20-23; compare Lk 22:8).

While Irenaeus does not designate "John" either as "son of Zebedee" or "apostle," it seems clear that this is who he means by "John, the disciple of the Lord." Elsewhere he is very explicit about this person. Writing to a Roman presbyter named Florinus to warn him against Valentinian Gnosticism, he recalls how

> while I was still a boy I knew you in lower Asia in Polycarp's house when you were a man of rank in the royal hall and endeavouring to stand well with him. I remember the events of those days more clearly than those which happened recently . . . so that I can speak even of the place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and disputed, how he came and went out, the character of his life, the appearance of his body, the dis-

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> courses which he made to the people, how he reported his intercourse with John and with the others who had seen the Lord, how he remembered their words, and what were the things concerning the Lord which he had heard from them, and about their miracle, and about their teaching, and how Polycarp had received them from the eyewitnesses of the word of life, and reported all things in agreement with the Scriptures.[14]

Irenaeus also passes on a tradition from this same Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna in the early second century, that "John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, 'Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within," adding that "the Church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the time of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles."[15] Here, by implication at least, is a testimony that "John," no less than "Paul," is indeed an apostle. Later, Irenaeus again cites "John, the disciple of the Lord," in refutation of Cerinthus and other heretics by attributing to him the opening words of the Gospel of John as we know it ("In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God").[16]

Surprisingly, Irenaeus also quotes **Ptolemy**, one of the Valentinian Gnostic writers against whom his *Against Heresies* was directed, as attributing to this same "John, the disciple of the Lord," the opening words of the Gospel as we know it (Jn 1:1-5, 10-11, 14).[17] Whatever their differences in interpretation, Irenaeus and his opponents seem to have valued equally the testimony of "John, the disciple of the Lord." Ptolemy is also quoted by a later church father as attributing to "the apostle" the statement, "All things came into being through him, and apart from him not one thing that has come into being was made" (Jn 1:3),[18] suggesting that he uses "apostle" and "disciple of the Lord" interchangeably. Thus "John" is identified as "the disciple of the Lord" both by Ptolemy and his enemy Irenaeus, and as "the apostle," explicitly by Ptolemy and implicitly at least by Irenaeus. If the designation "apostle" is strictly limited to Paul and to the Twelve so identified in the synoptic Gospels, then "John" can only be the son of Zebedee and brother of James.

This conclusion has been challenged occasionally on the basis of the

14. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.20.5-6 (LCL, 2.497-99).

15. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.3.4 (ANF, 1.416).

16. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.11.1 (ANF, 1.426).

17. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.85 (ANF, 1.328).

18. Ptolemy, *Letter to Flora,* from Epiphanius, *Panarion* 3.33 (see R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism,* 184).

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testimony of **Polycrates**, bishop of Ephesus at the end of the second century. Writing to Victor, bishop of Rome, in defense of a fixed date for Easter, Polycrates cited the "great luminaries" buried in Ephesus who held this view, among them "John, who lay on the Lord's breast, who was a priest wearing the breastplate, and a martyr, and teacher. He sleeps at Ephesus."[19] The identification of "John" with "the disciple whom Jesus loved" mentioned in the Gospel is unmistakable (see Jn 13:25), yet this "John" is not explicitly called either "apostle" or "disciple of the Lord," only "martyr" and "teacher," and, most remarkably, "a priest wearing the breastplate." Only the Jewish high priest wore "the breastplate," or "mitre,"[20] and it is incredible to think of John the son of Zebedee, or for that matter any disciple of Jesus, as having ever served as the Jewish high priest. Possibly Polycrates jumped to a rash conclusion from a notice in the Gospel that one of Jesus' disciples (according to *some* interpretations "the disciple whom Jesus loved") was "known to the Chief Priest" (Jn 18:15, 17). Or possibly he has confused "John" the Christian "martyr and teacher" with "John" the Jewish priest mentioned alongside "Annas the high priest" and "Caiaphas . . . and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family" (Acts 4:6) as interrogators of Peter and John the son of Zebedee after they had healed a lame beggar at the gate of the temple. According to Richard Bauckham, Polycrates could not have confused those two Johns because they are both part of the same narrative, and Polycrates must have therefore had in mind another "John" who had lived in Ephesus and was buried there.[21] But the argument is tenuous, for once such a capacity for confusion is admitted it is hard to set limits to it. Polycrates in almost the same breath confuses Philip the apostle with Philip, one of the seven appointed to serve tables in the apostles' place (Acts 6:5). His gift for muddying the waters seems to know no bounds.

More often, the notion that "John" must necessarily be the son of Zebedee is challenged on the basis of the even earlier testimony of **Papias**, bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor, a contemporary of both Polycarp and Ptolemy. While Papias says nothing about the authorship of the Gospel that we call the Gospel of John,[22] he does (like Ptolemy and Irenaeus) clearly re-

19. Quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.24.3 (LCL, 1.507); also 3.31.3 (LCL, 1.271).

20. Gr. τὸ πέταλον. "Mitre" is the translation in 3.31.3 (LCL, 1.271). See the lengthy (and convincing) discussion in R. Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple,* 41-50.

21. *Testimony of the Beloved Disciple,* 50.

22. Papias's discussion of the authorship of the Gospels is limited to Mark and Matthew in the material available to us from Eusebius (see *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15-16; LCL, 1.297).

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fer to "John" as a "disciple of the Lord." His testimony (preserved for us by Eusebius in the fourth century) has been the subject of considerable debate:

> And I shall not hesitate to append to the interpretations all that I ever learnt well from the presbyters and remember well, for of their truth I am confident. For unlike most I did not rejoice in them who say much, but in them who teach the truth, nor in them who recount the commandments of others, but in them who repeated those given to the faith by the Lord and derived from the truth itself; but if ever anyone came who had followed the presbyters,[23] I inquired into the words of the presbyters, what Andrew or Peter or Philip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples,[24] had said, and what Aristion and the presbyter John,[25] the Lord's disciples,[26] were saying. For I did not suppose that information from books would help me so much as the word of a living and surviving voice.[27]

Eusebius himself finds that Papias

> twice counts the name of John, and reckons the first John with Peter and James and Matthew and the other Apostles, clearly meaning the evangelist, but by changing his statement places the second with the others outside the number of the Apostles, putting Aristion before him and clearly calling him a presbyter. This confirms the truth of the story of those who have said that there were two of the same name in Asia, and that there are two tombs at Ephesus both still called John's. This calls for attention: for it is probable that the second (unless anyone prefer the former) saw the revelation which passes under the name of John. The Papias whom we are now treating confesses that he had received the words of the Apostles from their followers, but says that he had actually heard Aristion and the presbyter John. He often quotes them by name and gives their traditions in his writings.[28]

Has Eusebius read Papias correctly? The debate, which continues to the present day, hinges on the identification of Papias's "presbyters," whose "words" he values so highly. Are they simply his way of referring to the twelve apostles, seven of whom (Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John, and Matthew) he promptly names? Or are they the next generation of

23. Gr. τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις.
24. Gr. τῶν τοῦ κυρίου μαθητῶν.
25. Gr. ὁ πρεσβύτερος Ἰωάννης.
26. Gr. τοῦ κυρίου μαθηταί.
27. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.3-4 (LCL, 2.291-93).
28. *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.5-7 (LCL, 2.293-95).

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church leaders, particularly in Asia, who had followed the apostles and handed down their teaching? If it is the former, then Papias is twice removed from the seven apostles whom he names, for he looks to those who had "followed"[29] them. If it is the latter, he is three times removed from the apostles, for he looks to those who had "followed" the presbyters, so as to learn secondhand what they were saying about those whom they in turn had followed, the original disciples of Jesus.

Eusebius contradicts himself. On the one hand he presupposes the first alternative, that "the presbyters" are in fact "the apostles." This is clear in his paraphrase of what he has just quoted Papias as saying, for in the quotation Papias says, "If ever anyone came who had followed the presbyters, I inquired into the words of the presbyters," and in Eusebius's paraphrase he claims that Papias "confesses that he had received the words of the Apostles from their followers" (literally "from those who had followed them").[30] Nothing could be clearer than that Eusebius identifies Papias's "presbyters" with the "apostles" Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John, and Matthew. Yet this identification pulls the rug from under his insistence that two Johns are in play. *Both* Johns in the Papias citation are called "presbyters" (that is, apostles, according to Eusebius), and *both* are counted among "the Lord's disciples." All that distinguishes them is the tense of a verb. Papias inquired about what the one had "said"[31] and what the other (along with Aristion, who is not called "presbyter") was "saying."[32] Nothing in the citation requires that two individuals are in view. Rather, Papias seems to be saying that one of the seven "presbyters" who used to speak in the past (John) still speaks, together with Aristion, who was a "disciple of the Lord" but not one of the twelve.[33]

Nor do "two tombs at Ephesus both still called John's," necessarily point to two Johns. There are to this day two tombs in Jerusalem, each revered as the tomb of Jesus, but no one has proposed a second Jesus. Eusebius has a reason of his own (which he does not try to hide) for wanting to distinguish John the Apostle from John the Presbyter — it enables him to attribute "the revelation which passes under the name of John" to someone other than an apostle. He does not try to make the case here (candidly acknowledging that some "prefer the former," that is, the apostle as author of the Revelation), but elsewhere he is quite explicit:

29. Gr. παρηκολουθηκώς.
30. Gr. παρὰ τῶν αὐτοῖς παρηκολουθηκότων.
31. Gr. εἶπεν, aorist.
32. Gr. λέγουσιν, present.
33. So Morris, 21: "The trouble is that, for all the popularity in some circles, there is little evidence for the existence of John the Elder. It boils down to Eusebius' interpretation of one sentence in Papias and a much later traveler's tale of two tombs in Ephesus each said to be John's."

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> that this book is by one John, I will not gainsay; for I fully allow that it is the work of some holy and inspired person. But I should not readily agree that he was the apostle, the son of Zebedee, the brother of James, whose are the Gospel of John and the Catholic Epistle.[34]

Eusebius makes his case, then, in order to assign a different author to *the book of Revelation,* not the Gospel of John. While he acknowledges that the Revelation is "the work of some holy and inspired person" (evidently the elusive "presbyter John"), it is important to him (because of its differences from the Gospel) that it not be the work of the apostle. It is necessary to cherry-pick his testimony in order to use it in support of a different author for the Gospel. Yet while this "presbyter" distinct from the apostle remains something of a phantom in real history,[35] he has taken on a life of his own in modern "Johannine" scholarship. In D. A. Carson's words, "having an extra 'John' around is far too convenient to pass up."[36] It allows us to take seriously the unanimous tradition of the church that the author of the Gospel was "John," while avoiding the difficulties now frequently associated with the traditional ascription to John the son of Zebedee.

B. THE TRADITION PRO AND CON

What are the difficulties? How well does John the son of Zebedee fit the picture that emerges from the Gospel itself of the person it claims as its author, "the disciple whom Jesus loved"? The case in favor of the identification is simple and appealing: "the disciple whom Jesus loved" must have been one of the Twelve whom Jesus had chosen (6:70) because he was present at the last supper (13:23). Of the Twelve, he was the one sitting closest to Jesus, so close that he "leaned on Jesus' breast" (13:25), making it very likely that he was one of the "inner circle" of three (or sometimes four) apostles whom Jesus takes aside (in the other three Gospels) to share in certain crucial moments in his ministry such as the raising of Jairus's daughter, the transfiguration, the last discourse on the Mount of Olives, and the prayer in Gethsemane. These were Peter, the brothers James and John, and sometimes Peter's brother, Andrew —

34. *Ecclesiastical History* 7.25.7 (LCL, 2.199).

35. It is of course true that someone who calls himself "the Presbyter" is the author of 2 John (1) and 3 John (1), and putting that claim together with the traditional ascription to "John," it is natural to speak of "John the Presbyter." Yet if "presbyter" is simply a "Johannine" word for "apostle" (which does not occur in Jn, or 1-3 Jn as a term for Jesus' disciples), the author is simply claiming to be one of Jesus' original followers, possibly one of the Twelve (see 1 Jn 1:1, 3, where the "we" seems to carry the same implication).

36. *John, Jesus, and History,* Volume 1, 139.

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the first four disciples called, according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Of these four, the beloved disciple cannot be Peter, for the Gospel narrative clearly distinguishes him from Peter (13:23-25; 20:2-10; 21:7, 20-23). He can hardly be Andrew, for Andrew is frequently named in the Gospel, and there is no conceivable reason why the disciple would sometimes be named and sometimes not. That leaves the twosome, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They are a particularly attractive pair because their bold request to sit immediately on Jesus' right and left in his coming glory (Mk 10:37) could imply that those were *already* their customary seats when Jesus and the disciples ate together.[37] But James is eliminated because of his early martyrdom at the hands of Herod Agrippa I (see Acts 12:2), leaving him scant time to write a Gospel, much less become the subject of a rumor that he would live until Jesus returned (see Jn 21:23)! So we are left with half of the twosome, John the son of Zebedee.[38] It is worth noting as well that John is seen in the book of Acts only in association with Peter (Acts 1:13; 3:1-4:22; 8:14-25), even as four of the five appearances of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" in John's Gospel are with Peter (19:26-27 being the only exception).

So again, what are the difficulties? The flaws in the classic argument center on its assumption that the twelve apostles (that is, the twelve listed in the synoptic Gospels) were present at the last supper, and were the only ones present. But "the Twelve" are never listed in this Gospel, nor are they called "apostles." Only once do they come into the narrative (quite abruptly), when Jesus, after many of his disciples deserted, "said to the Twelve, 'Do you want to go away too?'" (6:67), prompting Peter's confession, and Jesus' reply, "Did I not choose you as the Twelve? And one of you is 'the devil'" (6:70). In contrast to the other three Gospels (Lk 6:13 in particular), the earlier moment of "choosing" is seen only in retrospect. Obviously Peter is one of "the Twelve," for it is to him that Jesus is speaking, but only "the devil" Judas Iscariot (6:71) and Thomas (20:24) are explicitly identified as being "one of the Twelve." Who were the other nine? Disciples named in the Gospel are Andrew, Philip, Nathanael (see 1:40-45), another Judas, "not Iscariot" (14:22), and "the sons of Zebedee" (21:2). The latter are presumably James and John, as in the other Gospels, bringing the total to nine. Of these, all but Nathanael are on at least one of the synoptic lists of twelve apostles — assuming that the other Judas can be identified with Luke's "Judas of James"

37. Caution is necessary because the two disciples' request had to do with thrones and judicial authority, not seats at a meal, yet the two ideas seem rather closely linked (see Lk 22:30).

38. The classic statement is that of B. F. Westcott a hundred years ago, who argued that the author was (a) a Jew, (b) a Jew of Palestine, (c) an eyewitness, (d) an apostle, (e) the apostle John (*The Gospel According to John,* ix-lix).

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(Lk 6:16; Acts 1:13). Lazarus, Martha, and Mary of Bethany are also named, as well as Mary Magdalene, but they are not called disciples, and they seem not to have traveled with Jesus. Other disciples besides "the disciple whom Jesus loved" are mentioned but not named (see 1:40; 18:15-16; 21:2). Consequently there is no way to determine which disciples (beyond Peter, Thomas, and Judas Iscariot) actually belonged to "the Twelve," nor is it ever explicitly stated that the Twelve, and only the Twelve, were present at the last meal and the farewell discourses. Obviously, some of them were present (Peter, Thomas, and Judas Iscariot all being mentioned by name in chapters 13 and 14), but what of the others who are mentioned, Philip, the other Judas, and "the disciple whom Jesus loved"? Did they belong to "the Twelve" so far as this Gospel is concerned?

Perhaps the strongest argument in favor of the Twelve being present at the last meal is the use of the verb "I chose" in 13:18 ("I know which ones I chose"), 15:16 ("You did not choose me, but I chose you") and 15:19 ("I chose you out of the world"), echoing 6:70, "Did I not choose you as the Twelve?" (italics added). While all of Jesus' disciples are "elect" in the sense of having been given him and drawn to him by the Father (see 6:37, 39, 44), only the Twelve are selected, or "chosen." If this is the case, then even though nothing is made of the designation, they are the disciples primarily in view in the farewell discourses, their calling as "the Twelve" being defined by the words, "I chose you, and appointed you that you might go and bear fruit, and that your fruit might last" (15:16). It is fair to assume that (with the obvious exception of Judas Iscariot), they are also in view in 20:19-31, where the designation of Thomas as "one of the Twelve" (20:24) seems to imply that even though Thomas, as "one of the Twelve," would have been expected to be present when Jesus first appeared (vv. 19-23), he was not. This is consistent with certain correspondences between what was promised to the disciples in chapters 14–16 and what happens in these verses after Jesus' resurrection.

To that extent the traditional argument for John the son of Zebedee is sustainable. But does the Gospel of John's "Twelve" match the twelve listed in the other three Gospels and Acts — lists which do not entirely agree even with one another?[39] We have no guarantee that they do, and in that sense the logic of the traditional argument is less than airtight. As for an "inner circle" consisting of Peter, James, John, and sometimes Andrew, there is no such inner circle in this Gospel. While Peter and "the disciple whom Jesus loved" stand out and are left standing at the end, each of the disciples — Andrew,

39. Peter, Andrew, James and John of Zebedee, Philip, Thomas, Matthew, Bartholomew, James of Alphaeus, and Judas Iscariot are listed in all three synoptics and Acts; Thaddeus and "Simon the Cananaean" only in Matthew and Mark; "Judas of James" and "Simon the Zealot" (possibly the same as "Simon the Cananaean") only in Luke and Acts.

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Philip, Nathanael, Thomas, and Judas-not-Iscariot — has his moment in the sun, or opportunity to ask a question, with "the sons of Zebedee," two-thirds of the synoptic inner circle, making a belated cameo appearance (21:2). Of all the disciples, they alone say nothing and do nothing. Yet their mere presence at the fishing scene in chapter 21 makes the identification of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" as one of them problematic.[40]

It has become almost axiomatic in attempting to identify the beloved disciple that he is not likely to have been sometimes named and sometimes anonymous. While some have ignored that principle, notably those few who identify him as Lazarus, or Thomas, it has for the most part been assumed that the beloved disciple's anonymity is maintained consistently throughout. Defenders of the traditional view that he is John of Zebedee have been content to make an exception on the ground that "the sons of Zebedee" are not actually named, but this is surely a technicality. In calling them "the sons of Zebedee," the writer has in effect named them, for there is little doubt that their names would have been known to most of the Gospel's readers.[41] And like the synoptic writers, he views them as a pair, not as individuals. This undercuts the notion that he is himself one of them. In fact, as we will see in the commentary, if the whole scene is understood to be viewed solely through the eyes of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," then he is distinguishing himself from *all seven* of the disciples said to be gathered for fishing at the lake of Tiberias, not only from the five who are named (Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, and the sons of Zebedee) but from the two who are unnamed, making eight in all. While this is by no means certain, it is consistent with two other scenes in the Gospel. In one, Jesus says to Judas, "What you are doing, do quickly!" and the disciple (as author) adds that "none of those reclining found out for what reason he said this to him" (13:28), obviously excluding himself, for he did know the reason. In the other, he enumerates four individuals (all women) "standing by the cross of Jesus" (19:25), again excluding himself because he is the one "taking the picture," as it were. Then suddenly he "comes out of hiding" as we see him through Jesus' eyes (vv. 26-27), correcting the reader's impression that only women were present at the crucifixion. In the fishing scene, a case can be made that he similarly excludes himself in listing the (other) disciples who were present, until he again comes out of hiding to exclaim, "It is the Lord!" (21:7). If so, he is clearly *not* one of "the sons of Zebedee."

40. Bauckham is even more emphatic: "But in fact 21:2, far from allowing the possibility that the beloved disciple is John the son of Zebedee, actually excludes the possibility" (*Testimony of the Beloved Disciple,* 77).

41. Again, Bauckham comments, "Everyone knew the names of the sons of Zebedee. . . . If the beloved disciple could be one of them, he could also just as well be Thomas or Nathanael" (*Testimony of the Beloved Disciple,* 77).

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Yet if the author is not John the Apostle (and if John the Presbyter remains a ghost), how did the name come to be attached so persistently to the Gospel, beginning with the superscription, "According to John"? It is a fair question. The Gospel as it comes to us sends distinctly mixed messages, with a clear identification by name (as do the other Gospels) at the beginning and at least the pretense of anonymity at the end. Why would this Gospel (alone among the four) identify its author as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," yet without providing an actual name? Does it do this in order deliberately to conceal the name, or because its readers were expected to know the name? The effort to correct a rumor "that that disciple would not die" (v. 23) seems to imply the latter, yet why the secrecy about something already well known? If John of Zebedee is the author, why the concealment? John was an acknowledged apostle, and there would have been every reason to claim his apostolic authority. The book of Revelation shows no such hesitation in claiming "John" (quite possibly the son of Zebedee) as its author, naming him as if he needs no introduction (Rev 1:1, 4). In the so-called "Gospel of John," however, the "John" who needs no introduction is a different John, the one known in the other Gospels as "the Baptist" or "the Baptizer." In this Gospel, he is the first person mentioned by name (1:6), and he is always simply "John" (never "John the Baptist," or "Baptizer") — as if there is no need to distinguish him from anyone else with the same name?[42] This is odd if "John" is the author's name as well.[43] To anyone looking at the Gospel for the first time, the juxtaposition of "According to John" as a heading, and "A man came, sent from God. John was his name" (1:6)[44] is striking. The impression given is that the two Johns are the same, and that he is either the author or the hero of the story, or both.

It is of course a misleading impression, for the "John" of 1:6-8, 15-18,

42. Contrast the author's care to distinguish between "Judas of Simon Iscariot" (6:71) and Judas "not the Iscariot" (14:22), and among "Mary, who anointed the Lord" (11:2), "Mary of Clopas," and "Mary Magdalene" (19:25). There is possibly one other "John" in the Gospel, the father of Simon Peter (see 1:42; 21:15-17), yet no care is taken to distinguish him from the Baptizer. In fact, as we will see, he may even *be* the Baptizer, if Jesus is speaking not of Peter's paternity but of the fact that he was at first a disciple of "John."

43. It is even more odd that defenders of the traditional view argue precisely the opposite. For example, Westcott (xlvii), "If, however, the writer of the Gospel were himself the other John of the Gospel history, it is perfectly natural that he should think of the Baptist, apart from himself, as John only"; so too Morris (7): "It is difficult to understand why any informed early Christian (who must have known that there were two Johns) should thus court confusion. But it would have been quite natural for John the Apostle to speak of his namesake simply as 'John.'" Yet Luke does this as well (with only three exceptions, all in dialogue, none in narrative), without "courting confusion."

44. On the importance of the name "John" for the Baptizer, see Luke 1:13, 60, 63.

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19-34 and 3:23-36 is neither the author nor the hero. And yet he is a major (if not the major) "voice" (1:23) in the Gospel's first three chapters. If the Gospel is viewed as "testimony," his is the first testimony we hear (see 1:7-8, 15, 19, 34; 3:26), and his pronouncement, "The One coming after me has gotten ahead of me, because he was before me" (1:15), seems to have been what prompted the author to begin as he did, with a reminder of Who it was who came "before" John (1:1-5). While this John is obviously not the author, the actual author is quite willing to blend his own voice with John's in testifying to the "glory" and the "grace and truth" of the Word made flesh (see 1:14, 16-17), and implicitly to make John's words his own (see 3:27-36) in exactly the same way that he makes the words of Jesus his own (see 3:13-21). As we will see, it is John, not Jesus, who speaks with the emphatic "I" in the opening chapter (for example, "I am not the Christ," 1:20; "I am a voice of one crying in the desert," 1:23; "I baptize in water," 1:26; "This is he of whom I said," 1:30; "And I did not know him," 1:31, 33; "And I have seen, and have testified," 1:34), and again when he reappears in chapter 3 ("I said I am not the Christ," 3:28; "So this, my joy, is fulfilled. He must grow, but I must diminish"). By contrast, Jesus in these three chapters (even though he will "grow" as John "diminishes," 3:29-30), says surprisingly little in the first person, and nothing at all with the emphatic "I" until at last he reveals himself to the Samaritan woman at the well.[45] It is at least possible that this Gospel is "According to John" not because someone named John is the actual author but because of the early mention of "John" in 1:6 and the prominence of John's testimony in the Gospel's first three chapters.

C. THAT DISCIPLE

What then of the Gospel itself, aside from its superscription and the traditions of the fathers? What does it say about "the disciple who testifies about these things and who wrote these things," and whose "testimony is true" (21:24)? In this commentary I have taken a "minimalist" approach, focusing on passages where "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is explicitly called that (13:23-25; 19:26-27; 20:2-10; 21:7, 20-24), and excluding the three passages where some have found him lurking but where he is not so designated (1:40; 18:15-16; 19:35). As a result, certain conclusions that have become almost conventional wisdom to some are not drawn. It would, for example, be convenient to

45. Jesus' first words in the Gospel are decidedly not centered on himself: "What are you seeking?" (1:38), and "Come, and you will see" (v. 39). After that, he speaks of himself in the third person as "the Son of man" (1:51; 3:14), or "the Son" (3:16-18), or "the Light" (3:19-21), or even as "we" (3:11), conspicuously avoiding the emphatic "I."

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argue that this disciple was first of all a disciple of John (1:40), helping to explain why John's name came to be attached to the Gospel. But there is no evidence for this. His anonymity does not mean that he can be identified with any or all unnamed disciples. It is at least as likely that the unnamed disciple with Andrew who heard John say, "Look, the Lamb of God!" was Philip (see 1:43) as that it was "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Nor can he necessarily be identified with the unnamed disciple accompanying Peter after Jesus' arrest who was "known to the Chief Priest" (18:15), and therefore (so the argument goes) more than likely a Judean, and probably not one of the Twelve. That hypothesis, in fact, stands somewhat in tension with the preceding one, for all the named disciples who heard John east of the Jordan (Andrew, Peter, and Philip, not to mention Nathanael) were Galileans, and if the beloved disciple were one of them, he too would likely have been a Galilean.

The most persistent identification, perhaps, is with the anonymous eyewitness to Jesus' crucifixion who "has seen" and "testified," and whose "testimony is true, and that one knows that he tells the truth, so that you too might believe" (19:35). If "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is the witness who "testifies about these things" (21:24), what could be more appealing than an explicit claim that he was an eyewitness to Jesus' crucifixion, and to the blood and water from Jesus' side? Yet if there is such a claim, it is anything but explicit. While "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was indeed present, along with four women, as witness to the crucifixion (19:26-27), nothing in the text links him to the anonymous figure whose eyewitness testimony is noted and confirmed several verses later. He is in the text for a different reason — to accept Jesus' mother as his mother and care for her; if taken literally, the notice that "from that hour the disciple took her to his own home" (v. 27) removes him from the scene well before the spear is thrust into Jesus' side. While he is obviously an eyewitness to much that transpires in the Gospel, in that certain scenes are viewed through his eyes and narrated from his standpoint, no great emphasis is placed on his role as eyewitness. That is left rather to John (that is, the Baptizer, 1:34) and to the anonymous witness at the cross (19:35). Only once does the disciple call attention to what he "saw" (20:8), and even there it is sandwiched between what Peter had just seen in the tomb of Jesus and what Mary Magdalene would see, to the point that we are left wondering which vision was actually his, the scattered graveclothes (vv. 6-7), or the two angels in white (v. 12).

In short, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is a very elusive figure in the Gospel, and not just because he is unnamed. He is first introduced — or introduces himself — as "one of his disciples" (13:23), but in the narratives that follow he is characteristically in, but not of, the apostolic company commonly designated the Twelve. Peter asks him to find out from Jesus which of them will hand Jesus over to the authorities, and he does so (13:25-26), only

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to leave Peter and the others in the dark as to who it is (vv. 28-29). When Jesus is crucified, he is not with the other male disciples (wherever they might be!), but with four female disciples, "standing by the cross of Jesus" (19:25). When Jesus gives his mother and the disciple into each other's care (19:26-27), the disciple holds his peace and obeys. When he looks into the tomb of Jesus and "believes" (20:8), he does not pause to share his insight with Mary Magdalene, who is left crying outside the tomb (v. 11); if he and Peter compare notes on the way home (v. 10), we hear nothing of it. If he is present on either of the two occasions when Jesus appeared to the disciples behind locked doors (20:19-23 and 26-29), we hear nothing of that either. Only at the final fishing scene near the lake of Tiberias does he make an appearance and break his silence, to tell Peter, "It is the Lord!" (21:7). Those are his only words to a fellow disciple anywhere in the Gospel, and his only words to anyone after the question at the table, "Lord, who is it?" (13:25).[46] When at the end Peter earns a rebuke for his curiosity about the disciple's fate (21:21), the disciple is again characteristically silent (vv. 22-23) — even as he is solemnly identified as the one who "testifies" (v. 24)!

Some commentators attach great significance to the disciple's association with Peter in four of his five appearances in the Gospel, usually suggesting a rivalry of some kind between the two, and usually to Peter's disadvantage. He and Peter are thought to represent competing segments of the Christian community (Jew and Gentile, institutional and charismatic, or whatever), or perhaps different spheres of responsibility within the Christian movement (such as pastoral and evangelistic, or administrative and prophetic). There is little evidence of such rivalry in the text, except perhaps at the very end (21:20-23). Long before "the disciple whom Jesus loved" even comes into the story, it is Peter who confesses, "Lord, to whom shall we turn? You have words of life eternal, and we believe and we know that you are the Holy One of God" (6:68-69). And Peter's request to the disciple at the table is a perfectly natural one, given the seating arrangement and the perplexity of all the disciples (see 13:22), not a sign of Peter's ignorance or inferiority. If anyone deserves blame, it is the disciple himself for not fully carrying out Peter's request. Nor does the disciple deserve any particular merit for winning the footrace to the tomb of Jesus (20:4). When we are told that he "saw and believed" (20:8), we are hardly allowed to infer (despite Lk 24:12) that Peter saw and did *not* believe. Later, at the lake of Tiberias when he recognizes that "It is the Lord!" (21:7), his words are probably said to be addressed to Peter simply because Peter is the first to act on this information. Obviously the other disciples hear him as well (see v. 12). Only the gentle re-

46. The latter is repeated in slightly longer form in 21:20, "Lord, who is the one handing you over?"

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buke to Peter at the end (21:22) puts Peter at any kind of disadvantage, and its purpose is only to remind Peter (and, more importantly, the reader) that different disciples have different callings.

Where, then, are we left? With an unnamed "disciple whom Jesus loved" who may or may not be one of the Twelve, but is *not* (in order of appearance) Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, Judas Iscariot, Thomas, Lazarus, Mary, Martha, Judas-not-Iscariot, Mary Magdalene, or a son of Zebedee. That he is male is evident from Jesus' words to his mother, "Look, your son!" (19:26), but beyond that his anonymity remains intact. While his identity is clearly known to those who vouch that "his testimony is true" (21:24), and probably to the Gospel's original readers, the modern reader can only guess as to who he was.

Two clues are worth exploring, both centering on what happened *after* the events recorded in the Gospel. The first is the rumor that the disciple would not die before the Lord's return (21:23). This does not help very much because the saying of Jesus that might have given rise to such a rumor mentioned "some" *(tines)* who "would not taste death" before the coming of the kingdom of God, not just one (see Mt 16:28//Mk 9:1//Lk 9:27). Some have proposed that the rumor would have had particular relevance to Lazarus, who had already died once and was expected not to die again, but if we stay with the principle that the disciple would not have been sometimes named and sometimes anonymous, Lazarus is ruled out.[47] The most we can infer is that the disciple lived at least into the last decade or so of the first century, and it is not unlikely that this was true of quite a number of Jesus' followers. Papias, after all, attests the "living and surviving voice" of at least two (Aristion and John) well into the second century.[48] The rumor that he would not die, therefore, only eliminates disciples known to have died earlier, and these — James of Zebedee and probably Peter — are eliminated already on other grounds.

The other possible clue, the one instance in which Peter is not in the picture, is more promising. It is that moment at the cross when Jesus says to his mother, "Look, your son!" and to the disciple, "Look, your mother!" (19:26-27). Taken literally, the pronouncement implies that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is in fact one of Mary's own sons and brother of Jesus, now appointed to care for his mother after Jesus' death. Certainly the expression, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," is consistent with the disciple's being Jesus' own brother. If he is not, Jesus' living brothers are, at the very least, being conspicuously overlooked. Moreover, among the women present near

47. For a list of those identifying the disciple as Lazarus, see Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple,* 185-92.

48. See above, n. 23.

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the cross in Mark (15:40) and in Matthew (27:61), the woman designated as "Mary the mother of James and Joses [or Joseph]" could, as some have suggested, actually have been the Mary mother of Jesus, given that two of Jesus' brothers (in addition to "Simon" and "Judas") were named "James" and "Joses" (or "Joseph"; see Mk 6:3 and Mt 13:55, respectively). Quite possibly Mark has deliberately avoided referring to Mary as Jesus' mother (in keeping with Mk 3:31-35), and Matthew has followed in his footsteps. In Mark, Jesus is called "the son of Mary" and "brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon" not by Mark himself, but by the people of Jesus' hometown — unreliable narrative voices at best (see Mk 6:3, and compare Mt 13:55). The reader already knows who Jesus' true "brother" and "sister" and "mother" are — those who "do the will of God" (Mk 3:35). Luke appears to have negotiated this tricky terrain by explicitly characterizing Jesus' mother and brothers themselves as "those who hear and do the word of God" (Lk 8:21) — that is, as "model disciples" and "prime examples of those who listen to the word of God 'with a noble and generous mind' " (see Lk 8:15).[49] In John's Gospel, Jesus himself takes the initiative to assign his mother to someone else — as it happens, to a kind of "model disciple" identified only as "the disciple whom he loved." If the disciple is one of Jesus' own brothers, this initiative can be viewed as yet another way of negotiating the same terrain. What is crucial for Jesus' mother and brothers is not their blood relationship to Jesus, but rather (as with any disciple) being objects of his love (see 13:1) who "hear and do the word of God." As we were told from the start, the birth that matters is "not of blood lines, nor of fleshly desire, nor a husband's desire, but of God" (1:13).

The obvious barrier to any identification of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" with a brother of Jesus is the flat statement that "his brothers did not believe in him" (7:5). Yet at least two of his brothers, James (Gal 1:19; Jas 1:1) and Jude (Jude 1), are known to have eventually come to faith, and there is no evidence that any of them did not. Within fifty days of Jesus' resurrection his mother is seen in the company of "his brothers," along with the eleven disciples (named one by one) and the women who had traveled with them (see Acts 1:13-14). We are not told anywhere in the New Testament the circumstances by which any of them came to believe in him — except that he "appeared to James" after his resurrection (1 Cor 15:7).[50] There is, moreover,

49. The language is J. A. Fitzmyer's (*Luke,* 1.723).

50. The account of the appearance to James in the *Gospel of the Hebrews* implies that James was already a believer before the resurrection, and that he was present at the last supper: "James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he had drunk the cup of the Lord until he should see him risen from among them that sleep." According to this tradition (in contrast to 1 Cor 15:7), Jesus appeared to James first, and "shortly thereafter the Lord said, Bring a table and bread! And immediately it is added, He

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a certain reticence about identifying Jesus' brothers among those who believed. While Paul refers once to James as "the brother of the Lord" (Gal 1:19),[51] James himself (or someone writing in his name) conspicuously does not, calling himself instead "servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Jas 1:1). Jude too identifies himself as "servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James" (Jude 1).

Quite possibly a similar reticence underlies the phrase "the disciple whom Jesus loved" in the Gospel of John. If one of Jesus' brothers did in fact become a disciple during the course of his ministry, this phrase might have served to distinguish him from his fellow disciples, all of whom Jesus loved (see 13:1, 34), but not as brothers — at least not to begin with. In the course of the narrative, they too (20:17), and finally all believers (21:23), come to be known as Jesus' "brothers," children of the same Father (see 20:17, "my Father and your Father"). Still, on this theory, only one is a child of the same mother, and he leaves his signature to that effect in recording Jesus' words, "Look, your son!" (19:26), and "Look, your mother!" (19:27). Early on in the Gospel, Jesus is seen briefly in Capernaum after his first miracle with "his mother and brothers and his disciples," as if they are all one family (2:12), and even in chapter 7, where his brothers are said not to have believed in him, they are presumably still in Capernaum (see 6:59), perhaps still in the company of, or at least in touch with, his disciples.[52] This should caution us that the contrast between Jesus' brothers and his disciples is not to be overdrawn, for even the disciples are not always characterized as "believers." Sometimes they are (16:27, 17:8), but just as often they are urged to "believe" (14:1), or told of Jesus' intent that later they "might believe" (13:19; 14:29), or said to believe "now" (16:31), with the implication that it might not last. One of them is even urged to be "no longer faithless but faithful" (20:27). As for "the disciple whom Jesus loved," he is explicitly said to "believe" only once, when he looks into Jesus' tomb after the resurrection (20:8). While this is surely not his first moment of belief, it does signal that what defined him from the start was not that he "believed," but that he was "loved."

The identification of the disciple as a brother of Jesus is, like all other theories of his identity, pure speculation. It is not even a real identification,

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took the bread, blessed it, and brake it and gave it to James the Just and said to him: My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of man is risen from among them that sleep" (Hennecke-Schneemelcher, 1.165, from Jerome, *Of Illustrious Men* 2).

51. It is likely that the phrase "James and the brothers" (Acts 12:17) places James among the believers (possibly the elders) in Jerusalem, not among the blood brothers of Jesus.

52. Jesus is said to be "walking in Galilee" (7:1), and it is fair to assume that the twelve disciples are still "walking" with him (in contrast to those who no longer did so, 6:66).

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for it stops short of providing an actual name. Which brother of Jesus is meant? James has left too many tracks in early Christian traditions, none of them linked particularly to this Gospel, to be a likely candidate, and the brief letter attributed to Jude is strikingly different from the Gospel of John.[53] Moreover, if "Jude" or "Judas" is the beloved disciple, then who is "Judas, not the Iscariot," mentioned in 14:22? If he is the same person, why is he sometimes named and sometimes not? And if he is a different "Judas" or "Jude," why does he go to such pains to distinguish this disciple from Judas Iscariot, but not from himself? We are left with a brother named either "Joses" (in Mark) or "Joseph" (in Matthew),[54] and another named "Simon" (see Mk 6:3; Mt 13:55). Because nothing is known of either of them except that they were Jesus' brothers, it is possible to lay at their doorstep almost any theory one wishes. "Joses" or "Joseph" is a marginally better candidate, perhaps, because of the purported mention of him (along with James) as Mary's son in connection with her presence at the crucifixion (see Mk 15:40, 47; Mt 27:56). But nothing approaching certainty is possible. The major difficulty is moving from chapter 7, with its explicit statement that Jesus' brothers "did not believe in him" (7:5), to chapter 13, where one of his brothers (according to this theory) is reclining at his side at the last meal.[55] How was this brother transformed from someone whom "the world cannot hate" (7:7) into someone whom "the world hates" (15:18-19)? The "brothers" (7:3) are obviously distinguished from "the Twelve" (6:70), and if those present at the last meal are the Twelve, what is one of the brothers doing there even if he did become a believer? Yet "the disciple whom Jesus loved" has a place at the table, and a place of honor at that.

One solution to which some have resorted in order to make room for someone beyond the Twelve at the table is the notion that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was the host at the meal (hence the place of honor), the "certain one"[56] in the city to whom Jesus' disciples were instructed to say, "The Teacher says, 'My time is near; I am doing the Passover at your place[57] with my disciples'" (Mt 26:18). "The Teacher" implies that this person too was a

53. The only interpreter I know of who identifies "the disciple whom Jesus loved" as one of Jesus' brothers is J. J. Gunther, who identifies him as this Judas ("The Relation of the Beloved Disciple to the Twelve," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 37 [1981], 129-48; see Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple,* 196-97).

54. Is Matthew's "Joseph" simply an assimilation to the name of Jesus' father in Matthew's birth narrative?

55. The only identifiable convert in these chapters is the man born blind (see 9:38), and there is nothing to link him either with a brother of Jesus or with "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

56. Gr. τὸν δεῖνα.

57. Gr. πρὸς σέ.

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disciple, who recognized "the Teacher's" authority;[58] yet like "the disciple whom Jesus loved," he conspicuously goes unnamed.[59] Could he be that disciple? If so, could he also be a brother of Jesus? The possibilities multiply, and with them the uncertainties, confirming that this identification, like all the others, is speculative. At the end of the day "the disciple whom Jesus loved" remains anonymous. After nineteen hundred years all we know of him is that Jesus loved him and confided in him at least once (13:26), that Jesus' mother became — or was — his mother (19:27), that he "believed" (at least once, 20:8), that he recognized Jesus when no one else did (21:7), and that he lived long enough to spawn a rumor that he would go on living until Jesus returned (21:23). The church for nineteen centuries has identified him with the Apostle John, son of Zebedee, and that long tradition deserves the utmost respect. Yet at that point, ecclesiastical tradition and critical traditions have largely parted company, and among the latter there is nothing approaching consensus as to his identity or even his authorship of the Gospel. His claim to authorship is unmistakable, yet his anonymity (whatever the original readers of the Gospel might have known) is both conspicuous and deliberate. In a way it need not surprise us, for several key characters in the story he tells — the Samaritan woman, the royal official at Cana, the sick man at the pool, the man born blind, even Jesus' mother — are just as nameless. Unlike Jesus' mother, who, according to Luke, "treasured these things and pondered them in her heart" (Lk 2:19; also 2:51),[60] he tells his story freely, yet like her (and evidently with her) he retains his privacy, a privacy that even the most inquisitive commentator will do well to respect.

III. TRUTH CLAIMS

The anonymity of this Gospel's author implies that in the eyes of the "we" who published it, its truth did not depend merely on the identity of the person

58. See John 13:13; also 11:28, where Martha uses this term of Jesus in speaking to her sister Mary.

59. In Mark (14:14) and in Luke (22:11) he is the anonymous "owner of the house" (ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης). For this identification (though without making this man a brother of Jesus), see Witherington, *John's Wisdom* (14), and Bauckham, *Testimony of the Beloved Disciple* (15), both of whom view him as a "nonitinerant" disciple, a Judean resident of Jerusalem. Yet the beloved disciple shows up in Galilee at the lake of Tiberias (21:7) and — at least according to both Bauckham (84-85) and Witherington (70) — even beyond the Jordan (see 1:40), in the company of three Galileans!

60. The twin notices in Luke may well imply a claim that Luke has somehow managed to access these unspoken memories as part of his "orderly account" (see Lk 1:3).

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who "testified" and who "wrote" it (21:24). Name dropping was unnecessary. What mattered was not the author's name or whether he was an "apostle" or one of "the Twelve," only that he was present at certain points in the narrative and was very close to Jesus, so close that he reclined "at Jesus' side" (13:23) at the last supper, and "leaned on his breast" (21:20), even as Jesus was now "right beside the Father" (1:18). As we have seen, his testimony does not stand alone, but belongs to a whole series of testimonies, starting with John's, who "came for a testimony, to testify about the light" (1:7). John's testimony, based on what he has "seen" (1:32-34) and "heard" (3:29), resounds through the first three chapters of the Gospel, and in retrospect Jesus himself acknowledged that John "testified to the truth" (5:33).

Jesus, too, "testifies" to what he has seen and heard (3:11, 32), and from chapter 4 on his testimony takes center stage. The voice testifying as "I" is now consistently his voice, and he calls witnesses to back up his testimony: "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true," he begins; "There is another who testifies about me, and I know that the testimony he testifies about me is true" (5:31-32). That this "other" is the Father is clear from what follows (see 5:37; also 8:18). This, he claims, is evident in "the works that the Father has given me that I might complete them" (5:36), for "The works that I do in my Father's name, these testify about me" (10:25).[61] Like John, he speaks as an eyewitness, testifying now in the first person to that which he has seen and heard : "The things I have seen in the Father's presence I speak" (8:38), and "the things I heard from him are the things I say to the world" (8:26). Consequently he tells those Jews who professed to believe, "If you dwell on my word, . . . you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (8:31-32). He calls himself "a man who has spoken to you the truth which I heard from God" (8:40), but in frustration he concludes, "If I speak truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is from God hears the words of God. This is why you do not hear, because you are not from God" (8:45-46). And to the Gentiles his message is the same: "I was born for this," he tells Pontius Pilate, "and for this I have come into the world, that I might testify to the truth. Everyone who is from the truth hears my voice" (18:37). Pilate's "What is truth?" (18:38) is a redundant question, one to which the reader is expected to know the answer: "I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life" (14:6), and "Your word is the truth" (17:17).

Such truth claims are absolute, and no less so are those of the Gospel in which they are embedded. Jesus, in fact, seems to anticipate, if not a written Gospel at least a testimony to "the truth," replacing yet continuing his own af-

61. The Father's testimony is evident as well, he implies, in the voice of God at Mount Sinai (5:37b), and consequently in "the Scriptures," which, he claims, also "testify about me" (5:39).

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ter his departure: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate, that he might be with you forever, the Spirit of truth" (14:16-17); "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and remind you of all things that I said to you" (14:26); "When the Advocate comes, . . . the Spirit of truth that goes forth from the Father, he will testify about me, and you too must testify because you are with me from the beginning" (15:26-27); "I . . . am telling you the truth: it is to your advantage that I am going away, for unless I go away the Advocate will not come to you" (16:7); "But when that one comes, the Spirit of truth, he will lead you in all the truth" (16:13). Not "the disciple whom Jesus loved," but "the Advocate,"[62] or "the Spirit of truth," is the Guarantor of the truth of the testimony, and consequently of the written Gospel — the Spirit in conjunction not with a single individual but with those whom Jesus acknowledges as being with him "from the beginning"[63] (15:27). The latter notice recalls Luke 1:2, with its reference to "those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word," and even more pointedly 1 John 1:1-2, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have touched, concerning the word of Life — and the Life was revealed, and we have seen, and we testify, and we announce to you the Eternal Life which was with the Father and was revealed to us."

No distinction between theological truth and historical truth is evident. If the Advocate guarantees the former, the testimony of those who were with Jesus "from the beginning" guarantees the latter. And in the end the Advocate guarantees both. If the Advocate will finally "lead you into all the truth" (16:13), he will first of all, Jesus says, "remind you of all things that I said to you" (14:26). The Gospel begins with a series of highly theological, unverifiable assertions (1:1-5) — but moves seamlessly from there into straightforward narrative (vv. 6-8), and back again (vv. 9-18), before taking up the historical narrative in earnest ("And this is the testimony of John when the Jews sent priests and Levites to him from Jerusalem," 1:19). To the author, the one is as "true" as the other, and in much the same sense. The modern notion that his account could be theologically "true" yet historically unreliable is as foreign to him as it is to those who in the end vouch for the truth of his testimony (21:24).

At the same time, he gives no hint that the truth of his account implies the falsity of other accounts known to him. He is quick to acknowledge that Jesus "did many, and other, signs" — whether before or after his resurrection — "in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book" (20:30), and his Gospel carries with it the added acknowledgment of "many

62. Gr. ὁ παράκλητος.
63. Gr. ἀπ' ἀρχῆς.

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other things that Jesus did" (21:25). His Gospel is "true," he claims, because the Advocate will lead the disciples into "all the truth" (16:13), yet he does not claim "all" the truth for his Gospel. Its truth claims, while absolute, are not necessarily exclusive. While it knows nothing of a canon, it is, one might say, "ready" to be part of a canon — much like Luke's Gospel, with its acknowledgment of "many" who have preceded it (Lk 1:1). It is also "ready" for the canon in the sense that the revelation the Advocate brings will not go on indefinitely, as the ancient Montanists believed, continuing or even supplanting the revelation that Jesus brought once and for all. Rather, the testimony of Jesus and that of the Advocate are inextricably linked. The Advocate illumines and interprets only what Jesus has already revealed (see 16:14). His role, Jesus says, is to "remind you of all things that I said to you" (14:26) — that is, to "remind" or "cause to remember," not simply in the sense of recalling facts and words, but in the sense of enabling a later generation to understand those words, perhaps for the first time (see, for example, 2:17, 22; 12:16).

IV. JOHN AND THE OTHER GOSPELS

Are the Gospel's truth claims consistent with its genre? Is it a genre that aspires to "truth"? There is no reason to distinguish the genre of John's Gospel from that of its companions, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Each begins at a "beginning" — all but Matthew explicitly — but each at a different beginning: Matthew with Abraham and a genealogy; Mark with John the Baptizer; Luke with a nod to "those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word," and then the Baptizer; John's Gospel with the Genesis beginning, and then the Baptizer. Each tells the story of Jesus with occasional attention to precise chronology, and each focuses disproportionately on the last week of Jesus' life and the events leading to his crucifixion (hence the designation "Gospel"). There is general agreement that the Gospels are not biographies in the modern sense of the word, yet with it a growing consensus that they are recognizable as ancient biographies or "lives,"[64] a genre encompassing something of a spectrum from pure propaganda to rather serious historiography. Richard Bauckham has made a strong case for placing the Gospel of John close to the historiographical end of that spectrum.[65] Whether or not he is

64. Gr. βίοι; Lat. *vitae.* See R. A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (1992; 2d ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

65. Bauckham, *Testimony of the Beloved Disciple,* 93-112. He concludes that "to its contemporaries the Gospel of John would have looked considerably more like historiography than the Synoptic Gospels would" (112).

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correct in placing it *closer* than the other Gospels to serious history is open to debate, but his appeal to the Gospel's topographical and chronological precision is impressive. Incidents are placed, for example, "not just in Galilee, but in Cana or Capernaum; not just in Jerusalem but at the pool of Bethesda near the Sheep Gate; not just in the temple but in Solomon's Portico."[66] Events and discourses take place at named Jewish festivals such as Passover (chapters 2, 6, 11–20), the Tent festival (chapters 7–8) and Hanukkah (chapter 10).[67] Whatever the interpreter's judgment about the historicity of this or that particular incident or pronouncement, the Gospel's genre is consistent both with its extraordinary truth claims and with the genre of the other three Gospels. There can be little doubt that it wants to be taken seriously as history.

The question of whether or not the "Advocate," or "Spirit of truth," is at work in other testimonies to Jesus and other written Gospels is one that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" and those who vouched for him obviously do not address. Yet it is legitimate to ask how the beloved disciple knows of Jesus' "other" words and deeds? He speaks of them as unwritten in "this book" (20:30), but does he know of other books in which they are "written"? More specifically, does he know any or all of the other three Gospels in their final written form? For centuries the conventional wisdom was that he did know the other three, and consciously wrote to supplement them. Eusebius hands down a tradition to the effect that

> The three gospels which had been written down before were distributed to all including himself [that is, John]; it is said that he welcomed them and testified to their truth but said that there was only lacking to the narrative the account of what was done by Christ at first and at the beginning of the preaching. The story is surely true. It is at least possible to see that the three evangelists related only what the Saviour did during one year after John the Baptist had been put in prison and that they stated this at the beginning of their narrative.[68]

As early as the third century Clement of Alexandria wrote 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,[69] composed a spiritual Gospel."[70] While this is consistent with the explicit accent on the

66. Bauckham, *Testimony,* 99.

67. See Bauckham, *Testimony,* 101. As we will see, the one festival not named (5:1) may have been left anonymous in order to conceal a rare departure from chronological order.

68. *Ecclesiastical History* 3.24.7-8 (LCL, 1.251-53).

69. Gr. πνεύματι θεοφορηθέντα.

70. *Hypotyposeis,* in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.14.7 (LCL, 2.49).

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Advocate, or "Spirit of truth," in John's Gospel, it is an oversimplification. Clearly, the synoptic Gospels are also "spiritual," and just as clearly the Gospel of John is as interested in "outward facts" as they are. The similarity of genre bears this out. Still, Clement's assertion that John was written last, with full knowledge of the other three, seemed to be confirmed by its placement in the canon. After all, anyone reading the Gospels in their canonical order would know by the time he reached the Gospel of John what the other three had said, and it seemed only reasonable that the Gospel writer had this knowledge as well. With the dominance of Markan priority from the mid-nineteenth century on, even those who had their doubts as to whether John's Gospel knew all three synoptics still routinely assumed that he knew at least the Gospel of Mark in its final written form.

This changed in the twentieth century, particularly after the work of Percival Gardner-Smith[71] and C. H. Dodd.[72] While there are exceptions, most interpreters today view the Gospel of John as independent of the other written Gospels (even Mark), yet familiar with many of the unwritten traditions behind them.[73] In the places where John and the synoptic Gospels overlap — the ministry of John the Baptizer (Jn 1:19-34), the cleansing of the temple (2:13-22), the healing of the royal official's son (4:43-54), the feeding of the five thousand and walking on the water (6:1-21), the decision of the Jewish council or Sanhedrin (11:45-53), the anointing at Bethany (12:1-8), the triumphal entry (12:12-29), and the entire passion narrative — the pattern of similarities and dissimilarities remains an enigma. As the commentary will show, parallels can be found between John's Gospel and every stratum of synoptic tradition: Mark, the so-called "Q" source, and material distinctive to Matthew and to Luke.[74] Sometimes the wording and/or placement of the synoptic material appears to be more nearly original, while at others John's wording and/or placement seems more primitive. Often it is difficult or impossible to decide. The respective traditions are perhaps best described as intertwined.

In general it is fair to say that John's Gospel differs from the other

71. *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938).

72. *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

73. Interestingly, Eusebius acknowledges that even after Matthew, Mark, and Luke had written their Gospels, "John, it is said, used all the time a message which was not written down" (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.24.7; LCL, 1.251) — this *before* the other Gospels "were distributed to all including himself" (see above, n. 72).

74. For example, Mark and John (see Mk 14:3 and Jn 12:3); "Q" and John (Mt 11:27//Lk 10:22 and Jn 3:35; 13:3; 17:2; 10:14-15; 17:25); Matthew and John (Mt 26:3 and Jn 11:47-53; Mt 27:49 and Jn 19:34; Mt 28:10 and Jn 20:17); Luke and John (Lk 23:4, 14, 22 and Jn 18:38; 19:4, 6; Lk 24:12; and Jn 20:6-8).

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three in style and in structure. As to style — which turns out finally to be inseparable from content — Jesus speaks with a very different voice in this Gospel. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke the theme of his proclamation is the kingdom of God; here it is himself and his mission. As Rudolf Bultmann famously insisted, the revelation turns in upon itself. What Jesus reveals from the Father is simply that he is the Revealer, sent from the Father![75] Yet in this way he reveals the Father, which is not so different from saying that he reveals God, or the kingdom of God. What he says is what God has given him to say, and in his "works" or miracles he reveals the God of Israel at work (see 5:17). One way of summing up the difference is to say that much of what is implicit in the other three Gospels becomes explicit in John. The emphatic "I" of the Sermon on the Mount ("You have heard, . . . but now *I* tell you") and other pronouncements ("If *I* by the Spirit of God drive out demons . . .") becomes the magisterial "I am" of the Gospel of John (see 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5-6). In the synoptics, Jesus proclaims "the gospel of God" (Mk 1:15), and in so doing reveals himself as God's messenger. In John's Gospel he reveals himself, and in so doing reveals the Father who sent him (see 12:45, "the person who sees me sees the One who sent me"; 14:9, "The person who has seen me has seen the Father"). Yet it is doubtful that this amounts to a simple reinterpretation of the other three Gospels. More likely the competing traditions took shape independently, with the Gospel of John attributing its own unique character to the interplay of inspiration and tradition (the "vertical" and "horizontal" if you will) — that is, on the one hand the testimony of the Advocate, or "Spirit of truth" ("he will testify about me," 15:26), and on the other the testimony of the eyewitnesses (those "with me from the beginning," 15:27), represented by "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

V. THE STRUCTURE OF JOHN'S GOSPEL

As to structure, if John's Gospel is familiar with the so-called Markan outline, common to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, then it has distanced itself from that outline in conspicuous ways. Eusebius acknowledged already in the fourth century that

75. In Bultmann's words, "Thus it turns out in the end that Jesus as the Revealer of God *reveals nothing but that he is the Revealer,*" and "the Revelation consists of nothing more than the bare fact of it (its *Dass*) — i.e., the proposition that the Revealer has come and gone, has descended and been re-exalted" (*Theology of the New Testament,* 2.66). This recurring self-reference is what produces the "relentless tattoo" of Johannine poetry so distasteful to the translators of the NAB (see above, n. 3).

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> John in the course of his gospel relates what Christ did before the Baptist had been thrown into prison, but the other three evangelists narrate the events after the imprisonment of the Baptist. If this be understood, the gospels no longer appear to disagree, because that according to John contains the first of the acts of Christ and the others the narrative of what he did at the end of the period.[76]

As we have seen in our discussion of the prominence of "John" (that is, the Baptizer) in the first three chapters,[77] there is something to be said for Eusebius's interest in "what Christ did before the Baptist had been thrown into prison." First, the importance of the Baptizer in the so-called "Prologue" should not be overlooked. Scholarly readings, even among those resolved to look at the finished text as a literary entity (that is, synchronically), sometimes tend to follow the "tracks" left by various source theories.[78] For example, the long-held theory that the first eighteen verses of the Gospel either were or contained a distinct pre-Johannine "hymn" of some kind has tended to lock in the notion that those verses were a unit set apart from the rest of the Gospel, to be given separate and special treatment as "the Prologue." The Gospel as a whole is rightly viewed as narrative, much like the other Gospels, but "the Prologue" is often seen differently — almost as another genre. Consequently, the explicit narrative beginning *within* the Prologue (1:6) has to be viewed as no narrative beginning at all, but simply as an "interpolation" embedded in what some scholars have already decided is a pre-Johannine, possibly pre-Christian, hymn. But if what looks like a narrative beginning *is* in fact just that — a reasonable assumption — then the real "prologue" — or "preamble," or "introduction" — is not John 1:1-18 but John 1:1-5.[79] These five verses, unlike most (but not all) of the Gospel, have no narrative context. Whatever their background — for example, in Jewish Wisdom tradition — their present function is to set the stage for introducing "A man . . . sent from God. John was his name" (1:6), and to explain John's repeated claim that "The One coming after me has gotten ahead of me, because he was before

76. *Ecclesiastical History* 3.24.12-13; LCL, 1.253-55.

77. See above, pp. ♦♦-♦♦.

78. Other examples include C. H. Dodd, who did not advocate a pre-Johannine "Signs Source," nevertheless described chapters 2–12, Jesus' public ministry, as "the Book of Signs" (in distinction from chapters 13–21, "the Book of the Passion"; Dodd, *Interpretation,* 297, 390); also, many of those who insist that chapter 21 is an original and integral part of the Gospel nevertheless continue to treat 20:30 and 31 as if they were in fact the ending of the Gospel.

79. This was how Chrysostom read it in commenting on John 1:6: "Having in the introduction [εἰσαγωγή] spoken to us things of urgent importance concerning God the Word (the Evangelist) proceeding on his road, and in order, afterwards comes to the herald of the Word, his namesake John" (*Homilies on St. John* 6.1; NPNF, 1st ser., 14.25).

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me" (1:15; also v. 30). Indeed, "the Word" who is Jesus does precede John, and therefore takes precedence over him. This is evident at once in the insistence that John "was not the light, but [he came] to testify about the light" (1:8), and in the accompanying excursus on the coming and presence of Jesus in the world (1:9-18). It is as if the Gospel writer cannot resist pouring out in advance the whole story he has to tell in ten memorable verses. If the narrative of John's testimony has already begun (vv. 6-8), then the real "interpolation" is this magnificent excursus, with the narrative of John and his testimony resuming in 1:19-34.[80]

It is John, accordingly, whose eyewitness first-person testimony dominates the first chapter — and frames the first three chapters. Although he disappears as soon as Jesus takes the initiative to find Philip and Nathanael and to set out for Galilee (1:43-51), John the Baptizer is not gone for good. After the wedding at Cana, which confirms several of John's disciples as disciples of Jesus (even with Jesus still within the family circle, 2:11-12), and after Jesus' eventful ministry at the first Passover in Jerusalem (2:13–3:21), we find him in Judea doing just what John had been doing. He who will "baptize in Holy Spirit" (1:33) is baptizing in water (3:22, 26), the same as John.[81] Even though Jesus has much to say of significance in the first three chapters, it is undeniable that he shares the spotlight with John. They speak, as it were, in stereo. Jesus speaks to Nicodemus, yet his words abruptly spring out of their narrative context (see 3:13-21) to become a kind of sequel to the "introduction" or "preamble" of 1:1-5 and the excursus of 1:9-18. John then comes front and center to give his farewell speech (3:27-36). He speaks to his own disciples (vv. 27-30), yet his words, too, spring from their narrative context to become yet another sequel to the Gospel's opening verses (see 3:31-36). Together, the "preamble" of 1:1-5 and the joint testimonies of John and Jesus frame the Gospel's first three chapters. Within these chapters, as we have seen, the dominant voice in the emphatic first person is John's voice, not (as yet) the voice of Jesus (see 1:20, 23, 26, 31, 33, 34; 3:28-30). It is arguable that not just chapter 1 but the Gospel's first three chapters should be designated "the testimony of John." Yet as soon as John says, "He must grow, but I must diminish" (3:30), Jesus' role in the story grows exponentially. John, with his very last words (3:31-36), announces that "the Word" (1:1) is about to speak: "What he has seen and what he heard, to this he testifies" (3:32), and "the one God sent speaks the words of God" (v. 34). At the same

80. As we will attempt to show, the testimony attributed to John in 1:15-18 is different, a testimony not made in history but in the present, as John is made a spokesman for the Gospel writer himself and the Christian community of his day.

81. Or at least his disciples were. It seems to have amounted to the same thing (see 4:2).

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time, John reinforces the alternatives of faith and unbelief already set forth in 1:11-12 and 3:13-21: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will never see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" (v. 36).

At this point the narrative resumes, the story line corresponding to that of the synoptics except that instead of John's imprisonment (as in Mk 1:14 and Mt 4:12) it is John's sovereign farewell speech that triggers Jesus' journey to Galilee (see 4:1-3). Whether or not Jesus continued baptizing as John had done, we are not told. The Gospel is more interested in Jesus' testimony than in any baptizing activity he may have carried on. From here on, as we have seen, the "I" who testifies is Jesus. So far, apart from the "Amen, amen, I say to you" formula (1:51; 3:3, 5, 11), he has had little to say in the first person ("*my* Father's house," 2:16; "I will raise it up," 2:19), and nothing with the emphatic "I," but this changes in chapter 4 when he reveals himself to the Samaritan woman with the words, "It is I — I who am speaking to you" (4:26; see also 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58). Moreover, in contrast to John (see 10:41), his testimony is punctuated by a series of miraculous signs. His self-revelation (whether in the emphatic first person, or as "the Son" or "Son of man") extends through chapter 12, at the end of which comes yet another brief monologue without narrative context (12:44-50), this time introduced with the words, "But Jesus cried out and said" (12:44), punctuated with the emphatic "I" (vv. 46, 47, 49) and, like John's farewell speech at the end of chapter 3, terminating a major section of the Gospel.

To this extent, Eusebius' testimony is helpful in structuring the Gospel of John in comparison to the synoptics. Our reading of the Gospel so far yields an outline consisting of a short preamble (1:1-5), the testimony of John (1:6–3:36), and the public testimony of Jesus (4:1–12:50). But Eusebius does not warn us that when we move beyond the first three chapters, the differences between John and the synoptics do not diminish. After John's imprisonment, Matthew, Mark, and Luke recount Jesus' ministry in Galilee at some length, concluding with one — and only one — extended journey to Jerusalem and an account of Jesus' arrest, trial, death, and resurrection there. Our Gospel, by contrast, places Jesus in Jerusalem already in chapter 2, and even after John's imprisonment Jesus is there again in chapter 5, again in chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10, and again in chapters 12 through 20, always in connection with one or another of the Jewish festivals. He is in Galilee only for one miracle in chapter 2 and another in chapter 4 — both in the same town, a town not even mentioned in the other Gospels — and once more for a miracle and an extended discourse at Capernaum in chapter 6. He returns to Galilee after the resurrection (chapter 21), as he does in Matthew and (implicitly) in Mark, but the Galilean ministry which dominates the other three Gospels virtually disappears. Moreover, in the Synoptics everything is public except for

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the interpretations of certain parables (see Mk 4:34) and a final discourse on things to come (Mk 13 and parallels),[82] while the Gospel of John seems to divide Jesus' ministry into two parts, a "public ministry" to the crowds and the religious authorities in Jerusalem and Galilee (chapters 2–12) and a "private ministry" to his disciples in the setting of the last supper (chapters 13–17). Most noticeably of all, the two events introducing passion week in Mark — the triumphal entry and the cleansing of the temple — are separated (and reversed) in John's Gospel in such a way as to frame the entire public ministry of Jesus (see 2:13-22; 12:12-19).

In view of all this, it is difficult to tell whether John's Gospel knows the outline common to Matthew, Mark, and Luke (an outline remarkably well summarized by Peter in Acts 10:37-41) and deliberately opts for an alternative, or whether it knows only isolated incidents and pronouncements of Jesus from synoptic tradition, and puts these together with what the Gospel writer knows as an eyewitness, independently of the other Gospels. In any event, its structure deserves close attention in its own right, apart from all theories of literary dependence, and apart from all source theories as well. To begin with, the effect of placing the temple cleansing almost at the beginning of Jesus' ministry rather than near the end is far reaching. Any reader familiar with the other Gospels will assume, on reading that "the Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem" (2:13), that Jesus' Galilean ministry has been extremely brief (see 2:1-12), and that the passion is about to begin.[83] In one sense the reader has been misled, but in another sense not, because all that happens from here on happens with the passion in view. The Scripture remembered in connection with the cleansing of the temple is "Zeal for your house will consume [that is, destroy] me" (2:17), and the only "sign" Jesus gave was "Destroy this sanctuary [that is, his body], and in three days I will raise it up" (2:19). Conspicuous in the synoptic passion narrative is a trial (of sorts) before the Sanhedrin and the Chief Priest, but in John's Gospel the whole public ministry of Jesus (at least from chapter 5 on) is his trial at the hands of the Jewish religious authorities, one in which he is both accused and accuser, and one peppered with such terms such as "testify" and "testimony" (see 3:11, 32; 5:31-34, 36-37, 39; 7:7; 8:13-14, 17, 18; 10:25), "judge" and "judgment" (see 3:18-19; 5:22, 27, 30; 7:24, 51; 8:15-16, 26, 50; 12:31), "true" and "truth" (see

82. In a sense, Jesus' claim to the Chief Priest that "I have spoken publicly to the world," and "I spoke nothing in secret" (18:20) is more applicable to the synoptics than to the Gospel of John.

83. The notice is remarkably similar to another, nine chapters later, when the passion actually does begin: "Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up from the region to Jerusalem before the Passover, that they might purify themselves" (11:55).

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5:31-33; 7:18; 8:13-14, 16, 17, 40, 45-46; 10:41). In a general way chapters 2 through 12 can be regarded as a book of judgment. In one sense, Jesus is on trial, but in another "the world," represented by the Jewish religious authorities, is being tried — and condemned. Ever since chapter 5 the religious authorities had been seeking Jesus' life, "because he was not only abolishing the Sabbath but was claiming God as his own Father, making himself equal to God" (5:18; see also 7:1, 19, 25, 30; 8:37, 40), but the verdict comes down only after this extended "trial," as the Jewish ruling council formally "resolved that they would kill him" (11:53). Consequently, there is no real trial after Jesus is actually arrested, only a brief hearing before the Chief Priest in which Jesus simply refers back to what he had "always taught in synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews come together" (18:20). Throughout the public ministry there looms the prospect of Jesus' "hour," which the reader understands as the hour of his death, a death viewed in this Gospel not as defeat but as victory, not as tragedy but as "glorification" (7:39; 12:23, 28). Suspense builds as the reader is told more than once that Jesus escaped arrest "because his hour had not yet come" (7:30; 8:20; see also 8:59; 10:39). Finally, "The hour has come that the Son of man might be glorified" (12:23), not in an arrest but simply by Jesus' sovereign decree (the arrest will take place six chapters later!).

As passion week begins (see 12:1), the book of judgment gives way to a book of glory. Strictly speaking, perhaps, the book of judgment consists of 2:13–11:54 (with the handing down of the verdict in 11:45-54), and the book of glory begins already with the notice of the last Passover (11:55), yet there is also (as we have seen) a definite break at the end of chapter 12, with the Gospel writer's own verdict on an unbelieving world (12:37-43) and a final soliloquy from the lips of Jesus (12:44-50). There is no urgent need to choose between the two options, for in either case 11:55–12:50 is transitional, marking both the end of the public ministry with its emphasis on judgment (see, for example, 12:31, "Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be driven out") and the beginning of the passion with its decisive revelation of Jesus' glory (see 12:23, 28). At the end of this longer transition is a shorter one (12:44-50) consisting not so much of Jesus' verdict on the world's unbelief (vv. 47-48) as his promise of light and life to those who do believe (vv. 44-46, 49-50), with just a hint that he will have more to say (v. 50) — which in fact he does. If chapters 2 through 12 lead up to the certainty that Jesus must be glorified in death, chapters 13 through 17 prepare the readers of the Gospel — in the persons of their surrogates, the disciples — for that death and its implications. To them, Jesus' "glorification" is not experienced as glorification but as departure or absence, and the thrust of the farewell discourses in 13:36–14:31 and in chapters 15 and 16 is to overcome the scandal of Jesus' absence with the promise of his return, whether in his

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resurrection (chapter 20) or in the person of the Advocate, or "Spirit of truth," and with a new command to "love each other, just as I loved you" (13:34; 15:12).

In chapter 17 Jesus turns around, as it were, to the Father in prayer, reporting to the Father what his ministry has accomplished and interceding for his soon-to-be-scattered disciples (see 16:32). Like 1:1-5, 3:13-21, 3:31-36, and 12:44-50, this, too, is a passage without a real narrative context. Jesus is no longer "with" his disciples, but rather looks back to a time when "I was with them" (17:12). His "private" ministry to the disciples has become even more private, as even they are shut out, and like the Jewish High Priest the Good Shepherd moves into the "Holy of Holies" to speak to his Father alone, on behalf of his sheep. Yet as soon as he is finished, he is "with" them again, as they cross the Kidron valley together, to a familiar gathering place where he will be arrested (see 18:1-2). With his arrest, the passion narrative proper begins, and whatever else it may be, in this Gospel it brings the verification of promises made earlier — that the sheep, though scattered, would not be "lost" (18:9), that Jesus would be "lifted up" (18:32) and "glorified" at a definite "hour" (19:13-14, 17-18), that he would go away to the Father (20:6-8) and come again to the disciples (20:19, 26), that he would bring with him the Holy Spirit (20:22), and that they would know joy (20:20) and peace (20:19, 21, 26) when they saw him again. The ending of the Gospel (chapter 21) is curiously like a new beginning, an acknowledgment, perhaps, of how the gospel story began in other traditions, with a fishing scene at the lake of Galilee (see Mk 1:16-20; Lk 5:1-11). Christian discipleship begins where the Gospel ends.

At the end of the day there is no one right way to outline the Gospel of John. The preceding observations yield the following:

PREAMBLE (1:1-5).
THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN (1:6–3:30), with a transition on the lips of John (3:31-36) corresponding to the preamble.
JESUS' SELF-REVELATION TO THE WORLD (4:1–12:43), with a transition this time on the lips of Jesus (12:44-50).
JESUS' SELF-REVELATION TO THE DISCIPLES (13:1–16:33), with a somewhat longer transition in the form of Jesus' prayer to the Father (17:1-26)
VERIFICATION OF JESUS' SELF-REVELATION IN HIS ARREST, CRUCIFIXION, AND RESURRECTION (18:1–21:25).

This outline, like all the others, is far from perfect. It does justice to some but by no means all of the evidence. It does not, for example, do justice to the importance of the seven signs Jesus performs, the first sandwiched be-

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tween the testimonies of John (2:1-11) and the other six displayed in connection with Jesus' self-revelatory discourses to the world. Its chief distinguishing features are that it does not begin with an eighteen-verse "prologue" but with a five-verse "preamble," and that it takes note of certain passages which, like the preamble, have no proper narrative context and can serve as markers dividing one section from another. Yet there are other such passages (for example, 3:13-21 and 5:19-47) which do not similarly serve as division markers. Structure in John's Gospel, as in most great literature, is in the eye of the beholder.

VI. LOCATION AND DATE

Where was the Gospel of John written, and when? Those questions are not easily answered. Traditions connecting it with Ephesus in Asia Minor are mostly linked to the assumption that the author was John the son of Zebedee, or (in the view of some modern scholars) the shadowy John the Presbyter. But once we are left with an author who is either anonymous or someone other than "John," the evidence begins to look rather thin. Ephesus, or at least Asia Minor, is still a reasonable guess, given certain similarities between the Gospel of John and such writings as Paul's letters to Colossians (for example, 1:15-20) and Ephesians, and the book of Revelation, and given the role assigned to "the Advocate" by the Montanists in Asia Minor in the second and third centuries.[84] Yet nothing approaching certainty is possible. The earliest textual witnesses to the Gospel of John are papyri from Egypt, above all the so-called Rylands fragment, or P^{52}, consisting of John 18:31-33, 37-38 (the earliest known fragment of any New Testament book), from the first half of the second century,[85] and the Bodmer papyri (P^{66} and P^{75}), from the early third century. This obviously does not mean that the Gospel was written there. Virtually all New Testament papyri come from Egypt, whose climate lends itself to their preservation. Yet Egypt cannot be ruled out, nor can Palestine. Syria is perhaps more likely than either, for Ignatius of Antioch shows signs of familiarity with the theology of the Gospel, even though he never

84. According to Eusebius, "Of these some like poisonous reptiles crawled over Asia and Phrygia, and boasted that Montanus was the Paraclete [τὸν μὲν δὴ παράκλητον] and that the women of his sect, Priscilla and Maximilla, were the prophetesses of Montanus" (*Ecclesiastical History* 5.14 (LCL, 1.471); also Montanus is said to have claimed, "I am the Father and the Son and the Paraclete" (Didymus, *De Trinitate* 3.41.1, cited in R. M. Grant, *Second-Century Christianity,* 95).

85. *An Unpublished Fragment of the Fourth Gospel in the John Rylands Library* (ed. C. H. Roberts; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1935).

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quotes it,[86] and so too do the *Odes of Solomon.*[87] Moreover, the Jewishness of this Gospel, and the intertwining of its traditions with those behind each of the synoptic Gospels, is consistent with Syrian origin. But there is no way to be certain. If there is such a thing as a distinctively "Johannine" community, we do not yet know enough about it to be able to locate it geographically. When we speak of the author's "community," all we mean is whatever Christian communities the author may be familiar with, wherever he, or they, may be. It is clear that these communities — like most Christian communities at that time — were "sectarian" with respect to the Graeco-Roman world around them, but by no means clear that they were sectarian with respect to other Christian groups.

As to date, we are similarly at a loss. The Gospel obviously predates the Rylands fragment, and if the author was, as he claims, an eyewitness, it was almost certainly written within the first century. Yet if it is in fact independent of the other three Gospels, drawing on traditions intertwined with theirs, but not on Matthew, Mark, or Luke themselves as literary sources, then there is virtually no limit on how soon after the death and resurrection of Jesus it could have been written. While there is nothing to shatter the conventional wisdom that it is the latest of the four Gospels, there is no way to prove it either. This Gospel could have originated any time within the latter half of the first century, and only the rumor that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" would not die (21:23) places it nearer the end of that period than the beginning. If, as seems likely, it was written after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans in AD 70, this would lend special poignancy and irony to the fear of the Jewish leaders that "If we let him go on like this, . . . the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation" (11:48). In fact, even though they arrested Jesus and put him to death, the Romans eventually came and did exactly that!

86. See, for example, Ignatius, *To the Magnesians* 7.1, "And so, just as the Lord did nothing apart from the Father — being united with him — neither on his own nor through the apostles" (LCL, 1.247; compare Jn 5:29; 8:28); *To the Philadelphians* 7.1, "For it [that is, the Spirit] knows whence it comes and where it is going" (LCL, 1.289; compare Jn 3:8); *Romans* 7.3, "I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, from the seed of David; and for drink I desire his blood, which is imperishable love" (LCL, 1.279; compare Jn 6:53-56).

87. See, for example, *Odes of Solomon* 7.12 ("He has allowed him to appear to them that are his own," *OTP,* 2.740; compare Jn 1:11); 8.20-21 ("Seek and increase, and abide in the love of the Lord; and you who are loved in the Beloved; and you who are kept in him who lives," *OTP,* 2.742; compare Jn 15:9); 10:5 ("And the gentiles who had been scattered were gathered together," *OTP,* 2.744; compare Jn 11:52); 11.23 ("Indeed, there is much room in your paradise," *OTP,* 2.746; compare Jn 14:2); 18.6 ("Let not light be conquered by darkness," *OTP,* 2.751; compare Jn 1:5).

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VII. THEOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

It is difficult to say much about the theology or christology of John's Gospel that has not been said many times before, nor is the introduction to a commentary necessarily the best place to try. Better to let the reader draw his or her own conclusions from discussions of particular texts as the commentary unfolds. But two things stand out for me, the first because it is so pervasive throughout the Gospel, the second because it is rarely noticed or appreciated by interpreters.

The first contribution of John's Gospel to the theology of the New Testament takes us back to where we began. It is the notion of Jesus as God's unique Envoy or messenger, simultaneously claiming for himself both Deity and obedient submission to Deity. The strangeness is evident to anyone who places the two pronouncements, "I and the Father are one" (10:30) and "the Father is greater than I" (14:28), side by side. Jesus can say, "My Father is working even until now, and I am working," provoking the accusation that he is "making himself equal to God" (5:17-18), yet immediately insist that he does nothing "on his own," but only what the Father has sent him and commanded him to do (see 5:19, 30). He can warn that "unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins" (8:24) and "When you lift up the Son of man, then you will come to know that I am," yet immediately add that "on my own I do nothing, but just as the Father taught me, these things I speak" (8:28). He never acts "on his own" in relation to the Father, but always "on his own" in relation to the world. As far as his death on the cross is concerned, no one takes his life from him, he insists, "but I lay it down on my own. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to receive it back," yet he quickly adds, "This command I received from my Father" (10:18). His "authority," whether to exercise judgment (5:27) or to lay down his own life, belongs to him only because it belongs first to the Father. His mission is to reveal the Father, but in so doing he reveals himself — first publicly, as we have seen, to the world at large on the stage of contemporary Judaism, and then privately to his own disciples.[88] The obvious objection to all this is that the Judaism of Jesus' day, in contrast to the Gentile world, did not need Jesus to reveal to it its own God — or so it would seem. What was needed rather was someone to

88. Certain parallels between the one and the other are worth noticing. Compare, for example, 8:21 ("Where I am going you cannot come"; see also 7:34) with 13:33 ("just as I said to the Jews that 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so I say to you now"); 8:14 ("you do not know where I come from or where I am going") with 14:5 ("Lord, we do not know where you are going"); 8:19a ("Where is your father?") with 14:8 ("Lord, show us the Father"); 8:19b ("If you knew me, you would know my Father") with 14:7 ("If you all have known me, you will know my Father too"). The disciples are are at first hardly better off than "the Jews," but in their case the revelation is in the end both given and received.

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reveal the God of Israel to the Gentiles, a Messiah who would make Israel a light to the nations. This the coming of Jesus will do as well, but it is largely outside the horizons of the Gospel narrative (see 10:16; 11:52; 12:32). Rather, Jesus in this Gospel "came to what was his own," even though "his own did not receive him" (1:11). He came to reveal the God of Israel to Israel in one very specific way — as Father, and in particular as *his* Father, not simply telling the people of God things about God they did not already know, but *showing* them the face of God in his own face (see 12:45; 14:9) and his own life.

The Gospel of John, then, is not just about Jesus but about God, as is evident not only in its christology but in its message of salvation. This, to my mind, is the Gospel's second major contribution to New Testament theology, and it is rather more controversial than the first. From the start, the Gospel speaks of those who "receive" Jesus as the Light and "believe in his name," those who are given "authority to become children of God" by virtue of having been "born . . . of God" (1:12-13). Two chapters later Jesus tells Nicodemus, "unless someone is born from above [or "of water and Spirit"], he cannot see [or "enter"] the kingdom of God" (3:3, 5). But what exactly is the relationship between being "born of God," or "born from above," and "receiving" or "believing in" Jesus? Which comes first? Is a person reborn because he or she believes, or does a person believe as a *result* of being reborn? Conventional wisdom assumes the former as a matter of course, and the word order of 1:12-13 seems on the face of it to support this. Yet those verses make no explicit causal connection either way between faith and rebirth, and as Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus runs its course, evidence for the opposite view begins to surface. "Receiving" Jesus' testimony is mentioned in 3:11, and "believing" is repeatedly urged in verses 12, 15, and 16. Finally, the stark alternative of "believing" or "not believing" in him is clearly set forth (v. 18), and then restated (in language reminiscent of 1:9-13) as either loving or hating the Light, either "coming to the Light" or refusing to come (vv. 19-21). The person who "hates the Light" does so because he "practices wicked things," and refuses to come "for fear his works will be exposed" (v. 20). By contrast, the person who "does the truth comes to the Light, so that his works will be revealed as works wrought in God" (v. 21).

On this note the interview with Nicodemus — if Nicodemus is still anywhere in the picture — comes to an end. In sharp distinction from the other three Gospels, in which Jesus says, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mk 2:17//Mt 9:13; also Lk 5:32), he does come to call, if not explicitly "the righteous," at least those who "do the truth" — as against those who "practice wicked things." Those who come to him in faith (that is, "come to the Light") demonstrate by so doing that they are *already* "doers of the truth," not by their own merits to be sure, but because their works have

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been done "in God" (*en theō,* 3:21). They do not prove their faith by their works — at least not yet — but on the contrary prove their works by their faith. To this extent, John's Gospel turns some versions of Reformation theology on their heads![89] It is not as radical as it sounds, however, for the point is simply that God is at work in a person's life *before* that person "receives" Jesus, or "believes," or "comes to the Light." This is evident in the account of the man born blind — the Gospel's classic case study on what it means to be "born of God" — where the point made is *not* that the man was a sinner who "believed" and was consequently reborn. On the contrary, Jesus insists, "Neither this man sinned nor his parents" — that is, his predicament was not the result of sin. Rather, the purpose of the healing was "that the works of God might be revealed in him" (9:3) — that is, God was *already* at work in his life, and his eventual confession of faith (9:38) would reveal that to be the case. He did not believe *in order* to be "born of God." He believed *because* he was "born of God." This interpretation is confirmed by Jesus' repeated insistence that "All that the Father gives me will come to me" (6:37), "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him" (6:44), and "no one can come to me unless it is given him from the Father" (6:65). The initiative in human salvation, no less than in healing, is God the Father's, and his alone.

Of the major interpreters of John's Gospel, only Rudolf Bultmann wrestles significantly with this aspect of the Gospel's view of salvation. He writes of "Johannine Determinism," defining it as a "dualism of decision" in contrast to "the cosmological dualism of Gnosticism."[90] But in the end he seems to accent human "decision," or free will, to the point that it trumps the divine initiative: "Man cannot act otherwise than as what he is, but in the Revealer's call there opens up to him the possibility of being otherwise than he was. He can exchange his Whence, his origin, his essence, for another; he can be 'born again' (3:1ff.) and thus attain to his true being. In his decision between faith and un-faith a man's being definitively constitutes itself, and from then on his Whence becomes clear."[91] While it is true that John's Gospel centers on a call to decision, the hearer's decision cannot change but only reveal what has gone on before — the working of God the Father in those who will eventually become his children. Jesus can speak of "other sheep" whom, he says, "I have," even though they have not yet believed (10:16), and the Gospel writer can envision scattered "children of God" — "born of God," therefore — who have yet to be "gathered into one" (11:52). Perhaps the

89. This is also consistent with the notion (often dismissed as out of place in John's Gospel) that "those who have done good things will go out to a resurrection of life, but those who have practiced wicked things to a resurrection of judgment" (5:29).

90. *Theology of the New Testament,* 2.21.

91. *Theology of the New Testament,* 2.25.

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words of old Simeon in another Gospel put it best: Jesus in the Gospel of John comes "so that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed" (Lk 2:35). The accent is not on "conversion" (the words for "repent" and "repentance" never occur), or even the forgiveness of sins, but on revelation. The coming of Jesus into the world simply reveals who belongs — and who does not belong — to his Father, the God of Israel. If the Gospel of John reveals who the Son is and who the Father is, it also tells its readers who they are and where they stand with the Father and the Son.

If God the Father is the initiator of Christian salvation according to this Gospel, he is also its end and goal. The Son is sent from the Father and returns to the Father again. This is what the world does not understand according to chapters 2 through 12, and through much of chapters 13 through 17 the disciples do not understand either. In the end they finally grasp that he has in fact "come forth from God" (16:30), but not that he must return to God again. "If you loved me," he tells them, "you would rejoice that I am going off to the Father, because the Father is greater than I" (14:28). Only by virtue of his prayer on their behalf (chapter 17) and of his resurrection (chapter 20) does his intention that "In that day, you will come to know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" (14:20) come to realization. He sends them, through Mary, the message that "I am going up to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (20:18). If the beginning of the story is the work of God the Father in the hearts of human beings, drawing them to the Son, the end of the story is their union with the Son and consequently with the Father. Just as the Gospel's christology is a kind of parabola, with the Son coming down from the Father into the world and going back up to the Father again, so too is its soteriology, its course of salvation, with God the Father drawing a people to God the Son, who leads them in turn back to the Father. Those who, in Emily Dickinson's words, "choose the Envoy — and spurn the groom" have failed to understand the Gospel of John.

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The Gospel of JOHN

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Text, Exposition, and Notes

I. PREAMBLE: THE LIGHT (1:1-5)

> 1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and*
> *the Word was God.* 2 *He was with God in the beginning.* 3 *All things*
> *came into being through him, and apart from him not one thing that*
> *has come into being was made.* 4 *In him was life, and that life was the*
> *light of humans,* 5 *and the light is shining in the darkness, and the*
> *darkness did not overtake it.*

The story to be told in this Gospel begins with the words, "A man came, sent from God. John was his name" (1:6). This means that the five preceding verses must be taken as a kind of preface or preamble, in keeping with the principle stated by John himself that "The One coming after me . . . was before me" (v. 15; see also v. 30). This will be new to generations of readers who are accustomed to setting the first eighteen verses of the Gospel apart as "The Prologue." In identifying the first five verses of John as "preamble," rather than the first eighteen as "prologue," we are breaking with tradition, and within these five verses we break with tradition again by accenting "the light"[1] rather than "the Word" as their major theme. John's Gospel is classically remembered as a Gospel of the Word *(ho logos),* and its christology as a "Logos" christology to be placed alongside other New Testament christologies. But the significance of "Word," or Logos, as a title for Jesus, real as it

1. Capitalization is a problem in translating Greek designations for God or Jesus into English. Capitalizing such metaphors as Good Shepherd, or Vine, or Bread, or Lamb of God, or such terms as the Word, the Light, the Life, the Son, even the Father, is one way of signaling to the reader that these expressions are being used as metaphors or titles of deity. Yet with terms not inherently personal in nature the decision to capitalize or not can be a rather subjective one. I have capitalized only where the term seems to function unmistakably as a personal title.

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is, must be kept in perspective. It appears only four times in the Gospel, three times in the very first verse, once in verse 14, and never again in the rest of John.[2] "Light," on the other hand, is a dominant image through at least the first half of the Gospel.[3] The preamble begins with "the Word" (v. 1) and finishes on a triumphant note with "the light" (v. 5), giving away at the outset the ending of the story, and succinctly describing the world as the Gospel writer perceives it: "And the light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it." The Gospel of John is about revelation; the text begins with audible revelation ("Word"), moving on to visible revelation ("light"), and thence back and forth between the two (embodied in Jesus' signs and discourses) as the story unfolds.

1-2 Each of the four Gospels begins, appropriately enough, with a reference to some kind of beginning. Mark's heading is "Beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" (Mk 1:1). Matthew opens with "an account of the origin of Jesus Christ" (Mt 1:1). Luke acknowledges the traditions of "those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" (Lk 1:2). John's "beginning" *(archē)* is the earliest of all, for the vocabulary of John's preamble is decisively shaped by the opening verses of Genesis. Why this is so has puzzled interpreters for centuries. The Gospel of John is not particularly interested in creation. Like the other Gospels, its focus is on revelation and redemption, the new creation if you will. But at the outset, attention is drawn to the beginning of all beginnings, the story of creation in Genesis. Whether or not the purpose is to counter a group in or on the fringes of the Christian movement that denigrated the old creation (Gnosticism comes immediately to mind), we do not know. As interpreters, our best course is to defer judgment for the moment, and wait to see if subsequent evidence in the Gospel sheds light on why the writer has begun in this way.

In any event, the words "In the beginning"[4] (=) unmistakably echo Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth." Yet the differences are more striking than the similarities. God is the solitary Creator in the Genesis account, while in John creation is jointly the work of God and

2. The fuller expression "the word of God" (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ) occurs in 10:35, but not (on most readings) in reference to Jesus. It also appears in Revelation 19:13 as a name for a rider on a white horse (evidently the triumphant Jesus) coming in judgment, but there the term echoes earlier references in the Revelation where it is not obviously christological (for example, 1:2, 9; 6:9; 20:4; see also 19:9).

3. Jesus identifies himself explicitly as light in 8:12, "I am the Light of the world"; compare 9:5, "As long as I am in the world, I am the world's light"; 12:36, "While you have the Light, believe in the Light"; 12:46, "I have come as light into the world" (see also 3:19-21). It is perhaps worth noting that all the references to light come within the first twelve chapters.

4. Gr. ἐν ἀρχῇ.

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the Word. Genesis, moreover, is interested in God's *act,* not God's being or existence, which is simply presupposed: "God *made* the heaven and the earth." John's Gospel, by contrast, focuses on *being,* in three clauses: (1) "In the beginning *was* the Word," (2) "the Word *was* with God," and (3) "the Word *was* God."[5] Perhaps this is because God in the book of Genesis needs no introduction. God can be safely presupposed, but the same is not true of the Word in the Gospel of John. The Word must be identified, and can only be identified in relation to God, the God of Israel.

After introducing "the Word" in the first clause, the verse presents an interplay between "the Word" *(ho logos)* and "God" *(ho theos)* in two different ways, and in chiastic fashion: the Word was "with God"[6] and, following the order of the Greek text, God was what the Word was.[7] The solemn repetition — Word, Word, God, God, Word — captures the reader's attention from the outset by giving the language a poetic or hymnic quality that immediately sets John apart from the other three canonical Gospels. Because this quality is not typical of John's Gospel as a whole, the impression is given that John will be more different from the other Gospels than is actually the case.

What then is the relationship between the Word and God? The signals are mixed, in that the two are viewed first as distinct entities ("the Word was with God"), and then in some way identified with each other ("the Word was God"). "God" in the first instance has the definite article in Greek *(ho theos),* which is not used in English when speaking of the Jewish or Christian God, but in the second instance it stands without the article.[8] But the placement of "God," or *theos,* first in its clause,[9] before the verb, gives it a certain definite-

5. "Was" in Greek is ἦν, repeated three times, the imperfect of the verb "to be." In the LXX of Genesis 1:2, the verb "was" (ἦν) goes not with God but with the earth as a static and formless void, waiting for the spirit of God to move upon it.

6. Πρός is literally "toward" God (see Moloney, 35; Brown, 1.3-5, suggests "in God's presence"). The translation "with God" seems to presuppose the more common Greek prepositions for "with": σύν or παρά followed by the dative, or μετά with the genitive. There is justification for the traditional rendering, however, if πρός is understood in the sense of "at home with" (like Fr. *chez*) or "close to" (see Abbott, *Johannine Grammar,* 273-76; also BDAG, 711, on πρός, III, 7). The meaning is comparable to that of 1 John 1:2, "We announce to you that eternal life which was with the Father (πρὸς τὸν πατέρα) and was revealed to us."

7. In Greek thus: καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

8. Some have seen a parallel in Philo's exposition of Genesis 31:13, where he distinguishes between θεός with and without the article, the former referring to "him who is truly God" and the latter to "his chief Word," or λόγος (*On Dreams,* 1.229-30). Such parallels should be used with caution, given that Philo was exegeting biblical language while John's Gospel is formulating its own. Notice that John uses θεός *without* the article in 1:18 for One who is so "truly God" that no one has ever seen him!

9. That is, θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

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ness, warning us against reducing it to a mere adjective.[10] At the same time, the absence of the article alerts the reader that "the Word" and "God," despite their close and intimate relationship, are not interchangeable. While the Word is God, God is more than just the Word.[11] Even though it stands first in its clause, "God" is the predicate noun and not the subject of the clause, that is, "the Word was God," not "God was the Word" (compare 4:24, "God is Spirit," not "Spirit is God"). Even when the subject stands first, the definite article is often used to distinguish the subject from the predicate, as in 1 John 1:5 ("God is light") and 4:8 and 16 ("God is love").[12] In our passage, "God" is virtually an *attribute* of the Word, just as spirit and light and love are attributes of God in these other texts. To some, this makes *theos* almost adjectival (as in James Moffatt's translation, "the Logos was divine"),[13] but it is no more an adjective than "spirit" or "light" or "love" are adjectives. To say "God is Spirit" is not the same as saying God is spiritual, and "God is love" says more than that God is loving. In the same way, "the Word was God" says more than "the Word was divine." While "the Word was deity" is possible, it sounds too abstract, losing the simplicity and style of "the Word was God" with no corresponding gain in accuracy.[14]

God will emerge in this Gospel as "the Father," with the Word as the Father's "only Son" (see vv. 14, 18) or simply "the Son." To express this rela-

10. See the classic rule proposed by E. C. Colwell that "definite predicate nouns which precede the verb usually lack the article" ("A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament," *JBL* 52 [1933], 20). On this passage in John, see P. B. Harner, "Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1," *JBL* 91 (1973), 84-86.

11. As Barrett puts it, "The absence of the article indicates that the Word is God, but is not the only being of whom this is true; if ὁ θεός had been written it would have been implied that no divine being existed outside the second person of the Trinity" (156).

12. That is, ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστιν and ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν, respectively. A partial analogy exists between God in relation to the Word and God in relation to love. The author of 1 John can say on the one hand that "Love is from God" (ἡ ἀγάπη ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστιν, 4:7), and on the other that "God is love" (ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστιν, 4:8, 16). But the analogy is far from perfect, because the conclusion to which it leads is not that "Love is God" (as "the Word was God").

13. Brown (1.5) rightly calls this rendering "too weak," adding that "after all, there is in Greek an adjective for 'divine' *(theios)* which the author did not choose to use." He concludes that "for a modern Christian reader whose trinitarian background has accustomed him to thinking of 'God' as a larger concept than 'God the Father,' the translation 'The Word was God' is quite correct."

14. The NEB and REB rendering, "what God was, the Word was," is less effective because it seems to imply a third entity to which both "God" and "the Word" are being compared. It does have the advantage of preserving the Greek word order, but a better option would have been "God was what the Word was."

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tionship, later Christian theology introduced the Hellenistic notions of "nature" and of "person": the Father and the Son are two distinct Persons sharing a common nature as God. A classic "Johannine" opening to the Gospel, and one wholly congenial to later Christian theology, would have been, "In the beginning was the Son, and the Son was with the Father, and the Son was God. He was in the beginning with the Father." Instead, the Gospel writer has opted to postpone speaking of "the Son" and "the Father" until after the narrative proper has begun, with the appearance of the "man sent from God. John was his name" (1:6). This is appropriate because elsewhere in the Gospel tradition the Father is defined as Father and the Son as Son precisely in the setting of Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan River (Mk 1:9-11 and parallels). The choice of different vocabulary in the preamble has contributed to the widespread (but questionable) view among modern scholars that not only the first five verses but much of what is commonly known as the prologue (vv. 1-18) belongs to a pre-Johannine, possibly pre-Christian, hymn.

The first and second clauses of verse 1 ("In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God") are echoed more briefly, like an antiphonal response, in verse 2: "He was in the beginning with God."[15] The point is that the Word was God's companion in the work of creation (see v. 3). The writer will not let us bypass the "beginning" and Genesis 1:1 too quickly. Ptolemy, the earliest known commentator on the Gospel of John, in the mid-second century elevated *archē* to the status of a christological title. "John the Lord's disciple," Ptolemy wrote, "desiring to tell of the origin of the universe by which the Father produced everything, posits a certain Beginning [*archēn*] which was first generated by God, which he called Only-Begotten Son and God, in which the Father emitted all things spermatically. By this the Logos was emitted, and in it was the whole substance of the Aeons, which the Logos itself later shaped. . . . First he differentiates the three: God, Beginning, and Logos; then he combines them again in order to set forth the emission of each of them, the Son and the Logos, and their unity with each other and with the Father. For in the Father and from the Father is the Beginning, and in the Beginning and from the Beginning is the Logos."[16] Creation, the

15. Pliny's letter to Trajan around A.D. 110 is often cited in this connection. According to Pliny, Christians told him that "they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses [*invicem*] a hymn to Christ, as to a god" (*Epistles* 10.96; see Theron, 15). Many scholars have conjectured that this "hymn to Christ, as to a god," sung responsively, was either the so-called "prologue" to John or a source underlying the prologue. Such a theory can be neither proved nor disproved.

16. The translation is that of Robert M. Grant, *Gnosticism* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 182. Grant proposes "principle" as an alternative translation of ἀρχή. The Greek text is as cited in Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.8.5 (Harvey, 1.75-76; see also

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work of one divine entity in Genesis, God (Heb. *'ĕlōhîm*), and the work of two in John (God and the Word), becomes in Ptolemy the work of three (God, the Beginning, and the Word).

In this way Ptolemy, a Valentinian Gnostic, created a kind of "trinity" out of the opening verses of John long before trinitarianism became dominant in the church. Nor is his interpretation quite as far-fetched as it sounds, given that *archē* was already a title for Jesus Christ in Asia Minor before the end of the first century.[17] Yet Ptolemy has moved too far from the world of Genesis to be convincing. The "beginning" in Genesis 1[18] is clearly intended in a temporal sense. The same is true in John 1:1, just as "from the beginning" (or *ap' archēs*) is also consistently temporal in the New Testament.[19] John's Gospel has moved beyond Genesis in its own ways, however, first by its transformation of the refrain, "and God said"[20] (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29), into the noun "word" or *logos,*[21] and second by its personification of "word" as "the Word." Personification is evident not so much in the pronoun "he"[22] as in the characterization of the *logos* as "God," understood as a personal Being. But if the Word is personal in John 1, is the reader expected to know that the Word is specifically Jesus Christ? Probably so, in view of the fact that when the name "Jesus Christ" is finally introduced (1:16), it is as a given, without explanation or fanfare. Moreover, when "Jesus" makes his appearance as a living character in the story, he does so very abruptly and through the eyes of the baptizer, John, who "sees Jesus coming toward him"

W. Völker [ed.], *Quellen zur Geschichte der christlichen Gnosis* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1932], 93-94). For fuller discussion, see Elaine Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis* (SBL Monograph Series 17; Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 26-27.

17. See Colossians 1:18 ("And he is the head of the body, the church, he who is the beginning [ἀρχή], firstborn from the dead, so that in all he might come first"), and Revelation 3:14, "Thus says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning [ἡ ἀρχή] of the creation of God" (compare Rev 21:6; 22:13).

18. That is, Ἐν ἀρχῇ in the LXX of Genesis 1:1 and **בראשית** in the Hebrew Bible.

19. This is the case whether the "beginning" in view is the creation of all things (Mt 19:4, 8; 24:21; Mk 10:6; 13:19; Jn 8:44; 2 Pet 3:4; 1 Jn 3:8) or the beginning of the Christian movement (Lk 1:2; Jn 6:64; 15:27; 1 Jn 1:1; 2:7, 13, 14, 24; 3:11; 2 Jn 5, 6; compare ἐν ἀρχῇ in Acts 11:15).

20. In Hebrew **ויאמר אלהים** or in Greek καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός.

21. This happens already in the Hebrew Bible. See Psalm 33:6, "By the word of the Lord [Heb. **בדבר יהוה**; Gr. τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ κυρίου] were the heavens made."

22. "He" is οὗτος, literally "this man," but inevitable in any case because λόγος is a masculine noun. Moloney (35) allows for the possible translation of οὗτος as "this man," anticipating the Gospel narrative about Jesus, but the formal introduction of John as the first "man" (ἄνθρωπος) in the story argues against this. The masculine gender of λόγος is a perfectly adequate explanation for the gender of οὗτος.

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(1:29). Evidently the reader knows who Jesus is, and therefore, in all likelihood, that the story is about him from the start. He is first "the Word" (vv. 1-3, 14), then "the Light" (vv. 4, 5, 7-8, 9-10), then the "One and Only" (vv. 14, 18), and finally, in much of the rest of the Gospel, "the Son."[23]

3-4 As soon as the Word has been introduced, "was" gives way to "came" or "came to be" *(egeneto),* a verb conspicuous in the LXX of the Genesis account.[24] Divine being gives way to divine action, starting with the creation of the world. This is the verb the Gospel writer will use not only for creation (vv. 3 and 10) but for the coming of John as "a man sent from God" (v. 6), for the coming of the Word himself in the flesh of Jesus Christ (v. 14) and for the "grace and truth" that Jesus Christ brings (v. 17). Regarding creation, the same thing is stated twice for rhetorical effect, first positively and then negatively. "All things" came into being through the Word, and "not one thing" came into being without him.[25] The construction is similar to that of verse 1, where the repetitions, "Word, Word, God, God, Word," carried the thought forward in similar chainlike fashion (sometimes known as "staircase parallelism"), except that here strong contrasts are introduced: "through him" and "apart from him"; "all things" and "not one thing."

The classic problem of the verse is that the symmetry is broken by the seemingly redundant clause, "that which has come to be" *(ho gegonen),* at the end of the verse. Traditional English versions convey the sense of redundancy quite well; for example, "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (RSV); "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (NIV). Not all English versions agree, however. Some have followed instead an ancient precedent in reading this clause not as an anticlimax to verse 3 but as the beginning of verse 4: for example, "All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people" (NRSV); "Through him all things came to be; no single thing was created without him. All that came to be was alive with his life, and that life was the light of men"

23. For a different way of making a transition from the speech of God to that of the Son, see Hebrews 1:1-2, "God, who in many and various ways spoke [λαλήσας] to the fathers in the prophets, has in these last days spoken [ἐλάλησεν] to us in the Son [ἐν υἱῷ]."

24. Note the repetition of καὶ ἐγένετο (Heb. **ויהי**) in Genesis 1:3, 5, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 19, 20, 23, 24, 30.

25. The first two elements of the second clause (χωρὶς αὐτοῦ / ἐγένετο) correspond to the last two elements of the first (δι' αὐτοῦ / ἐγένετο). The chainlike contrasting parallelism is framed by the sharper contrast of πάντα ("all things") and οὐδὲ ἕν ("not one thing"). The Greek word order shows the symmetry of the construction:

πάντα / δι' αὐτοῦ / ἐγένετο,
καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ / ἐγένετο / οὐδὲ ἕν.

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(NEB).[26] Such a verse division is supported by Kurt Aland, who demonstrated thirty years ago from ancient versions and citations of the fathers that this way of reading the text enjoyed almost universal support in the second and early third centuries.[27]

Is Aland's reading correct? I once thought so,[28] but now I am not so sure. This was a rare point at which Bruce Metzger disagreed with the committee that edited the United Bible Societies *Greek New Testament.* The UBS Editorial Committee read *ho gegonen* with verse 4 in keeping with Aland's argument, but Metzger filed his own minority report in his *Textual Commentary,* arguing that the relative clause belonged with verse 3.[29] The awkwardness Metzger noticed is evident in the NRSV ("What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people"), where the perfectly accurate rendering, "what *has* come into being," seems to require "*is* life."[30] The present tense, "is" *(estin),* does in fact appear as a variant reading in verse 4 in several ancient manuscripts and versions.[31] But Metzger, this time in agreement with the UBS Editorial Committee, comments, "In order to re-

26. Similar renderings of verse 4 include, "Everything that was created received its life from him, and his life gave light to everyone" (CEV), and "What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race" (NAB).

27. K. Aland, "Eine Untersuchung zu Joh 1:3-4: Über die Bedeutung eines Punktes," *ZNW* 59 (1968), 174-209. For a more recent defense of a similar view, see E. L. Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4* (Leiden: Brill, 1989). This, for example, was the reading of Origen, who seems to have known no other (see, for example, his *Commentary on John* 2.112-32 [FC 80.124-29]).

28. J. R. Michaels, *John,* NIBC 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 25.

29. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London/New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), 195-96. Metzger appealed to "John's fondness for beginning a sentence with ἐν and a demonstrative pronoun (compare 13:35; 15:8; 16:26; 1 Jn 2:3, 4, 5; 3:10, 16, 19, 24; 4:2, etc.)," and concluded, "It is more consistent with the Johannine repetitive style, as well as with Johannine doctrine (compare 5:26, 39; 6:53), to say nothing concerning the sense of the passage, to punctuate with a full stop after ὃ γέγονεν" (196). His most telling point was that "Despite valiant attempts of commentators to bring sense out of taking ὃ γέγονεν with what follows, the passage remains intolerably clumsy and opaque. One of the difficulties that stands in the way of ranging the clause with ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν is that the perfect tense of γέγονεν would require ἐστιν instead of ἦν" (196, n. 2).

30. The alternative would have been to make the imperfect ἦν ("was") determinative, and read ὃ γέγονεν as a pluperfect: "What *had* come into being in him *was* life." This would be an improvement but still awkward.

31. These include א and D, plus the old Latin, a number of other ancient versions, and patristic quotations. For the evidence, see *The Greek New Testament* (4th rev. ed.; Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1993), 312. Origen, for example, knows of this reading and considers it "perhaps not without credibility" (*Commentary on John* 2.132 [FC, 80.129]).

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lieve the difficulty . . . the tense of the verb was changed from imperfect to present."[32]

Peter Cohee, in an attempt to resolve the problem, argues that the seemingly redundant clause was not original, but rather "introduced into the text as a gloss."[33] But even if it is a gloss, the same question remains. Was it added to the end of verse 3, or to the beginning of verse 4? Whether one agrees with his conclusion or not, Cohee's answer is instructive. If it is a gloss to verse 3, he infers that "Someone wished to point out that the absolute statement in the verse proper applied to the mortal sphere of created things, but that there were things — or at least *one* thing — uncreated."[34] In effect, Cohee is attributing the gloss to a scribe whose interpretation of John 1:3-4 precisely matched that of Ptolemy. Irenaeus quotes Ptolemy as claiming that "'all things' came into existence 'through' it [*di' autou*], but Life 'in' it [*en autō*]. This, then, coming into existence *in* it, is closer *in* it than the things which came into existence *through* it."[35] There is no textual evidence for excluding the clause "that which has come to be" as a gloss, and to do so is precarious.[36]

If it is *not* a gloss, but part of the original text, then Cohee's mention of a view "that there were things — or at least *one* thing — uncreated" takes on added significance, for it could as easily be the view of the Gospel writer himself as of a later scribe. As soon as he had written, "All things came into being through him," and "not one thing was made without him," it may have

32. He therefore rejects the reading on the ground that "the second ἦν (in the clause ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς), seems to require the first" (*Textual Commentary,* 196).

33. "John 1.3-4," *NTS* 41 (1995), 470-77. Cohee appeals on the one hand to "John's fondness for ending a clause with οὐδεὶς, οὐδὲ ἕν, or οὐδέν," and on the other (citing Metzger) to "John's fondness for beginning a sentence or clause with ἐν and a demonstrative pronoun." The former he urges as an argument against construing ὃ γέγονεν with verse 3, and the latter against construing it with verse 4! The only conclusion he can draw is that it was added later.

34. Cohee considers it more likely a gloss to verse 4, "to emphasize the contrast between the prepositions δι' of verse 3a and ἐν of 4a, and to equate the respective verbs of these verses. In other words, the author simply wished to state that Life existed in the Word; someone else added the relative clause to comment that, like all things, Life, too, was created, but unlike all other things, Life had its creation *in* the Word" (Cohee, 476).

35. The translation is from Grant, *Gnosticism,* 182-83. The Greek text is in Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.8.5 (Harvey, 1.75-76). Cohee cites this text (474), but does not mention Ptolemy and seems to imply that it represents Irenaeus's own interpretation.

36. Cohee's appeal to the presence of dots on either side of the clause in question in certain Byzantine manuscripts as an acknowledgment of doubt about its authenticity (476) is unconvincing, particularly in light of his own admission that "there are no variant readings" here, but "only one reading with various punctuation indicating different editorial opinions" (470). At most the dots in later manuscripts would be simply a recognition that earlier interpreters had divided the verses differently.

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occurred to the writer that some things did not come into being at all, but had always existed.[37] Among these were the two things of immediate concern in these opening verses, eternal "life" and the "light" of human beings. Other examples would have been divine wisdom, truth, and love. Such things are not creations of God but attributes of God. They exist wherever and whenever God exists. The Gospel writer, therefore, had to add the words "that which has come into being" as a qualification: "All things came into being through him, and apart from him not one thing *that has come into being* was made" (my italics).[38] Not all things were created, but all things created were created through the Word. The contrast is not, as Ptolemy thought, between things created *through* the Word and things created *in* the Word, but between things that *came into being* through the Word and things that did not come into being at all, but always *were.* The latter, being attributes of God, are also attributes of the Word.

The first of these is "life," probably not physical life (which according to Genesis 1 *was* created), but spiritual life, or what the Gospel of John elsewhere calls "eternal life." One definition of "eternal," after all, is having neither end nor beginning. Here the Gospel writer moves past "life" quickly to get to the theme of light, which will be developed at greater length in the verses to follow, but in 1 John "life " takes center stage at the start. There, having mentioned "the word [or message] of Life" (1 Jn 1:1), the writer adds, "and the Life was revealed, and we have seen, and we testify and announce to you that eternal Life which was with the Father [*pros ton patera*] and was revealed to us" (1 Jn 1:2).[39] Clearly, "Life" is not something created, but, like the Word, is with God from the beginning. Near the end of 1 John the writer concludes, "And this is the testimony, that God has given us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has Life, and whoever does not have the Son of God does not have Life" (1 Jn 5:11-12). The Gospel of John makes the same point at the end of its first major section: "Whoever believes

37. For a somewhat analogous qualification of πάντα, see 1 Corinthians 15:27, where Paul cites Psalm 8:6, "For he subjected all things [πάντα] under his feet," and then immediately added that "all things" do not, of course, include the One who did the subjecting!

38. At least one recent version has returned to this traditional verse division. The Revised English Bible (REB), moving away from the NEB, has "and through him all things came to be; without him no created thing came into being. In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind."

39. It appears that what the Gospel of John says of the Word, 1 John says of Life. The Word was "with God" (πρὸς τὸν θεόν, Jn 1:1), while eternal Life was "with the Father" (πρὸς τὸν πατέρα). Consequently it seems appropriate to capitalize "Word" in John's Gospel while leaving "life" in small letters, and to capitalize "Life" in 1 John while leaving "word" in small letters.

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in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (Jn 3:36). Here in verse 4, "life" and "light" are equivalent expressions for salvation, and for the time being the preoccupation is with light. In stating that in the Word "*was* life," and that "that life *was* the light of humans,"[40] the writer is giving us a provisional *definition* of the "life" he has in mind. Salvation in the Gospel of John is defined as revelation or knowledge, something of which "light" is a most appropriate symbol. "This is eternal life," we will read, even within Jesus' last prayer to the Father, "that they may know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ" (17:3). Life in this Gospel *is* light, "the light of humans." Once again, physical light is not meant because in Genesis physical light was created as the first of all created things ("God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light," Gen 1:3).[41] In our text, by contrast, "the light of humans" is not something created, but is part and parcel of the life that is in the Word, and therefore eternal.[42]

Almost always, "light" in the Gospel of John is a metaphor,[43] but the question here is whether the metaphor is to be understood universally, as the intellectual or emotional light distinguishing humans from the rest of creation, or more specifically as the "the light of the world" revealed in Jesus Christ (see 8:12). This question can perhaps be answered definitively only after taking into consideration verse 9 of this chapter ("The light was the True [Light] that illumines every human being who comes into the world"), and 3:19 ("This then is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and human beings loved the dark rather than the Light, for their works were evil"). The former points toward the general or universal understanding of verse 4, the latter toward the more redemptive-historical interpretation. But because there has been no mention of any specific "coming" of the light this early in the story, it is wise to give the phrase "the light of humans" the broadest possible application. It is fair to assume that "the light of humans" refers to a capacity for love and understanding given to every human being at

40. "Life" (ζωή) is without the definite article the first time it appears in verse 4, but when it appears a second time, it has the article (ἡ ζωή), suggesting the translation "that life" (that is, the life just mentioned).

41. In the LXX, literally, "and light came to be [καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς]." In Genesis, light is among those things that "came to be," while in John's Gospel it belongs to those things that simply "were" (ἦν).

42. Paul makes a transition from physical light to spiritual light somewhat differently: "For God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness," has shined in our hearts, bringing to light the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6).

43. When light is not a metaphor, but refers to physical light, the author supplies a qualification to that effect (that is, "the light *of this world*," 11:9).

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birth. Despite the strong Johannine emphasis on another birth, "of God" (1:13) or "of the Spirit" (3:6) or "from above" (3:3), the testimony of verse 4 is that physical birth is also a source of "light" from God. At least the burden of proof is on those who would argue otherwise.

5 The tense of the verb changes from imperfect to present. The light "is shining" *(phainei)* in the darkness. Having looked at beginnings, and how "all things came into being" (v. 3), the Gospel writer returns to his own time and his own world. What is striking is that he passes over the whole "biblical" period (what Christians today call the "Old Testament") in silence. Some modern interpreters have found this odd, and have tried to find allusions to the Old Testament, beyond Genesis 1, either in verses 1-5 [44] or verses 6-13,[45] or both. But these supposed allusions are not convincing. This book is a Gospel, not a survey of redemptive history. Having laid claim, briefly and decisively, to the whole created order on behalf of the Word (and implicitly, though only implicitly, to the entire biblical past), the writer moves on to tell the Gospel story, the good news of Jesus. As readers, we are not kept in suspense. We learn immediately that the story will have a happy ending. The light "is shining in the darkness," we are told, not continually through time but specifically *now,* because something decisive happened. What that something was, we are not told. The Christian reader familiar with the rest of the New Testament already knows, and probably the Gospel's original readers knew. But all we are told explicitly is what did *not* happen: "the darkness" did not "overtake" *(katelaben)* the light.[46]

This is the first we have heard of "darkness" *(skotia),* and the writer does not pause to address the philosophical question of where the darkness came from if "all things" were either created through the Word or existed in the Word. The perspective of John's Gospel as a whole, however, suggests that "the darkness" is equivalent to "the world" *(ho kosmos),*[47] and the writer

44. Brown (1.27) links verse 4 to the tree of life in the garden of Eden, and verse 5 to the struggle between light and darkness in connection with the Fall.

45. C. H. Dodd (*Interpretation,* 270-71) finds in vv. 4 and 9-10 the notion that the Torah was present in the world throughout the history of Israel, in v. 11 an assertion that "the word of the Lord through Moses and the prophets came to His own people Israel, and Israel rejected it," and in vv. 12-13 a hint that God nevertheless gave some in Israel the status of "sons" (citing Exod 4:22, Deut 14:1, and Hos 1:10, as well as Ps 81[82]:6, which Jesus himself later quotes in Jn 10:35). This is to read between the lines far more than the text warrants.

46. The point is much the same as in 1 John 2:8, where the old commandment the readers have heard is also called a new commandment "because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already [ἤδη] shining."

47. This can be seen by comparing John 2:8 ("the darkness is passing away") with 2:17 ("the world is passing away").

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will make clear in verse 9 that "the world came into being through him." It is probably fair to assume that if "all things" include "the world," they also include "the darkness." Some translators (perhaps with the analogy between darkness and the world in view) have rendered the verb as "comprehend" or "understand," anticipating verse 10 ("the world did not know him").[48] Others accent the idea of conflict, as I have done, with the verb "overtake" or "overcome."[49] Still others, combining the ideas of comprehension on the one hand and confrontation on the other, have proposed such alternatives as "seize," "grasp," or "master."[50] The verb is probably to be read as part of the imagery of darkness, hence "overtake." The physical darkness of night falls quickly, "overtaking" those who stay too long in places where the night brings danger, and the same is true of the spiritual darkness of ignorance and unbelief.[51] This is *not* what has happened, however, in the story to be told here, which was after all handed down in the Christian church as "gospel," or good news. Right from the start it is clear that a confrontation between light and darkness has taken place once and for all, and that the light has emerged victorious. The light shines on in the darkness, and the writer will now proceed to narrate how this all came about.

II. THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN (1:6–3:36)

After the preamble, the first three chapters of the Gospel are framed by John's varied testimonies to Jesus (1:6-8, 15-16, 19-36 and 3:22-36), and his continuing presence gives these chapters their distinctive character. John's is the dominant voice at first, and then as Jesus begins to find his own voice (3:11-21), John bids the reader good-bye (3:30), confirming Jesus' testimony and yielding center stage to "the One coming from above" (3:31-36).

48. As in the NIV, "but the darkness has not understood it"; compare, for example, Schnackenburg, 1.246-47; Bultmann, 47-48; Beasley-Murray, 11.

49. So the RSV, NRSV, and NEB; compare Westcott, 5; Morris, 75-76.

50. As in the REB, "and the darkness has never mastered it." According to Barrett (158), "The darkness neither understood nor quenched the light"; compare Hoskyns, 143.

51. This is illustrated in the reading of certain Greek manuscripts (א and D) of John 6:17: "They got in a boat and were on their way across the lake to Capernaum, but the darkness overtook [κατέλαβεν] them, and Jesus had not yet come to them." For similar imagery, but with spiritual rather than physical darkness in view, see 12:35: "Yet a little while the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake [καταλάβῃ] you."

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A. JOHN AND THE COMING OF THE LIGHT (1:6-13)

> 6 *A man came, sent from God. John was his name.* 7 *He came for a testimony, to testify about the light, that they all might believe through him.* 8 *He was not the light, but [he came] to testify about the light.* 9 *The light was the true [Light] that illumines every human being who comes into the world.*[1] 10 *He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, and the world did not know him.* 11 *He came to what was his own, and his own did not receive him.* 12 *But to as many as did receive him he gave authority to become children of God, to those who believe in his name,* 13 *who were born not of blood lines, nor of fleshly desire, nor a husband's desire, but of God.*

The narrative, like that of Mark's Gospel (1:4), begins with John the Baptist, or Baptizer, known here simply as "John" (v. 6).[2] As we have seen, the name "John,"[3] right on the heels of the caption "According to John" in the earliest manuscripts of the Gospel,[4] could mislead some readers into thinking that this John is either the author of the Gospel or its main character, and indeed a case could be made that his is the major voice in at least the Gospel's first three chapters. John's ministry of baptism is not even mentioned at first (not until v. 25), but instead he is identified (v. 7) as one who "came for a testimony, to testify about the light" (that is, the "light" mentioned in vv. 4 and 5), so that "they all might believe through him" (v. 7). But almost immediately, as if to deflect the assumption that the story is going to be about him, the narrative is interrupted, as the narrator stops to explain that John himself was not the light (v. 8), then to reflect on the identity of the light (v. 9) and on the coming of the light into the world as a person ("he" and not "it"). The Christian reader will know that the Light is Jesus, but strictly speaking "he" is still anonymous. All we know for certain is that he is not John. We do learn that the world he created "did not know him," and "his own did not receive him," yet that some did receive him, and that those who did are called "the children of God." As for John, and his explicit testimony to "the light," that will come later (see vv. 15-16, 19-34; 3:27-36). In short, the preamble (vv. 1-5) intrudes upon the narrative, as the

1. Or: *The light was the true [Light] that illumines every human being by coming into the world.*

2. John is said to be "baptizing" (βαπτίζων) in the Gospel of John (1:28; 3:23), but only Jesus is actually called "the Baptizer" (ὁ βαπτίζων, 1:33), and that in reference to baptism not in water but in the Holy Spirit.

3. The accent on the name "John" (literally, "a name to him John") is strangely reminiscent of the birth narrative in Luke (see Lk 1:13, "and you shall call his name John"; 1:60, "no, but he shall be called John"; 1:63, "John is his name").

4. In Greek, Κατὰ Ἰωάννην.

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Gospel writer pauses to spell out its implications, and in the process summarizes in very few words the whole of the Gospel story (see vv. 10-13).

6 The coming of "John" into the world represents a continuation of the plan of God that began with creation. Just as all things "came into being" through the Word (v. 3), so John "came" as one "sent from God."[5] The terminology invites misunderstanding, perhaps deliberately on the author's part. If John was "sent from God," was he a divine messenger or angel of some kind? The use of the term "man" or "human being" *(anthrōpos)* rules out this possibility, but readers familiar with the whole story will know that Jesus was a "man" too, and viewed as such both by himself (8:40) and others (see, for example, 1:30; 4:29; 9:11, 16; 19:5). Was John "sent" in the same way Jesus was sent? The author writes as if he knows of persons or groups that may think so, and perhaps wants his readers confronted, if only for a moment, with that possibility.[6] But he quickly adds that John was sent only "for a testimony, to testify about the light" (v. 7), and that John himself "was not the light" (v. 8). Later, when his disciples begin comparing him with Jesus, John will insist that "I am not the Christ," but that "I am sent ahead of him" (3:28). He is "sent from God" as a human delegate on a purely human mission,[7] that of bearing testimony to someone greater than himself.

7-8 Preamble and narrative beginning are linked both in style and content. Stylistically, verses 7-8 exhibit the same chainlike repetition or "staircase parallelism" evident in verses 1-5: the pattern of "testimony, testify, light, light, testify, light," recalls the repetition of "Word, Word, God, God, Word" in verse 1, or of "life, life, light, light, darkness, darkness" in verses 4-5. The similarity is remarkable in view of the fact that advocates of a hymnic source behind the so-called prologue have tended to identify verses 1-5 largely as poetry and verses 6-8 as a prose interpolation. As to content, the new factor introduced is "testimony" (or *martyria*). Nothing is said of John's baptizing activity. John has come solely "to testify" (vv. 7, 8), and his testimony has to do with "the light" mentioned in verses 4-5. Later we will learn that John did in fact baptize (1:25-26, 33; 3:23), as in the other Gospels, but baptism is incidental to his real mission, which is to point all people, especially his disciples, to Jesus Christ.

C. H. Dodd found in verses 7-8 an anticipation of much of what is to

5. Both "came into being" and "came" are ἐγένετο in Greek.

6. According to BDAG (756), "John the Baptist was not, like Jesus, sent out from the very presence of God, but one whose coming was brought about by God" (citing 2 Macc 11.17, "John and Absalom, who were sent by you" [οἱ πεμφθέντες παρ' ὑμῶν]).

7. Even though John is "sent" (ἀπεσταλμένος), his mission is perhaps more like that of the delegation sent to him by the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem (1:19, 24; note the participle ἀπεσταλμένοι in v. 24) than to Jesus' mission from heaven. The distinction between John's mission and that of Jesus will be explored more fully in 3:31-36.

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follow concerning John. The statement that John "came for a testimony, to testify about the light" (v. 7a) anticipates John's recorded testimonies in 1:19-34, while the intent "that they all might believe through him" (v. 7b) comes to realization in 1:35-37. Within John's testimonies, the notion that John himself "was not the light" (v. 8a) provides the theme of 1:19-28, where the accent is mainly on what he himself is *not* (that is, not the Christ, not Elijah, not the Prophet, vv. 20-21); the positive aspect of "testifying about the light" (v. 8b) comes to expression in 1:29-34, where John finally sees Jesus and points him out as "Lamb of God" (v. 29) and "Son of God" (v. 34).[8] Whether Dodd has given us here a glimpse into the author's actual programmatic intent or simply a useful pedagogical device is uncertain. But his insight underscores the centrality of "testimony," or *martyria,* in the presentation of John in the Gospel that (perhaps coincidentally) bears his name.

The goal of John's testimony is "that they all might believe through him" — not "in him" but "through him." This is the first appearance of the verb "believe" *(pisteuein),* and we are not yet told what, or in whom, people were to believe. A reasonable guess is that they were to believe in "the light." This would give a certain symmetry to the first twelve chapters of the Gospel, for Jesus' last words to the crowds at Jerusalem at the end of his public ministry were, "Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness will not overtake you. . . . While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light" (12:35-36). In one sense, John and Jesus have a common goal and mission, shared also by the Gospel writer, whose stated intent is "that you might believe" (19:35; 20:31). At the outset, the shared mission is universal in scope. Just as "all things" came into being through the Word (v. 3), John testifies in order that "they all," or "all people," might believe (v. 7).[9] Aside from the passing reference to "darkness" in verse 5, the stubborn reality of unbelief is nowhere to be seen. Consequently, there is no hint as yet of the classic Johannine contrast between those who believe and those who do not.

The disclaimer to the effect that John "was not the light" (v. 8) is important for two reasons. First, it raises the obvious question of why such a disclaimer was necessary. Does the author know of readers or potential readers for whom John and not Jesus was the main character in the story? We know that there were such groups in later times,[10] and this is the first of several hints

8. See Dodd, *Historical Tradition,* 248-49, who finds echoes of these two verses also in 3:22-30 and 10:41-42.

9. Compare 12:32, where Jesus promises that "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw them all [πάντας] to myself."

10. According to the third-century Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.54, "Some even of the disciples of John, who seemed to be great ones, separated themselves from the people, and proclaimed their own master as the Christ" (ANF, 8.92). John is also a major messianic figure in the later Mandean literature.

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in the Gospel that the author may be countering their views by attempting to "put John in his place,"[11] exalting Jesus, and him alone, as the Word (vv. 1-2, 14), the true Light (vv. 4-5, 9), and God's One and Only (vv. 14, 18).

Second, the disclaimer has the effect of sidetracking the narrative, just as it is getting started, by shifting the focus of interest *away* from John and his testimony and back to "the light" to which John testified — back, that is, to the preamble and to the overriding question of how it came about that "the light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it" (v. 5). The narrative that began at verse 6 is aborted in favor of a series of theological reflections, not on John's significance but on the significance of the light. With these reflections the whole story is collapsed into a magnificent summary of the Gospel (vv. 6-13), with a response from the believing community (vv. 14-18). The narrative proper, at its orderly and proper pace, will resume in earnest only at verse 19, with a detailed account of John's testimony to a delegation of priests and Levites from Jerusalem.

9 More about the light. In my translation I have taken "light" as the subject and the adjective "true" substantivally as a predicate: "The light was the true [Light]." It is also possible to take both as predicates ("That — or he — was the true Light"), leaving the subject unexpressed and without a definite antecedent. This is commonly done on the assumption that the unexpressed subject is "the Word,"[12] but the Word has not been mentioned, even implicitly, since verse 4.[13] Even if the subject is left unexpressed (as "that," or "he"), it is defined not by an antecedent but by its predicate, as "the light" to which John testified in verse 8. The point of verse 9 is that the light in question here, "the light of humans" mentioned earlier, was the "true" light (see 1 Jn 2:8), not so much in contrast to some "false" or misleading light as in contrast to *all* other light — the physical "light of this world," for example (11:9), or the spiritual "light" given off by the ministry of John, the "burning and shining lamp" (5:35). The light to which John testified was not his own, but the supreme and universal "Light of the world" (8:12), the light "that illumines every human being who comes into the world." For the first time, "light" can be appropriately capitalized, because it is now apparent that "the true Light" is a personal being.

In our translation, the participle "coming" or "who comes" *(erchomenon)* is taken with the phrase that immediately precedes it, "every human being," yielding a redundant yet quite idiomatic expression, "every human being who comes into the world" (compare KJV). The phrase is idiomatic

11. See 1:19-28; 3:27-30; 5:33-36; 10:40-42.

12. For example, Bultmann, 52; Schnackenburg, 1.253.

13. Dodd (*Interpretation,* 268) is correct that "In verse 4 a transition is made to φῶς, and φῶς, not λόγος, is formally the subject of the propositions made in verses 9-12."

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because "all who come into the world" was a common expression in rabbinic literature for "everyone,"[14] but more redundant than the rabbinic expression in that the latter did not include the word "man."[15] The redundant language seems intended simply to recall "the light of humans" (v. 4), now further defined as the light shining on "every human being."

Modern translators are bothered not only by the apparent redundancy, but perhaps also by the fact that on this interpretation no room is left for any explicit mention of the coming of the light into the world. The alternative adopted by most commentators and modern English versions has been to read the participial expression with "light" rather than with "every human being," as, for example, in the REB: "The true light which gives light to everyone was even then coming into the world" (see RSV, NRSV, NIV, NEB, NEB). But there are difficulties with such a translation. The verb "was," instead of standing on its own like the seven other instances of this verb in the first thirteen verses, is pressed into service as a helping verb with the participle "coming" so as to create a periphrastic construction ("was . . . coming") rather uncharacteristic of Johannine style.[16] Moreover, the periphrastic construction gives the impression that the coming of the light into the world was a state, or at most a process, rather than a simple identifiable event.[17] The words "even then," which are not in the Greek text but supplied in the REB translation, represent an effort to give this process a setting in real history, within the ministry of John as sketched in verses 6-8. But if we think of the light as Jesus, then the coming of the light is not a process going on during

14. One frequently cited parallel is in *Leviticus Rabbah* 31.6 ("Thou givest light to the celestial as well as to the terrestrial beings and to all who enter the world" (*Midrash Rabbah: Leviticus* [London: Soncino, 1961], 401). On the expression **כל באי העלם** generally, see Strack-Billerbeck, 2.358.

15. Yet as Leon Morris notes (83), "No argument should be based on the occurrence of ἄνθρωπον, for John uses the redundant ἄνθρωπος quite often" (he cites 2:10 and 3:1, 27; other examples are 5:5; 7:46; 8:40; 9:16; 11:50). Rudolf Bultmann's excision (52) of ἄνθρωπον from the Johannine text as "an explanatory gloss (of the translator)" is not only "arbitrary" (Schnackenburg, 1.255), but raises the question, an added explanatory gloss by whom? To Bultmann "the translator" (of a pre-Johannine hymnic source) is none other than the author of the Gospel. But if the author wrote it, why should it be excised as a gloss?

16. Although there are periphrastic constructions in John's Gospel (1:28; 2:6; 3:23; 10:40; 11:1; 13:23; 18:18, 25), none have the participle separated from its helping verb by a relative clause, as here (see Schnackenburg, 1.254, who calls the periphrastic construction here "not impossible, though the insertion of a relative clause makes it unique").

17. Although the light "comes into the world" in two other places in the Gospel of John, its coming is an accomplished event, not a process (ἐλήλυθεν, "the light *has come* into the world," in 3:19; ἐλήλυθα, "I *have come* as light into the world," in 12:46).

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John's ministry, but a simple event, the birth of Jesus. In replying to Pontius Pilate, Jesus himself says as much: "You say that I am a king; *I was born* for this, and for this *I have come into the world,* that I might testify to the truth" (18:37, my italics). It should come as no surprise that being "born" and "coming into the world" are equivalent expressions. If "the light" is a human being, then the light "comes into the world" like any other human, by natural birth, not by some kind of continuing process, least of all during the ministry of John!

Another alternative views the phrase "coming into the world" either as a kind of afterthought,[18] or as a parenthetical expression modifying "the light." In effect, a comma is placed (as in the Nestle Greek text) between "every human being" and "coming into the world." This too could be read as a process, like the periphrastic construction mentioned above,[19] or it could be read simply as a characterization of the light, as, for example, in the NASB ("There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man"), or the TEV ("This was the real light — the light that comes into the world and shines on all mankind"). It is a "coming-into-the-world" sort of light, just as "the bread of God," or "bread of life" (another designation for Jesus), is a "coming-down-from-heaven" sort of bread (6:33, 50). Just as Jesus, coming down from heaven, "gives life to the world" (6:33), so this light, coming into the world, "illumines every human being."[20]

This view avoids the difficulties of the first alternative, and must be held open as a possibility. Still, the traditional interpretation that "coming into the world" goes with "every human being" remains the most natural one. On such a reading, the "light" is not *explicitly* said to "come into the world" at all. What we might have expected, and what is missing, is a simple affirmation that the light "came" *(egeneto),* echoing the LXX of Genesis 1:3 and announcing a new creation in contrast to the old. Instead, the author postpones the simple affirmation until verse 14, reverting to "Word" (or *logos*), in place of light: "So the Word came [*egeneto*] in human flesh." There is no way that these verses can be placed in any real chronological order. The time reference of the verb "illumines" (v. 9), like that of the verb "shines" (v. 5), is the present, the time when the author writes the Gospel. Already in verse 5, and again at verse

18. Schnackenburg, 1.255.

19. See, for example, Edwin Abbott: "There was [from the beginning] the light, the true [light], which lighteneth every man, coming as it does (ἐρχόμενον) [continually] into the world" (*Johannine Grammar,* 221). Abbott later presses the point in favor of a sharp distinction between ἐρχόμενον here and the aorist ἦλθεν in verse 11: "The passage says, first, that the Light was *'continually coming'* to all mankind (more especially to the prophets and saints) and then that it definitely *'came'* in the Incarnation" (367).

20. It acquires virtually an instrumental sense, as in our marginal rendering, "by coming into the world" (see above, n. 1).

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9, the author presupposes, without quite saying it, that "the light has come into the world" (3:19), or that "the Word became flesh" (1:14), in the person of Jesus Christ. The only difference between the two verbs is that "illumines" *(phōtizei)* is transitive, while "shines" *(phainei)* is intransitive: the light "is shining" in the darkness, but "illumines," or shines *on,* every human being born into the world. The point is not that the light illumines every human being at birth (that is, at the *time* of "coming into the world"),[21] but simply that the light illumines everyone in the world. The author seems to have chosen his terminology out of a belief that the "True light," or "the light of humans," in some sense illumined everyone since the creation, but his specific point in verse 9 is that this light illumines every human being *now,* because of the revelatory events to be unfolded in this Gospel.

10 Those who read "coming into the world" with "the light" commonly point to verse 10 in support of their interpretation: the light "was coming into the world" (v. 9), and consequently "was in the world" (v. 10).[22] But the statements are too close together for the link to be convincing. There is a certain awkwardness in claiming that the light "was coming into the world" (v. 9), and then, almost in the same breath, that it "was in the world" (v. 10). No sooner is the process mentioned than it is over. The reader is tempted to ask, "Which is it? Was the light on its way, or had it actually arrived?"

Verse 10 settles the matter. The light "was in the world," and it is probably fair to assume that the time frame is the same as in verses 6-9: that is, during the ministry of John, and on the threshold of Jesus' ministry. The author's fondness for word repetitions surfaces again in verse 10, as the expression "the world" is picked up from the end of verse 9 and repeated three times, in three distinct clauses. As in verse 9, the subject is "the light," but with an increasingly human persona. In the first clause, the notion that the light "was in the world" comes as no surprise in view of such phrases as "the light of humans" (v. 4), or "the light . . . that illumines every human being." But was "the light" an "it" or a "he"? In itself, the second clause could be translated either "the world came into being through it," or "the world came into being through him." But the analogy with "all things came into being through him" (that is, through the Word, v. 3) argues for the latter. The "light" of verses 4-5 and 7-9 is here assimilated to "the Word" mentioned in verses 1-2. Finally, in the third and last clause of verse 10, "the world did not know him," the masculine pronoun "him" (*auton,* in contrast to the neuter *auto,* "it," in v. 5) makes it now unmistakably clear that "the Light" is a Person, interchangeable with "the Word." The parallel between "the world came

21. For this reason, Morris's paraphrase, "every man at the time of his birth" (83), is misleading as a summary of the view presented here.

22. For example, Brown, 1.10; Barrett, 160; Moloney, *Belief in the Word,* 37.

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into being through him" (v. 10) and "all things came into being through him" (v. 3) is striking.[23]

In verse 10 the Gospel writer wants to remind us of creation, and that the entire created order came into being through "the Word," now further identified as "the Light" (and appropriately capitalized in translation). The effect is to heighten the irony and tragedy of a new assertion: "and [yet] the world did not know him." *Even though* he created the world, *still* "the world did not know him"![24] It is natural to ask if perhaps the reason — or at least one reason — for beginning with creation in the first place was to lay the basis for this supreme irony in the story of Jesus. The statement that "the world did not know him" is the second hint of conflict or rejection in the Gospel story, the first being the note in verse 5 that the darkness "did not overtake" the light. Its purpose, however, is not — at least not yet — to set up a dualism between "the world" and some community of faith that *does* "know" Jesus as the world's Light. John himself, within this chapter, will introduce his questioners to Jesus for the first time as someone "whom you do not know" (1:26), admitting that "even I did not know him" (1:31, 33). As the story unfolds, some will come to "know" Jesus and some will not, but for the time being "the world" is an undifferentiated whole, encompassing within itself the potential both for knowledge and ignorance, belief and unbelief.

11 The word repetitions continue: "his own," "his own," "received," "received."[25] The irony of the Light's rejection comes to expression a second time, and even more explicitly: "He came to what was his own [*eis ta idia,* neuter], and his own [*hoi idioi,* masculine] did not receive him." Just as "the world" in verse 10 was an undifferentiated whole, so there is no distinction here between "what was his own" and what was not, or between "his own people" (Jews, for example)[26] and others who did not belong to the Light. Rather, "what was his own" is simply another way of saying "all things," or "the world," while "his own" (masculine) refers generally to "humans" (v. 4), or "every human being" (v. 9) in the world.[27] The author seems to be reflect-

23. That is, πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο (v. 3) and ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο (v. 10).

24. The verb "know" (ἔγνω) is aorist: the world did not "come to know" or "learn to know" the Light, just as it never learned to know God (compare 17:25).

25. In Greek, τὰ ἴδια . . . οἱ ἴδιοι . . . παρέλαβον . . . ἔλαβον.

26. Brown (1.10) identifies τὰ ἴδια as "what was peculiarly his own in 'the world,' i.e., the heritage of Israel, the Promised Land, Jerusalem," and οἱ ἴδιοι as "the people of Israel," citing Exodus 19:5, "You shall be *my own possession* among all the peoples." According to Beasley-Murray, "the Evangelist almost certainly saw the saying as relating especially to Israel in its resistance to the Word of God" (12-13). So too Morris, 85-86.

27. Bultmann, 56. On the grounds that Bultmann sees here "a cosmological reference, rather than a reference to salvation history," Brown contends that "his interpretation flows from his presupposition that the Prologue was originally a Gnostic hymn"

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ing, in the broadest possible terms, on a principle known to him from Gospel tradition, that "A prophet has no honor in his own hometown" (4:44).[28] The RSV translation, "He came to his own home," can appeal to 4:44, and to the two other uses of the same phrase in John's Gospel (16:32 and 19:27), where it refers to the homes of Jesus' disciples.[29] Yet it is hard to see how "the world" (v. 10) can be viewed as "home" to the Word, who was "with God in the beginning" (v. 2).[30] Rather, the expression grows out of the reminder in verse 10 that "the world came into being through him."[31] The world is "his own" in the sense of being his creation, and thus his property or possession, not his "home" in the sense of either place of origin or permanent dwelling.[32]

The notion that the Light, or the Word, found no reception in the world stands in sharp contrast to certain Jewish teachings about Wisdom seeking a home and finding it in Israel or Jerusalem.[33] It is more akin to the apocalyptic

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(1.10). This is by no means the case, for the Gospel writer was as capable of viewing Jesus' ministry within a cosmological framework as was any supposed hymnic source, Gnostic or otherwise.

28. Other forms of the saying occur in Mark 6:4//Matthew 13:57b, Luke 4:24, and *Gospel of Thomas* 31, but only John 4:44 includes the words "his own" (τῇ ἴδιᾳ, redundant with πατρίς, or "hometown"), echoing the language of 1:11 (compare Michaels, "The Itinerant Jesus and His Home Town," 183).

29. Morris is quite emphatic: "When the Word came to this world he did not come as an alien. He came home. Moreover, he came to Israel. Had he come to some other nation it would have been bad enough, but Israel was peculiarly God's own people. The Word did not go where he could not have expected to be known. He came home, where the people should have known him" (85).

30. See, for example, 8:23, where Jesus tells the Pharisees, "You are from below, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world"; also, 17:14, where he refers to disciples as "not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

31. Compare *Odes of Solomon* 7.12, "He has allowed him to appear to them that are His own; in order that they may recognize Him that made them, and not suppose that they came of themselves"; *The Odes of Solomon: The Syriac Texts* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 36.

32. Bultmann, 56; Schnackenburg, 259.

33. For example, Wisdom speaks in Sirach 24.3-11 (RSV): "I came forth from the mouth of the Most High. . . . I dwelt in high places, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud. Alone I have made the circuit of the vault of heaven and have walked in the depths of the abyss. In the waves of the sea, in the whole earth, and in every people and nation I have gotten a possession. Among all these I sought a resting place; I sought in whose territory I might lodge. Then the Creator of all things gave me a commandment, and the one who created me assigned a place for my tent. And he said, 'Make your dwelling [κατασκήνωσον] in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance. . . . In the holy tabernacle I ministered before him, and so I was established in Zion. In the beloved city likewise he gave me a resting place, and in Jerusalem was my dominion. So I took root in an honored people, in the portion of the Lord, who is their inheritance" (see also Baruch 3:35–4:2).

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tradition in the book of *Enoch* about Wisdom finding no permanent home on earth.[34] But the story is not the same. "The Word," or "the Light," in John's Gospel is not the "Wisdom" of either the wisdom or apocalyptic traditions in Judaism. The decisive difference is that "he" — not "she" as in the case of Wisdom — is a specific historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. Grammatically, the subject of verses 10 and 11 is the Light (see v. 9), but the author knows, and readers are expected to know, that the real subject is Jesus — even though he will not be named until verse 17, nor brought into the narrative until verse 29. Because verse 11 (even more than v. 10) has the sound of a concrete reference to Jesus and his ministry on earth, even those who appreciate the universality of the context tend to notice at the same time the appropriateness of verse 11 in relation to Israel and the Jewish people. Barrett is ambivalent on the subject,[35] while Hoskyns finds here a "double reference to the whole earth and to Israel as God's possession," with "no final distinction between Israel and the world, between Jew and Greek. As the creation of God, all men are his property . . . and Jesus was in the world, not merely in Israel."[36] The point is that while the Jews are not viewed here as Jesus' "own" in a special sense in which the Gentiles are not, they may be in mind as *representatives* of the world to which Jesus came, with Judea or Jerusalem as the *stage* on which the drama of Jesus' confrontation with the world is to take place.

12 If "his own" in verse 11 is meant to be inclusive rather than exclusive, then "as many as received him" (v. 12) are not a different group consisting of others who were *not* Jesus' own (Gentiles, for example, in contrast to Jews), but rather a subset of "his own." This sets up a kind of rhetorical contrast, even contradiction. Jesus' "own did not receive him," *yet* many of them did receive him. The contradiction cannot be avoided by attributing different meanings to the two different words for "receive." Rather, "receive" in verse 11 *(parelabon)* and in verse 12 *(elabon)* are to be taken as synonymous.[37] The

34. "Wisdom could not find a place in which she could dwell; but a place was found (for her) in the heavens. Then Wisdom went out to dwell with the children of the people, but she found no dwelling place. (So) Wisdom returned to her place and she settled permanently among the angels" (*Enoch* 42.1; Charlesworth, *OTP,* 1.33).

35. Barrett claims that "the 'home' to which Jesus came was Israel," and that "Jesus came to the framework of life to which as Messiah he belonged," yet concludes that "It was the world that rejected Jesus" (163). His ambivalence is as old as Chrysostom, who saw the text "calling the Jews 'His own,' as his peculiar people, or perhaps even all mankind, as created by Him" (*Homily* 9.1; NPNF, 14.32).

36. Hoskyns, 146.

37. See Barrett, 163; Bultmann, 57; Morris, 86. At most, it could be argued that παρέλαβον (used only two other times in John) was appropriate with οἱ ἴδιοι because of its connotation of taking to oneself or one's home (14:3; compare 19:16, where it involves taking into custody).

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latter, in fact, echoes the former and reinforces the contrast between the two clauses. The "contradiction" is deliberate, allowing the second clause to qualify and balance the first (as in 3:32-33, "No one receives his testimony," *yet* "the person who did receive his testimony confirmed thereby that God is true").[38] The use of "received" here anticipates verse 16: "Of his fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace." To "receive" the Light is to receive Jesus' "testimony," and to partake "of his fullness" (1:16).[39] Not surprisingly, this "receiving" belongs to "those who believe" *(tois pisteuousin)* in Jesus' name (v. 12b). "Receiving" and "believing" are virtually synonymous in this Gospel, both involving a conscious, active choice, and each interpreting the other. John had come "to testify about the light, that they all might believe through him" (v. 7), but now we learn that matters are not that simple. Even when the Light came, "his own did not receive him," that is, they did *not* believe — and yet some of them did! This is what the story is about.

Grammatically, the author places a middle term between "receiving" and "believing." "Receiving" implies a gift and a giver. "Giving" and "receiving" are natural correlatives in any language, not least in biblical Greek (see, for example, 3:27; 16:23-24; 17:8). Despite the word order, the subject of verse 12 is not the "many" who "received" the Light, but rather (as in vv. 10-11), an unexpressed subject, the Light himself (v. 9). The main verb, accordingly, is not "received," but "gave," with "them" as indirect object. The author, however, has highlighted the recipients instead of the giver by placing them front and center in a relative clause.[40] This is not all. The recipients are given "authority to become children of God" *(tekna theou)* and then, as we

38. Abbott (*Johannine Grammar,* 466) cites this and several other passages (4:1-2; 7:8-10, 16; 8:15-16; 16:14-15, 32, as well as the formula "the hour is coming and now is") as examples of what he calls John's "self-corrections," but they are too diverse to justify identifying this as a characteristic Johannine literary device. An example from another Gospel is Matthew 28:17, "When they saw him, they worshipped," *yet* "some doubted."

39. For "receive," the author prefers the more active λαμβάνειν (literally, "take"; forty-six occurrences) over the more passive δέχεσθαι ("accept" or "welcome"; only one occurrence). For other examples of "receiving" or "taking" either Jesus or his testimony or the Holy Spirit, see 3:11, 5:43, 7:39, 12:48, 13:20, 16:24, 17:8, and 20:22. Another compound, καταλαμβάνειν (1:5, 12:35, and the variant reading in 6:17; see above on v. 5), also means "take" in an active sense, but with hostile intent (more like "overtake," as with the woman "taken" in adultery in 8:3, 4).

40. According to Barrett, "The relative clause thrown to the beginning of the sentence as a *nominativus pendens* and resumed by αὐτοῖς is characteristic of John's style" (163). C. F. Burney cited this construction years ago as evidence of a Semitic original (*Aramaic Origin,* 64-65), but Bultmann (57) calls it "a not uncommon rhetorical device which is by no means specifically Semitic" (compare Brown, 1.10; Morris, 86-87). But true parallels to the construction found here are difficult to find in John's Gospel (the closest, perhaps, being 6:39, 10:29, and 17:2, 22, 24).

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have seen, further identified as "those who believe." Finally, the author highlights them once more by returning to the nominative with which verse 12 began: "who were . . . born of God" (v. 13). The two nominative constructions frame the main clause so as to shift attention from the Light to the recipients of the light, first by contrasting them with those who did *not* receive the Light (v. 12a) and then by decisively spelling out their identity as "children of God" (v. 13).[41]

The point of verse 12 is that to receive "him" (that is, the Light, or Jesus as the Light) is to receive "authority" *(exousian)* from him to become God's children. "Authority" in the Gospel of John is something Pontius Pilate claims for himself falsely, but which must be given "from above" (19:10-11). It is something the Father gives to the Son, whether authority to exercise divine judgment (5:27), or to lay down his life and take it again (10:18), or "over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to all that you have given him" (17:2). The last of these is the one with the most direct bearing on our passage, for it involves the gift of life to believers.[42] If one were to bring the two passages together, it would be possible to conclude that the recipients of the Light here are given not just life, or the status of God's children, but the divine "authority" of Christ himself. While this is a legitimate Johannine theme (see 17:22), it is a rather heavy one to introduce so early in the Gospel. At this point it is wise not to overinterpret this "authority." It clearly does *not* mean that "those who received him" have a choice of either becoming "children of God" or not! It is nothing like the authority Pilate thought he had, to either crucify Jesus or let him go (19:10). Rather, if the word "authority" were to disappear from the text altogether, the meaning would be about the same! To say "He gave them *authority* to become children of God" is little different from saying, "He gave them to become children of God," in the sense of granting them the status of children.[43]

41. No causal sequence is spelled out here, and none should be assumed. The text does *not* say they were given authority to become God's children *because* they received the Light or as a reward for doing so. If the principle later introduced that "A person cannot receive anything unless it is given him from heaven" (3:27) is operative here as well (see also 6:65), it could as easily have been the other way around.

42. An often-cited parallel is found in Poimandres, the first tractate of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (1.28): "Why, O men of earth, have you given yourselves up to death, when you have authority [ἔχοντες ἐξουσίαν] to partake of immortality [τῆς ἀθανασίας]?" (my translation; the text is from A. D. Nock and A.-J. Festugière, *Corpus Hermeticum,* Tome I: *Traités I-XII* [Paris: Société d'Édition, 1960], 16). The parallel is noteworthy because the *Corpus Hermeticum* contains a whole tractate on "Rebirth" (Tractate 13, Περὶ Παλιγγενεσίας). An important difference is that in Hermetic literature the "authority" is something humans (at least some humans) possess naturally by birth, while in John's Gospel it is a gift contingent on receiving the Light that has come.

43. See BDAG, 242, citing Matthew 13:11, "To you it is given to know," and John

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"Children of God" is not a distinctively Johannine phrase, nor is it common in the New Testament as a whole. It appears in the Gospel only here and in 11:52, and in 1 John 3:1, 2, 10 and 5:2.[44] Paul uses it four times (Rom 8:16, 21; 9:8; and Phil 2:15),[45] more or less interchangeably with "sons of God" (see Rom 8:14-15, 19, 23; 9:4). Bauer's lexicon understands it "in Paul as those adopted by God," and "in John as those begotten by God,"[46] but the distinction is not clear-cut. "Giving authority to become," or granting status as children of God, is not so different from "adoption" in the Pauline sense (Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5). Yet John's Gospel parts company with Paul in two ways. First, the term "sons of God" never occurs,[47] probably because the Gospel writer wants to preserve the uniqueness of Jesus' relationship to God as "the Son." Jesus is introduced, in fact, not simply as "Son" *(huios),* but as "unique Son," or "One and Only" (vv. 14, 18). Second, John's Gospel goes on to unpack the metaphor involved in "children of God" in a way in which Paul never does (v. 13).[48]

Before defining "children of God" (v. 13), the author pauses to identify God's "children" unmistakably as "those who believe in his name" (v. 12b), a phrase equivalent to "those who believe in him" — that is, in the Light.[49] The longer expression, "to believe in the name," occurs only here

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5:26, "For as the Father has life in himself, he has also given to the Son to have life in himself" (to the latter of which Jesus adds, "and he has given him *authority* (ἐξουσία) to pass judgment, because he is Son of man," 5:27). Compare Bultmann, 57, n. 5.

44. Τέκνα θεοῦ occurs without the article here and in 1 John 3:1 and 2, and with definite articles (τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ) in 11:52 and 1 John 3:10 and 5:2. As a rule the phrase lacks the article when it precedes verbs of being or becoming, as it does here (see the discussion above on θεός without the article in 1:1).

45. Paul tends not to use the definite article (see Rom 8:16-17; Phil 2:15), except when the phrase is caught up in his rhetoric with other expressions that include the article (as in Rom 8:21 and 9:8).

46. BDAG, 995.

47. The closest the Gospel of John comes to "sons of God" is "sons of light" (υἱοὶ φῶτος, 12:36), a phrase which, taken literally, would be virtually equivalent to "sons of Jesus," but which means simply those who are of the light, or belong to the light (compare 1 Thess 5:5).

48. Paul explores instead the metaphor of adoption (Gal 4:1-7). Aside from the Gospel of John, only 1 John (3:9) and 1 Peter (1:23) among the New Testament books pause to examine the metaphor of being God's children, both by referring in some way to the divine "seed" or "sperm."

49. The equivalence of "believe in him" and "believe in his name" is clearly seen in 3:18: "The one who *believes in him* is not condemned, but the one who does not believe is condemned already because he has not *believed in the name* of the only Son of God." The three other characteristic constructions of πιστεύειν are simply "to believe," with no object expressed (as in v. 7), "to believe that" (with ὅτι), and "to believe someone" (with the dative) in the sense of believing what that person says.

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and in 2:23 and 3:18, while the simpler "to believe in" *(pisteuein eis)* dominates the Gospel of John, with thirty occurrences.[50] Two things are noteworthy about the phrase, "those who believe in his name." One is that in 3:18 it is linked explicitly to a title, "the One and Only Son of God" (3:18), and it is possible that here too it anticipates the references to "a father's One and Only" in verse 14 and "God the One and Only" in verse 18. The other is that the present tense of the participle, "those who believe," suggests that the author has in mind Christian believers (or potential believers) *in his own day,* even as he writes his Gospel (compare 20:31: "These things are written *that you might believe* that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life *in his name*").[51] The Gospel is written to just such a community of believers, and the author now takes time to remind his readers of their new identity as children of God, and what it means.

13 In simplest terms, "children of God," or "those who believe in the name," are those "born [or begotten] of God" *(ek theou egennēthēsan).* It is important to notice here what is *not* said. The text defines no temporal or causal relationship between "believing" and being "born of God," either to the effect that individuals are born of God *because* they believe,[52] or that they believe because they are *already* born of God. The point is simply that both expressions refer to the same group. "Born of God," or "born of him," occurs six times in 1 John (2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, and twice in 5:18), but only here in John's Gospel. Three equivalent phrases do occur, however, in Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus: "born from above" (3:3), "born of water and Spirit" (3:5), and "born of the Spirit" (3:6). There if anywhere Jesus spells out what "born of God" means theologically.[53] Here the Gospel writer spells out instead what it does *not* mean, above all that it is something other than physical birth (see Nicodemus's question in 3:4). He is not of course denying that believers are born physically, but he is saying that this is not what makes them "children of God." Believers are born like anyone else into the real world (see v. 9), but

50. The statistics are very different in 1 John, where "believe in" occurs only once (5:10), and "believe in the name" twice (3:23 and 5:13, the latter with εἰς and the former with a dative: "believe the name" or "believe by the name"). Neither expression appears in 2 or 3 John.

51. See also 17:20 and 20:29, where Jesus makes reference to a later generation of believers distinct from those who believed during his ministry (compare also perhaps 10:16, as well as 11:52, the only other occurrence of "children of God" in this Gospel).

52. Bultmann (59) assumes without argument that this is the case. But the accent in verse 13 on divine sovereignty and on the absence of any human involvement in the birth of "the children of God" points, if anything, in the opposite direction.

53. 1 John concentrates rather on what it means ethically: those "born of God" are those who do what is right (2:29), and do not sin (3:9; 5:18). They are those who love (4:7), believe that Jesus is the Messiah (5:1), and so overcome the world (5:4).

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their physical birth is merely a metaphor for the birth referred to here. Birth "from God" can be understood only as *new* birth, or rebirth, and the emphasis is on the *difference,* not the similarity, between the new and the old.[54]

The author accents the distinction between physical and spiritual birth by means of three negative phrases. "Not of blood lines" is literally "not of bloods." The plural is unexpected because it refers in the Old Testament not to physical birth but to acts of bloodshed.[55] According to Schnackenburg, "It is found only in classical Greek for birth," but even here the evidence is meager.[56] It is remotely possible that the writer avoids the singular, "of blood," simply because Christian believers are in fact born anew through the blood of Christ, but this would have been a reason for avoiding the terminology of blood altogether, not for resorting to an ambiguous plural.[57] More likely, the plural points simply to the participation of two parents in the act of procreation, not to the physiological details of either conception or birth. In the second phrase, the words "of fleshly desire" (literally, "of the will of flesh") are not equivalent to the "lust" *(epithymia)* of the flesh (1 Jn 2:15), even though the subject is sexual intercourse between a man and a woman. Both here and in the next clause, "desire" or "will" *(thelēma)* refers simply to choice or initiative, not to sexual or any other kind of desire, legitimate or illegitimate. "Flesh" *(sarx)* refers to human nature as such (see v. 14), not to an evil principle or impulse in human nature, as is often the case in Paul.[58] The third phrase, "a husband's desire," reiterates the second but makes it more specific, in that "human initiative" in procreation is defined (in John's first-century world!) as "the husband's initiative."[59] The word for "husband" *(anēr),* in

54. Compare Paul's emphasis in connection with the image of new creation (καινὴ κτίσις): "the old things have passed away; look, new things have come" (2 Cor 5:17).

55. See 2 Samuel 16:8, etc., LXX.

56. Schnackenburg, 264; Bultmann (60) cites Euripides, *Ion* 693: ἄλλων τραφεὶς ἐξ αἱμάτων ("a son sprung from strange blood"). See also H. J. Cadbury, "The Ancient Physiological Notions underlying Joh. 1:13a and Heb. 11:11," *The Expositor* 9 (1924), 430-39.

57. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel.* This is never explicit in John's Gospel, but according to 1 John 5:6 Jesus came "through water and blood, not by the water alone, but by the water and the blood" (compare Jn 19:34), and according to 1 John 1:7 "the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin."

58. Paul writes of "the lust of the flesh" (ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκός, Gal 5:16; compare Rom 13:14), and at least once (Eph 2:3) he uses "lusts of the flesh" (ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῆς σαρκός) interchangeably with "choices" or "initiatives" (τὰ θελήματα) of the flesh. "Flesh" does not have the same negative connotations even in 1 John 2:16, where it is more an occasion for sin (like "eyes" in the next phrase) than the source of sin.

59. This phrase is omitted in the first hand of B, probably by accident (because of the repetition of οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος), and in some patristic quotations (perhaps because of seeming redundancy).

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distinction from the generic word for human being (vv. 4, 9), normally means "man" in the sense of male, here in a context involving procreation a husband or sexual partner (compare Eph 5:22, 24, 25; Col 3:18-19; 1 Pet 3:1, 7).[60] Together, the three negative expressions make a simple point: to be "born of God" is not a physical or literal birth, but a metaphor for a transformed life.

Some ancient versions and patristic citations presuppose a singular relative pronoun and a singular verb ("who . . . was born") instead of the plural, "were born." The subject then becomes not the recipients of the Light, but the Light himself, the "him" of verse 12 in whose name they believed. In short, verse 13 becomes an explicit statement of the virginal conception and birth of Jesus. It is important to note that the Greek prototype of this reading is found in no Greek manuscript, and that it has no serious claim to originality.[61] Theologically, however, it was a natural, perhaps inevitable, development because verse 13 would have seemed to later scribes and Christian readers a perfect affirmation of the mystery of the virgin birth as narrated in Matthew and Luke. To some it would have set the stage admirably for the affirmation of verse 14 that "the Word came in human flesh."[62] Another proposal has been that the plural was original, but that the author phrased verse 13 in such a way as to make a subtle allusion to the virgin birth of Jesus.[63] "Taken literally," according to Haenchen, "these words express the virgin

60. A further implication is that God in the expression "born of God" is also visualized as male (that is, "born of God," is equivalent to "begotten of God"). This assumption is most clearly evident in 1 John 3:9, with its reference to God's "seed" (σπέρμα, probably referring to the male sperm) remaining in the believer to keep the believer from sin.

61. The variant could easily have arisen from the tendency of a copyist to link the relative pronoun directly to the immediately preceding αὐτοῦ at the end of verse 12 rather than the more remote ὅσοι at the beginning of the verse. The reading occurs in one old Latin version, *b* ("qui . . . natus est"), one Latin lectionary, and partially in the Curetonian Syriac and some manuscripts of the Peshitta. Tertullian (*De Carne Christi* 19), who also supported the singular reading, attributed the plural to Valentinian Gnostics who were trying to support their doctrine that the elect, or gnostic pneumatics, were born of a secret divine seed. But as Schnackenburg (264) and Bultmann (59) point out, the plural attributes this divine birth to all believers, not just an elite group, so that the reading would not have established the point the Valentinians were trying to make. Instead, Tertullian provides unwitting testimony to the great antiquity of the commonly accepted plural reading.

62. Thus it is easy to see how an original plural could have been changed by scribes to the singular. If the singular were original, however, it is difficult to imagine why anyone would have blunted such an eloquent testimony to the unique and supernatural birth of God's "One and Only" (μονογένης, vv. 14 and 18).

63. Boismard, *Le Prologue de Saint Jean* (56) appeals to 1 John 5:18: "We know that one who has been born of God [understood as the believer] does not sin, but he who was born of God [understood as Jesus] keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him."

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birth for all Christians."[64] But the virgin birth of Jesus, according to Matthew and Luke, was a real physical birth from a real womb, and this is not the case with Christian believers. There is no actual virgin from whose womb they are born. The whole point of verse 13, as we have seen, is that the imagery of birth is *not* to be taken literally in their case. Its language, as Schnackenburg puts it, "seems to exclude not merely a human father, but any kind of human cooperation."[65]

Efforts to read the virgin birth into verse 13 lose sight of an important feature of the last three verses of this section. After the profound christological reflection on "the Word" (vv. 1-3), and on "the true [Light] that illumines every human being who comes into the world" (v. 9), the writer shifts the center of interest to the recipients of the Light, known as "those who believe in his name," or "children of God" (vv. 12-13).[66] The Word, or the Light (we are not even sure what to call him at this point) recedes momentarily into the background, as a pronoun ("him" or "his"), or as the unexpressed subject who "came to . . . his own" (v. 11) and "gave authority to become children of God" (v. 12). Christology gives way to ecclesiology, and the Christian community to which the Gospel of John was written takes center stage.

B. OUR TESTIMONY AND JOHN'S (1:14-18)

> 14 *So the Word came in human flesh and encamped among us; we looked at his glory — glory as of a father's One and Only,*[1] *full of grace and truth.* 15 *John testifies about him and has cried out, saying*[2]

64. Haenchen, 118.

65. Schnackenburg, 265. It is true that the reference to "a husband's desire" does focus on the husband or father, but the other two phrases ("not of blood lines, nor of fleshly desire") are sufficiently sweeping to support Schnackenburg's contention.

66. Rhetorically, the shift corresponds to a subtle change in style. The chainlike word repetitions and alternations that have characterized the author's style from the start (with alternations of "Word" and "God," "life" and "light," "light" and "darkness," "witness" and "light," and repetitions of "world") taper off after the repetition of "his own" and "received" in verses 11 and 12a. The effect is a quickening of the rhetorical pace, building to a kind of crescendo with the phrase "born of God" at the end of verse 13 (the repetition of οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος in v. 13 has the quite different effect of preparing for this crescendo by creating suspense and expectation).

1. This translation, which follows the NIV, has three advantages over "only-begotten" or "only Son": (1) it avoids the metaphor of begetting or birth, which is not present in the Greek μονογενής; (2) it preserves the notion of uniqueness, which is conspicuous in that word; (3) it avoids confusing the two different words μονογενής and υἱός.

2. This translation is based on the Westcott and Hort text. If I had followed the Nestle and Bible Society texts, as most English versions have done, the translation would

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> *— he it was who said, "The One coming after me has gotten ahead of me, because he was before me" —* 16 *that of his fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.* 17 *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ.* 18 *No one has seen God, ever. It was God the One and Only, the One who is right beside the Father, who told about him.*

Stylistically, the next few verses stand apart from what precedes by their conspicuous use of the first-person plural: "So the Word . . . encamped *among us,* and *we looked* at his glory" (v. 14) and "Of his fullness *we have all* received" (v. 16, my italics). The change can be expressed in one of two ways. Either the author is revealing his own identity as one of the "children of God" introduced in verses 12 and 13 who "received" the Light, or else he is invoking this group implicitly in verse 14 to testify to their faith in much the same way in which he invokes John explicitly in verse 15 ("John testifies about him and has cried out, saying . . ."). In the first instance the author is speaking personally, in the second rhetorically.

If personally, a further question arises: Is the "we" exclusive or inclusive? Is the author distinguishing himself from his readers, as if to say, "The Word came in human flesh and encamped among *us* [the original disciples of Jesus], and *we* [the eyewitnesses of what is written in this Gospel] looked at his glory"? The analogy of 1 John 1:1-4 makes it tempting to introduce just such an "apostolic we" into the discussion,[3] but there is no "you" corresponding to the "we" to support such a distinction here.[4] On the contrary, two verses later we read, "Of his fullness we have *all* received" (v. 16), matching the inclusiveness of "as many as did receive him," who "believe in his name" (v. 12). Despite the analogy of 1 John 1:1-4, it is by no means cer-

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have been: *John testifies about him and has cried out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'The One coming after me has come ahead of me, because he was before me.'" For of his fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.*

3. The "apostolic we" is evident in 1 John 1:1 and 3: "That which was from the beginning, which *we* have heard,, which *we* have seen with *our* eyes, and *our* hands have touched, concerning the word of life . . . what *we* have seen and heard *we* announce *also to you* [καὶ ὑμῖν], so that *you too* [καὶ ὑμεῖς] may have communion *with us* [μεθ' ἡμῶν], and truly our communion is with the Father and with his Son Jesus" (my italics). Quite clearly, the "we" is limited here to the apostles or eyewitnesses, while the "you" refers to the readers.

4. Contrast also 1 John 1:5, "And this is the message *we* have heard from him and announce *to you.*" While an audience consisting of "you" is visible twice in John's Gospel (19:35 and 20:31; see Introduction), "we" and "you" are never used together so as to distinguish explicitly between two groups. Even where such a distinction may be implied (20:31), the point is made in the immediate context (20:29) that those who have "seen" have no advantage over those who have not.

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INDEX OF AUTHORS

This index is not exhaustive, for I have largely ignored names which were merely part of a long list. While these are mostly modern authors, I have made exceptions in the case of early commentators on John, including Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine, Calvin, Bengel, and Wesley. I have included English translations only when linked to individual author translators.

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This index does not include cross references within the Gospel of John itself. There are too many of these to make indexing feasible.

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