



The Historical Jesus in the Fourth Gospel: A Paradigm Shift?

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Abstract

The Gospel of John has been either ignored or used marginally in the study of the historical Jesus. Careful study of the *realia* mentioned in the Gospel of John and explorations of the topography and architectural structures mentioned in the Gospel indicate that it must not be ignored or used only sporadically in Jesus research. Archaeological discoveries prove that sometimes the Fourth Evangelist knew more about Jewish customs and debates than the authors of the Synoptics and more about the architectural landscape of Jerusalem than the authors of the Qumran Scrolls or Josephus.

Keywords

archaeology, Dead Sea Scrolls, Gospel of John, historical Jesus, Jewish purification rites, Second Temple Judaism, Synoptic Gospels

The present stage of biblical research seldom permits a scholar to claim an area of consensus, yet most New Testament scholars would probably agree that those who have written a life of Jesus over the past one hundred years have focused on Mark and the Synoptics. Against this strong consensus, the present essay points to a growing propensity of some of the best experts devoted to Jesus research; some are no longer branding John as a ‘spiritual’ work devoid of historical information.¹

¹) In this essay I use ‘John’ to refer both to the Gospel of John and to the author(s) and editor(s) of the Gospel. I wish to focus on the Johannine tradition in contrast to

I certainly do not presume that the following reflections are scientific and objective; we have all learned to forego such camouflages of what can only be claimed, after the published insights of Polybius, Polanyi, Merleau-Ponty, and Pokorný, to be an aspect of personal knowledge. The first of these, Polybius, stated long before Jesus or John: ‘The inquirer contributes to the narrative as much as his informant, since the suggestions of the person who follows the narrative guide the memory (ὑπόμνησις)² of the narrator to each incident ...’.³ Hoping that our collective memory and suggestions help disclose the focus of John’s narrative, my focused question is the following: *Is it wise to ignore the Fourth Gospel in re-constructing the life, mission and message of Jesus from Nazareth?*

A Dated Paradigm: Ignore John

Five Influential Opinions

After Reimarus’ thoroughgoing dismissal of any historicity in the gospels, the nineteenth century began with a search for a source with reliable historical data about Jesus. In 1832, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) concluded that the Gospel of John was the best source for reconstructing the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. In 1835, David Friedrich Strauss critiqued Schleiermacher’s choice; and though he used John, Strauss judged the gospels, especially John, devoid of reliable history and were deposits of myths which evolved from philosophical

the Synoptics’ traditions. Professor D.M. Smith read an earlier draft of this publication and helped me improve my thoughts. I am most grateful to him for his typical graciousness and willingness to share his knowledge.

² On memory, historiography and ‘comprehensive’ memory, see D. Mendels, *Memory in Jewish, Pagan and Christian Societies of the Greco-Roman World* (Library of Second Temple Studies, 45; London and New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), esp. see p. xiv on Polybius.

³ Polybius, *Histories*, Book 12.28.9; the translation and text is by W.R. Paton (in the Loeb series; Polybius IV), pp. 409–409.

ideas, poetry or history.⁴ In 1847, F.C. Baur convinced many that John could not be used in recreating Jesus' life and teaching.⁵ In his *Vie de Jésus* of 1863, Ernest Renan judged John to be an apologetic work devoid of the attractive 'simple, disinterested, impersonal tone of the synoptics'.⁶ In *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* of 1892, Johannes Weiss argued: 'The contemporary state of Gospel criticism justifies our excluding the Gospel of John almost totally from our investigation.'⁷ As Walter P. Weaver points out in his judicious survey of Jesus' lives from 1900 until 1950, at the beginning of the twentieth century scholars tended to concur that only the intra-canonical gospels count but John 'raises great difficulties and should be largely omitted'.⁸

As J.D.G. Dunn reports, 'the Fourth Gospel had been effectively knocked out of the quest'.⁹ Subsequently, Jesus scholars depended on, sometimes only on, the Synoptics, and among them most notably Mark. Occasionally, emphasis is placed on a Sayings Source used by Matthew and Luke; this Source, Q, is probably anterior to Mark and is certainly Jewish, perhaps emanating from Galilean circles.¹⁰ In a most helpful guide to studying the historical Jesus, Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz conclude: 'Q is certainly the most important source

⁴ J.S. Kloppenborg Verbin warns us that Strauss's work 'was less interested in recovering a life of Jesus than it was in documenting and interpreting the use of myth in gospel narratives'. Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), p. 283. See S. Freyne, 'Re-imagining Jesus in his Culture: Reflections on Some Recent Scholarly Byways', in the second Princeton-Prague Symposium on the Historical Jesus, forthcoming.

⁵ F.C. Baur, *Kritische Untersuchungen über die kanonische Evangelien* (Tübingen: L.F. Fues, 1847).

⁶ E. Renan, *The Life of Jesus* (New York: Random House, 1927, 1955), p. 44.

⁷ J. Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), p. 60.

⁸ W.P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century: 1900–1950* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), p. 46.

⁹ J.D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 41.

¹⁰ Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q*, p. 435; C.M. Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), p. 15.

for reconstructing the teaching of Jesus.¹¹ They also rightly report that Paul is closer to the historical Jesus than any of the Synoptics, making no mention of John at that point and representing a tendency among scholars.¹² More and more, John was ignored by scholars devoted to the so-called Quest of the Historical Jesus. In the past half century, many exceptionally influential scholars, prosecuting research on the historical Jesus, stress that only the Synoptics are to be followed in reconstructing Jesus' life and message. I have chosen five luminaries to illustrate that the Synoptics alone are to be used in reconstructing the life and teaching of Jesus.

In *Jesus of Nazareth* (1956 [ET 1960]), the most influential book on Jesus written after World War II and before 1980, G. Bornkamm argued that 'the sources to which we owe almost exclusively our historical knowledge of Jesus' are the Synoptics.¹³ To study the history of the traditions about Jesus 'we have to turn first of all to the synoptics'.¹⁴ Perhaps Bornkamm used two adverbs 'almost exclusively' to reflect a choice for the Synoptics but uncertainty in claiming there is no historical data in John. In the notes, Bornkamm evidences numerous problems in ignoring John's witness when describing Jesus' passion and resurrection.¹⁵

After presenting a most helpful study on the tendencies of the Synoptic tradition, one would expect Edward P. Sanders to begin with and stay focused on the Synoptics. In *Jesus and Judaism*, Sanders begins a clear approach to Jesus, beginning with Mark's account of the so-called Cleansing of the Temple. In John's account of this action we confront 'post-Easter interpretation'.¹⁶ In a subsequent book on Jesus, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, Sanders writes: 'We shall now follow Mark for the story of Jesus' early activity in Galilee after the call of the first

¹¹ G. Theissen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (trans. J. Bowden; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), p. 29.

¹² Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, p. 17.

¹³ G. Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1960), pp. 13-14.

¹⁴ Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 215.

¹⁵ See Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 210-20.

¹⁶ E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), p. 62.

disciples.¹⁷ Sanders is clear about rejecting John from Jesus research: ‘The Gospel of John is quite different from the other three gospels, and it is primarily in the latter that we must seek information about Jesus.’¹⁸

The most influential and interesting book on Jesus from the Jesus Seminar is by John Dominic Crossan. In *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (1991), Crossan uses the intra-canonical and many extra-canonical sources for Jesus’ life and teaching.¹⁹ He perceives the importance of learning from the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, the Jewish papyri, and the Greek and Latin authors who mention Judaism and Jews in antiquity. Crossan’s prose is often so attractive that one forgets to think about his methodology. In studying Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptizer, Crossan judges that in the Gospel of John ‘the baptism of Jesus is gone forever, and only the revelation about Jesus remains’.²⁰ One could add that according to Luke, John the Baptizer cannot have baptized Jesus, since he was already in prison.

Crossan has a very detailed and novel list of sources for Jesus. He places the following sources for Jesus between 30 and 60 CE: 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 Corinthians, Romans, *Gospel of Thomas* (earliest stratum), *Egerton Gospel*, *Papyrus Vindobonensis Greek 2325*, *Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1224*, *Gospel of the Hebrews*, the Sayings Source Q, a miracle collection, an apocalyptic scenario, and a Cross Gospel. The first edition of the Gospel of John is relegated to the ‘very early second century CE and a second edition of John appeared somewhere between 120 and 150 CE.’²¹ Obviously, John is not a source for authentic Jesus tradition.

In *Jesus and the Victory of God* (1996), N.T. Wright admitted: ‘[T]his book is largely based on the synoptic gospels.’²² His focus and the exclusion of John was because of the mood at that time and the scholars

¹⁷ E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London and New York: The Penguin Press, 1993), p. 128.

¹⁸ Sanders, *Historical Figure of Jesus*, p. 57.

¹⁹ J.D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).

²⁰ Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, p. 234.

²¹ Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, pp. 427–32.

²² N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), p. xvi.

he was addressing, namely Sanders and Crossan. He also admitted that the study of John was not his specialty and was challenging:

Someone who spends most of his time studying Paul and the synoptics, rather than John, may come to feel like an Alpine climber who from time to time hears tales of the Himalayas. I am aware that there is a large range of mountains still waiting for me; aware, too, that they may offer views, prospects and of course risks yet more breathtaking than the ones I habitually climb.

One could not have wished for a more balanced and mature expression of why Wright chose the Synoptics as the source for Jesus research. One should not confuse Bornkamm's definition of Jesus sources from Wright's prerogative. He admitted later in this book that including non-canonical gospels 'is simply good scholarly practice' (p. 30) and clearly used John in imagining Jesus' passion and resurrection. This inclusion of John appears more evident in the smaller *The Challenge of Jesus*.²³

Jewish experts on Jesus—notably Klausner, Flusser and Vermes—tend to shun John and follow Mark; perhaps the reasons are the long held (and confused) opinion that John is really a Greek Gospel and somewhat 'anti-Jewish'.²⁴ Note the words of Joseph Klausner: 'The Fourth Gospel is not a religio-historical but a religio-philosophical book.'²⁵ In *Jesus* (1969), David Flusser offered the customary claim: 'the fourth gospel is correctly regarded as biographically unreliable', and 'is of less historical value than the three synoptic gospels'.²⁶ More recently, in 2007, Flusser repeated these judgments and added new ones: 'The first three Gospels are primarily based upon common historical

²³ N.T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999); see esp. pp. 146–47 and 174–97.

²⁴ I try to show that John is not 'anti-Semitic' in numerous publications; see esp. Charlesworth, 'The Gospel of John: Exclusivism Caused by a Social Setting Different from that of Jesus (John 11:54 and 14:6)', in R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville (eds.), *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel: Papers of the Leuven Colloquium, 2000* (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2001), pp. 479–513.

²⁵ J. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth* (trans. H. Danby; New York: Macmillan, 1944), p. 125.

²⁶ D. Flusser, *Jesus* (trans. R. Walls; New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), pp. 7–8; also see p. 58.

material, while the fourth Gospel, John, is correctly regarded as more concerned with presenting a theological perspective.²⁷ Hence, our final witness for a consensus to base Jesus research on the Synoptics is Geza Vermes. In *Jesus the Jew*, he chose to use the Synoptics to ‘find out how the writers of the Gospels, echoing primitive tradition, wished him to be known’.²⁸

Vermes’s many works on Jesus include *The Changing Faces of Jesus* (2000), *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus* (2003), *The Passion: The True Story of an Event that Changed Human History* (2005, 2006), and *The Nativity: History and Legend* (2006). Vermes often talks about ‘all three evangelists’ which means Mark, Matthew and Luke. Vermes judges that John is ‘at home in Hellenistic mystical speculation’, contains a ‘highly evolved doctrine’, was by no means composed by an eyewitness to Jesus, and reflects a rift with the synagogue that is ‘hardly conceivable before the turn of the first century AD’. He concludes: ‘The combined evidence suggests that the Fourth Gospel was published in the early second century, probably between the years AD 100 and 110.’²⁹

Vermes judges that in contrast to John, the Synoptics were right to report a rift between Jesus and his family. He also concluded that John incorrectly has Jesus travel from Galilee to Jerusalem through Samaria.³⁰

Regarding the time of Jesus’ Last Supper, Vermes follows the Synoptics and has Jesus celebrate a *Seder* and contends that John was incorrect to report that Jesus’ Last Supper was ‘before the feast of Passover’: ‘After sunset, at the start of 15 Nisan, Jesus reclined at table with his apostles and celebrated what is known in contemporary Judaism as the *Seder* meal.’³¹ In another book, published in the same year, Vermes perceives more credibility in John’s traditions. He claims: ‘[I]n John, with greater

²⁷ Flusser with R.S. Notley, with an introduction by J.H. Charlesworth, *The Sage from Galilee: Rediscovering Jesus’ Genius* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), p. 1. Also see p. 9.

²⁸ G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: Collins, 1973), p. 19.

²⁹ For all these quotations, see G. Vermes, *The Passion* (New York: Penguin, 2006 [London, 2005]), pp. 11–12.

³⁰ Vermes, *Who’s Who in the Age of Jesus* (New York: Penguin, 2006 [London, 2006]), pp. 130–32.

³¹ Vermes, *The Passion*, pp. 36–37.

probability, everything is dated twenty-four hours earlier: the Last Supper of Jesus with his apostles is not described as a Passover meal and it is specifically stated that Jesus was delivered by the chief priests to Pilate in the morning of the day *before* the feast on 14 Nisan.³² In this publication, Vermes wisely sees the importance of John's dating; that is, Jesus was arrested and interrogated (not a trial) before Passover and not during it, as the Synoptics report, since, 'Jewish courts did not sit, investigate or pronounce sentence on a feast-day or a Sabbath.'

It is refreshing to see how Vermes perceives that John's passion narrative is harmonious with Jewish customs and laws. Vermes also recognizes that Luke clearly misrepresents Jewish law, having two high priests at the same time (Lk. 3.2) and John seems to be correct in not reporting a trial of Jesus but only an interrogation in Annas's house (Jn 18.13–14).³³ Is it likely that Vermes's penchant to ignore or minimize John and prefer the Synoptics has begun to change? If so, his books which are full of insights, rare brilliance, and impressive control of historical data from the first century CE will be even more valuable to many.

These are five very influential scholars—Bornkamm, Sanders, Crossan, Wright, and Vermes. It would be risky for a scholar to go against this august front. It seems that the decision to follow only the Synoptics in the study of Jesus has become a consensus, and many scholars assume it is a well-established conclusion of Gospel research. It is clear now that an impressive group of experts working on the historical Jesus either minimize or ignore John and follow only the Synoptics. Is this informative and does it represent precise historiography?

Too often we are misled by a generic title or summary of diverse data; in this case we should pause to ponder how 'synoptic' are Matthew, Mark and Luke. To what extent do the first three canonical Gospels see all about Jesus with a unified eye? Are we to follow Matthew's record which has wise men at Jesus' birth or accept Luke's account which places lowly shepherds in Bethlehem adoring the baby Jesus? Are we to accept Matthew's portrayal of Jesus' presenting a lengthy 'Sermon on

³² Vermes, *Who's Who in the Age of Jesus*, pp. 135–36.

³³ Vermes knows and reports this facts about John; see *Who's Who in the Age of Jesus*, p. 44.

the Mount' or prefer Luke's 'Sermon on the Plain'? Is Matthew correct to portray Peter attempting to walk on the water as Jesus had or is Mark closer to historical events with the simple version of Jesus alone walking on the water? Is Mark correct to leave us assuming Jesus rebukes Peter's confession and associates him with Satan, or is Matthew reliable when he has Jesus bless Peter for his confession of him as the 'Christ, the Son of the living God' (Mt. 16.16). Should we follow Mark and have Jesus make a long journey to Tyre and Sidon, or accept Luke's account that has no such journey outside Palestine; is Mark's story only a post-Easter creation, reflecting Marcan literary creativity, to indicate how the prophecy of Isa. 9.1 came true?³⁴ What did Jesus say to the High Priest; should we follow Mk 14.62, the variant to Mt 26.64, Matthew or Luke? Were Jesus' last words in Aramaic, as Mark indicates, or in Hebrew, as Matthew reports? Should we choose Mark who ends his story of Jesus with women running from the tomb with fear or should we opt for Matthew and especially Luke who provide lengthy accounts of Jesus' resurrection? Were Matthew and Luke correct to reject Mark's account of the parable of the seed growing secretly and to rewrite Mark's emphasis on the immediacy of God's Kingdom, and was Matthew perceptive to emphasize the presence of the Son of Man and Luke the presence of God's Rule? We may have answers for most of these questions but each of them point out the differences among the compositions that are categorized as Synoptic.

Why have most Jesus scholars used only the Synoptic account of Jesus' life and teaching? Five reasons seem apparent. First, many of those who become devoted to the search for the historical Jesus were previously devoted to a study of the history of the Synoptic tradition; one rightly can imagine that this interest shapes their opinion. None of those influential in presenting a historical Jesus is a specialist on the Gospel of John. Second, it is much easier to base one's historical work on the Synoptics and ignore the challenges confronted by including

³⁴) For the argument that 'the Great Omission' of a Marcan passage in Luke is because this was added later to Mark, see A.F. Rainey and R.S. Notley, 'Literary and Geographical Contours of the "The Great Omission"', in *The Sacred Bridge* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006), pp. 360-62.

John. Third, the Synoptics' account of Jesus seems coherent but John's account is disjointed and the flow of the narrative suggests that a concise chronology and geography is impossible to construct using it. Fourth, with the Synoptics one can compare three separate but related accounts of Jesus' life, but there is no comparative data for John;³⁵ that is, the *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* is almost always used only to study the redaction of Mark by Matthew and Luke. Fifth, neither Mark, Matthew nor Luke present the historian with so many editorial problems and christological anachronisms as John. The regnant paradigm which I perceive as waning is accurately defined by Francis J. Moloney:

The rumblings of Reimarus, the work of the source critics and the first search for the historical Jesus, closed by Schweitzer,³⁶ all led to the rejection of the Gospel of John as a reliable source for words and works of the pre-Easter Jesus. The emergence of Form Criticism, the post-Second world War redaction critics, and the new quest for the historical Jesus, all strengthened the grounds of this rejection.³⁷

The major commentaries, as is typical of commentaries,³⁸ tend to ignore the search for the historical Jesus and focus more on the theological and rhetorical thought in John; this is true of the masterful commentaries written by M.-J. Lagrange, R. Bultmann, C.H. Dodd, C. K. Barrett, F.-M. Braun, R. Schnackenburg, R.E. Brown, E. Haenchen, Y. Simoons and C.S. Keener, as well as J. Frey's work on Johannine eschatology.

³⁵ See esp. P. Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 199: 'Lacking the sort of comparative data that the synoptic gospels provide for each other, it is difficult to say' what 'sources or traditions stand behind John's Jesus'.

³⁶ As Weaver demonstrates in *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century: 1900–1950*, in Great Britain and the USA, and for Dibelius, there was no moratorium on the 'search' for the historical Jesus.

³⁷ F.J. Moloney, 'The Fourth Gospel and the Jesus of History', *NTS* 46 (2000), p. 42.

³⁸ This point was also made by Moloney, 'The Fourth Gospel', p. 42.

Are scholars correct in using only the Synoptics as sources for understanding the historical Jesus? Are there no other sources to help us reconstruct the life and teachings of Jesus? Earlier I suggested the importance of including the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Testimonium Flavianum* in Jesus research;³⁹ for our present purposes, I will focus on the Gospel of John.⁴⁰

10 Reasons for Reassessing a Putative Consensus

I shall now present ten reasons why we should reconsider jettisoning John from Jesus research.

1. *John is Theologically Shaped, but he is not the only Evangelist with a Theology*

Too often scholars devoted to Jesus research have forgotten the major contribution of *Redaktionsgeschichte*: Each Evangelist shapes tradition from a pronounced theological agenda. One needs only a quick glimpse over the past fifty years: Bornkamm clarified the theological Tendenzen of Matthew,⁴¹ Marxsen proved the theological purpose of Mark,⁴² and Conzelmann illustrated that Luke edited traditions to

³⁹ See J.H. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (Anchor Bible Reference Library, 1; New York: Doubleday, 1988).

⁴⁰ J.D. Crossan includes many extra-canonical works, notably the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, and the *Gospel of Peter*. See Crossan, *Historical Jesus*. While alluring, this approach fails to convince because most scholars agree that these gospels are not as early as Crossan claims and they do not appear to be so independent of the canonical gospels. See G. Theissen and D. Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria* (trans. M.E. Boring; Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), p. 7.

⁴¹ Also see U. Luz, 'Matthew's "Interpretative Tendencies" and the "Historical" Jesus', in the proceedings of the second Princeton-Prague Symposium on the Historical Jesus, forthcoming.

⁴² Also see D. L. Bock, 'The Gospel of Mark and the Historical Jesus', in the proceedings of the second Princeton-Prague Symposium on the Historical Jesus, forthcoming.

create a new theology.⁴³ Hence, John is not the odd fellow out because of theological Tendenzen.⁴⁴

Scholars who use only the Synoptics in Jesus research must assume that John nowhere preserves reliable Jesus traditions. To admit that John may occasionally have reliable Jesus tradition, demands that John be used in reconstructing Jesus' life or thought.

Scholars who dismiss the possibility of reliable Jesus traditions in John often do so at the outset assuming John is unreliable historically because it is so highly developed theologically and christologically. There is no doubt that John's presentation of Jesus is shaped by Johannine theology. Clearly redactional are, at least, the following Johannine themes: the Logos theology, the paradigmatic use of ἄνω and κάτω, the ἐγὼ εἶμι pronouncements, the long discourses, the absence of agony in Gethsemane (in contrast to Luke), the portrayal of Jesus carrying his own cross, the use of irony and *double entendre*, and the Johannine coloring due to imagery and symbolism. None of these, however, indicates that all is creative history. Evidence of editing (redaction) is also evidence of something to edit, and that is earlier traditions. No one should assume that because the Gospels interpret history that they cannot contain history; no unbiased and unselected sources to human history can exist.⁴⁵

⁴³ Also see C. Keener, 'Luke-Acts and the Historical Jesus', in the proceedings of the second Princeton-Prague Symposium on the Historical Jesus, forthcoming. In his most recent study, Keener claims that he will 'depend heavily on Mark and "Q" material' in reconstructing Jesus' life because of 'a consensus of scholarship regarding the most accepted sources for reconstructing Jesus' life' (*The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], p. 164. Original emphasis). Yet, later he prefers the historical elements in John: 'The Fourth Gospel's portrait of baptism by Jesus' disciples (Jn 3:26) thus makes sense' (ibid., p. 176). Note his judgment that John 'thus may report accurate historical tradition that in the earliest stage of Jesus' ministry, which overlapped with John in a comparable region, Jesus' disciples supervised others' baptisms under his instruction' (ibid., p. 176).

⁴⁴ See the reflections of D.M. Smith, 'Redaction Criticism, Genre, Narrative Criticism, and the Historical Jesus in the Gospel of John', in the proceedings of the second Princeton-Prague Symposium on the Historical Jesus, forthcoming.

⁴⁵ G. Theissen and D. Winter offer this sage advice: 'Da es absolut zuverlässige Quellen jedoch in der menschlichen Geschichte nicht gibt, bleibt selbst bei der besten Quelle die Aufgabe, diese weiter zu untersuchen'. Theissen and Winter, *Die*

2. *John is not Clearly Dependiant Upon the Synoptics*

Those who use only the Synoptics must assume that John depends everywhere on the Synoptics and thus has no independent traditions about Jesus. Here specialists in Jesus research have not kept abreast of research; to claim that John is dependent on the Synoptics is no longer a consensus.⁴⁶ John's similarity to the Synoptics is most evident in the Passion and this section of the Gospels cannot prove John's dependence on one or more of the Synoptics since it is a tradition that antedates them. The form critics clearly showed that the first narrative written was the Passion narrative; it was necessary to combat the opinion, especially in Jerusalem, that Jesus deserved to die with criminals. D. Moody Smith has presented evidence that John is not dependent on the Synoptics but there is no longer a consensus in this area of research.⁴⁷

3. *John's Traditions Do Not Always Postdate the Synoptics*

Jesus scholars who reject John as a source presume that John is later than the Synoptics and thus unreliable. Yet it is now becoming clear that John also had sources and that many of these antedate the first Gospel, Mark. If John is the latest Gospel to be completed that in no way indicates it preserves only late traditions. If specialists on John are correct to conclude that it took shape over many decades and shows evidence of being expanded and edited and re-edited, then it is not simply a work that postdates all the Synoptics. When was the earliest portion of John composed? Can we ignore evidence that there is a Signs Source preserved in this Gospel and that it indicates a composition somewhere near Cana? When was the first edition of the Gospel of John composed; does it antedate 70 CE because it preserves impressive

Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung (Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus, 34; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), p. 12.

⁴⁶ See esp. D.M. Smith, *John among the Gospels* (Columbia: University of Carolina Press, 2001). See esp. 'John, an Independent Gospel', on pp. 195-241.

⁴⁷ See esp. the second edition of Smith, *John among the Gospels* (2001). The first edition was published by Fortress Press in 1992.

evidence of pre-70 Jerusalem and reflects traditions associated with the Essenes?⁴⁸

John has passages that indicate independent and reliable early traditions about Jesus. By what criteria do we dismiss as unreliable historically such unique Johannine passages as the miracle at Cana and a male disciple present at the cross? Surely, Jn 7.53–8.11 is a later addition to John but that does not indicate that it is devoid of reliable Jesus traditions; in fact, the story of the woman caught in adultery has all the characteristics of early Jesus traditions: the Palestinian coloring, the *halachic* concerns, and the debates over adultery found in pre-70 Jewish traditions, including the very early *halachic* traditions in the *Temple Scroll*.

4. *The Synoptics are not Intrinsically Superior to John for Historical Data*

While the written traditions about Hillel first appear in the third or even in the sixth century CE, all the Jesus traditions in the canonical Gospels can be dated to the century in which Jesus lived. We must not assume that within that relatively short period all eyewitnesses disappeared. At least one of the Evangelists was interested in checking with eyewitnesses.⁴⁹ Luke, perhaps under the influence of Polybius, claims to have examined eyewitnesses (Lk. 1:2). Oral traditions also did not disappear when the Gospels were composed.⁵⁰ Long after John had been composed, Papias claimed that he checked with those who had heard the Lord.

Archaeological research also proves that one should not talk only about discontinuity, as if 70 CE was a major divide in ancient Palestinian

⁴⁸ See J.H. Charlesworth, ‘The Priority of John? Reflections on the Essenes and the First Edition of John’, in P.L. Hofrichter (ed.), *Für und wider die Priorität des Johannesevangeliums: Symposium in Salzburg am 10. März 2000* (Theologische Texte und Studien, 9; Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2002), pp. 73–114.

⁴⁹ See esp. R. Bauckham, ‘Gospel Traditions: Anonymous Community Traditions or Eyewitness Testimony’, in the proceedings of the second Princeton-Prague Symposium on the Historical Jesus, forthcoming. Also, see Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

⁵⁰ See esp. W.H. Kelber, ‘Rethinking the Oral-Scribal Transmission/Performance of the Jesus Tradition’, in the proceedings of the second Princeton-Prague Symposium on the Historical Jesus, forthcoming.

culture. There is stark evidence of discontinuity in Jotapata, Gamla, Qumran and Jerusalem, but there is undeniable evidence of continuity in Sepphoris, Nazareth, Capernaum, Bethsaida, Tiberias, Jericho, Caesarea Maritima, and around Jerusalem. By what criteria do we dismiss the probability that from 26 until about 90 CE in some of these villages, towns and cities lived eyewitnesses who had heard what Jesus had said and seen some of his works? Perhaps some of these eyewitnesses helped to provide historical insights for Paul, James, wandering charismatics, and the anonymous Jews and Gentiles who checked and protected the evolution of Jesus traditions.

As we noted earlier, Vermes rightly points out that John's account of an 'interrogation' in front of a high priest is more historically reliable than the trial described by the Synoptics. There would have been many eyewitnesses to this event.

It is no longer wise to ignore the historical gems preserved in John. For example, Moloney perceptively points out that the Marcan and Lucan accounts of the call of the disciples are 'idealized'. That is, the Johannine account 'may be closer to "what actually happened" than the highly charged narratives found in the Synoptic tradition'.⁵¹ Indeed, the call of the disciples in Mark is abrupt; there is no indication in Mk 1.16-20 that Simon, Andrew, James and John know about Jesus; perhaps the Marcan narrative is shaped by immediacy demarcated by καὶ εὐθὺς, 'and immediately', a Marcan christological and eschatological theme: 'and immediately they left their nets and followed him' (cf. 1.18).

5. The Synoptic Chronology is not Obviously Superior to John's Chronology

In a review of the sources now employed by most Jesus scholars, D.L. Bock reports that Mark provides the outline of Jesus' ministry for most scholars.⁵² He is correct; scholars who are specialists in Jesus research and who exclude John from consideration tend to assume

⁵¹ Moloney, 'The Fourth Gospel', pp. 49-50.

⁵² D.L. Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), p. 26. Also see Bock, 'Gospel of Mark and the Historical Jesus'.

that the first three gospels provide reliable evidence that Jesus' ministry lasted one year, and not roughly two or perhaps three years. Flusser, for example, prefers the Synoptics' duration of Jesus' ministry, 'not more than one year', and that if we followed John, '[W]e would have to assume that it covered two, or even three years. It has become fairly clear today that John, the theologian, had little intention of being a historian, and thus it would be unwise to accept his chronology or his geographical framework without careful examination'.⁵³

We scholars should admit that we are not so certain about the conclusion that the Synoptics and John present irreconcilable differences and one must choose the former. There is much wisdom in Raymond E. Brown's insight that the 'outline of Jesus' ministry seen in the Synoptic Gospels' is not 'dissimilar to the outline of the ministry in John'. I would agree that all Evangelists have Jesus' ministry begin with John the Baptizer then move to Galilee and finally to Jerusalem. As Sean Freyne notes, Jesus' first disciples were formerly John the Baptizer's disciples and John, 'the narrator, deliberately changes the scene to Galilee (1,43)'.⁵⁴ Each Evangelist has probably inherited and expanded what Brown called 'the basic kerygmatic outline of Jesus material used by the earliest preachers'.⁵⁵ William R. Farmer also rightly stressed that when one compares the intra-canonical Gospels with 'all extant examples of gospel literature' the four Gospels are 'in fact all strikingly similar'.⁵⁶

It is becoming apparent that too many New Testament experts assume that only the Synoptics provide trustworthy historical information and have not carefully sifted John for reliable chronological data. Mark, Matthew and Luke do not explicitly state that Jesus' ministry lasted only one year and John does not demand a duration of at least three years. The first three Evangelists report only one Passover during Jesus' ministry. John clarifies three Passovers (2.13; 6.4; 11.55)

⁵³ Flusser, *The Sage from Galilee*, p. 9.

⁵⁴ S. Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel* (WUNT, 125; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), p. 294.

⁵⁵ R.E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* (ed. F.J. Moloney; New York and London: Doubleday, 2003), p. 91.

⁵⁶ W.R. Farmer, *Jesus and the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 161.

and perhaps a fourth is implied in the ambiguous ‘a feast of the Jews’ (5.1). The contention that Jesus’ ministry lasted roughly one year is derived from putting together several assumptions and observations. On the one hand, none of the Synoptics claim that Jesus’ ministry lasted only about one year. On the other hand, John does not indicate that Jesus’ ministry lasted more than three years. As L. Devillers points out, John’s narrative is presented in line with Jewish festivals. He shows that chapters 7–10 in John are shaped by *Sukkoth* (Feast of Booths or Tabernacles) but they are heavily edited with christological developments.⁵⁷ Michael A. Daise may be correct to suggest that perhaps ‘in an earlier stage of its development, the Fourth Gospel gave Jesus’ ministry as long a duration as is implied in the Synoptics’.⁵⁸ We scholars should be more attentive to our assumptions, reevaluate some long-held conclusions, and read the earliest narratives with an open and inquisitive mind. No ancient source helps us decide the precise length of Jesus’ public ministry.

What might be reported about the timing of Jesus’ actions in the Temple, when the tables of the money changers were overturned (cf. m. *Shekalim* 1.3)? Was that event at the beginning (John) or the end of Jesus’ ministry (Mark)? Almost all scholars follow Mark as if he were a well-trained historian without a theological bias. They conclude that the event must have occurred at the end of Jesus’ life. Such certainty smacks of historical positivism. It is possible, perhaps probable, that Jesus’ so-called cleansing of the Temple occurred at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in Judea, as explained in John, and not during his last week, as stressed by Mark, Matthew and Luke.

As Dan Bahat points out, Jn 2.19-20 is a reference ‘to the Temple Mount and not to the Temple’, and the Temple Mount ‘played as important a role in Jesus’ life in Jerusalem as it played in Jewish life altogether’.⁵⁹ Unlike the Qumranites who paid the Temple tax only once

⁵⁷ L. Devillers, *La Fête de l’Envoyé: La section Johannique de la fête des tentes (Jean 7, 1-10,21) et la christologie* (EB N.S. 49; Paris: J. Gabalda, 2002).

⁵⁸ M.A. Daise, *Feasts in John* (WUNT, 2.229; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), p. 12.

⁵⁹ D. Bahat, ‘Jesus and the Herodian Temple Mount’, in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Jesus and Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), p. 300.

(4Q159.6-7; cf. 1QSa 1.8-9)⁶⁰ and like most Jews (m. *Sheqalim* 3.3; cf. Exod. 30.11-16 and Neh. 10.33-34)⁶¹ Jesus and his disciples paid the half-shekel tax (Mt. 17.24-27). Jesus' admiration of the Temple is clear from the Gospels and especially from John. Many scholars take John's references to Jesus' relation to and work in the Temple to be fundamentally historical, and while only John clarifies that there were large animals within the Sanctuary (the Temple Mount area) this possibility is supported by the Palestinian Talmud (j. *Betzah* 2.4 61c.13).⁶² Perhaps that adds credence to John's chronology. It is relatively certain that Jesus frequented the Temple, clarified by John's use of the festivals, and it is obvious that the Temple was a world-class bank in which the Temple treasury was preserved as well as individual accounts (4 Macc. 4.3), and the buildings represented 'one of the architectural wonders of the ancient world', as Bahat claims.⁶³ Imagining the size of the Temple Mount, especially from the 570-ton stone in the western retaining wall, leads many to agree with the well-known adulation: 'He who has not seen Herod's Temple, has never in his life seen a beautiful structure' (b. *Baba Batra* 43a). We may never be able to determine if Jesus' disruptive actions in the Temple occurred at the beginning or ending of his ministry, but we should not dismiss John as if this Gospel alone has a theological agenda at this point.

While Mark preserves pre-Markan traditions that suggest Jesus' chronology may be better preserved in the longer ministry implied in John, dating the Last Supper as a Passover meal is hardly certain. While Mark indicates that Jesus observed the Last Supper at Passover, John reports that Jesus' last meal was before Passover. While it is obvious that two calendars were regnant in Second Temple Judaism, one solar

⁶⁰ See esp. M. Broshi, 'The Role of the Temple in the Herodian Economy,' *JJS* 38 (1987), pp. 34-35 and Broshi, 'Anti-Qumranic Polemics in the Talmud', in *The Madrid Qumran Congress* (ed. J.T. Barrera and L.V. Montaner; STDJ, 11.2; Leiden and New York: Brill, 1992), see esp. vol. 2, p. 593.

⁶¹ The Temple tax was not acceptable from a Gentile or Samaritan; see m. *Sheqalim* 1.5.

⁶² See J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (trans. F.H. and C.H. Cave; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), p. 49.

⁶³ D. Bahat, 'The Herodian Temple', in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, III (ed. W. Horbury, W.D. Davies and J. Sturdy; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 58.

(represented by the Jewish groups behind 1 Enoch, Jubilees, and the Dead Sea Scrolls) and one lunar (followed by many in Jerusalem and those controlling the Temple), it is far from certain that the Synoptics have the proper presentation. At the present, one should avoid the positivism that too often shapes the presentation of Jesus' last week and his Last Supper as a Passover meal. For certain, Jesus' last meal was during Passover week and would have been influenced by the celebration of Passover hopes during the week.

If the canons of historiography demand balance and caution, it is better not to follow slavishly Mark's presentation of Jesus, which is certainly shaped by an eschatological urgency, repetitively advanced by the connective καὶ εὐθὺς, 'and immediately'. Moreover, Mark's account of Jesus' life is not in any coherent putative chronological order; it is frequently structured according to themes or topics. Mark's chronology is shaped by theological concerns; most notable among them is his pervasive penchant for apocalyptic urgency.

6. The Synoptic Geography may Intermittently Presuppose John's Emphasis on Judea

Mark centers Jesus' ministry in Lower Galilee and reports that Jesus goes to Jerusalem only once.⁶⁴ From chapter 11 to 20, John presents Jesus working in Judea, and has Jesus making at least four trips to Jerusalem. Mark, in contrast, has no Judean ministry for Jesus. Should we follow the mass of Jesus scholars who follow Mark without providing exegetical grounding for that position? What if Mark seems to imply, at times, that John's geographical movements of Jesus are present in his traditions?

Is it not clear that passages in Mark imply that Jesus knew Jerusalem and had been to that city before his final week? Some of Mark's comments indicate that Jesus knew Jerusalem. Note, for example, the following passage:

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, 'Where do you want us to go and make

⁶⁴ See J. Schröter, 'Jesus of Galilee: The Role of Location in Understanding Jesus', in J.H. Charlesworth with Petr Pokorný (eds.), *Jesus Research: An International Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 36-55.

the preparations for you to eat the Passover?’ So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ‘Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, “The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?” He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there’. So the disciples set out and went into the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal (Mk 14.12-16 [NRSV]).

For one who believes that Jesus was omniscient, this precise information for one who has never been to Jerusalem causes no problems. The inquisitive reader, however, will be curious, asking: ‘How does Jesus know about such a man and the area of the Jerusalem in which the man carrying a water jar might be exceptional?’ Is it not astounding that Jesus knew the room was ‘large’, ‘upstairs’, ‘furnished’ and ‘ready’? How can Jesus refer to ‘my guest room’ if has never been to Jerusalem, as Mark reports?

Almost any reader would assume this visit to Jerusalem described by Mark is certainly not Jesus’ first trip to the city. Only John provides data that allows one to conclude that Jesus was familiar with Jerusalem and had associates who knew him and accorded him the title ‘the Teacher’.

In contrast to Mark, John suggests that Samaria was a region important to Jesus. Luke tends to support John’s inclusion. Sean Freyne brings into focus a point often lost: ‘Of all the literary sources from the first century, the Fourth Gospel expresses the competing religious claims of the Samaritans and the Jews most sharply.’⁶⁵ Freyne assumes we know these tensions are historically valid.

We should remember that Mark merely implies that Jesus focused only on Galilee; and that he provides asides that make it clear Jesus had connections in and a ministry for Jews in Judea. Matthew indicates many connections between Jesus and those in Jerusalem, and Luke adds that some of Jesus’ relatives lived near Jerusalem. The summary of Jesus in Acts 10.36-43, which many scholars judge to be pre-Lucan, indicates that Jesus taught in Galilee and Judea.

⁶⁵ S. Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel* (WUNT, 125; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), p. 125.

That Jesus, a Galilean, had probably been in Jerusalem before his final visit receives extra-biblical support. It is now becoming clear that a large majority of Galilean Jews had been moved (or migrated) from Judea by one of the Hasmoneans. Galilee is clearly demarcated among Gentile and Jewish sites. For example, the pagan temples are not in Lower Galilee; they are in the Golan, the Hermon, and the high mountains of Upper Galilee.⁶⁶ From a study of historical sources and especially from explorations and excavations, M. Aviam proves that ‘the foundations of Jewish settlement in the Galilee go back to the Hasmoneans’.⁶⁷

The excavations in Lower Galilee have produced *realia* that indicate a bond with Jews living in Judea. Mikvaot and stone vessels are not unique to Judea and are found in many areas of Lower Galilee; moreover, it is evident, although there were quarries for making stone vessels in Nazareth and elsewhere, that some of the pottery, and some of the massive stone vessels found in Galilee, were made in Judea. Thus, the assumption that one should differentiate between Galilean and Judean Judaisms (as reflected in the works by Horsley, Oakman, and Kloppenborg Verbin)⁶⁸ and that Lower Galilee was far removed culturally from Judea needs to be replaced with precise information obtained by the present excavations at Jotapata, Khirbet Kana, Bethsaida, Midgal, Tiberias, and elsewhere. The pre-70 archaeological evidence now unites Upper Galilee with Tyre and Sidon but Lower Galilee with Judea. Hence, it is no longer obvious that Jesus focused his ministry on Galilee and went to Jerusalem only once, when he was crucified. Scholars must dismiss from their minds the misconception that Galileans in Jesus’ time were Jews with a mixed lineage; this construct has been regnant for over a century and found, for example, in Bornkamm’s words: ‘It is a mixed race, incidentally, which also lives in Galilee, the home of Jesus’.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ See the map [Fig. 17.25 on p. 202] in M. Aviam, *Jews, Pagans and Christians in the Galilee: 25 Years of Archaeological Excavations and Surveys, Hellenistic to Byzantine Periods* (Land of Galilee, 1; Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004).

⁶⁷ Aviam, *Jews, Pagans and Christians in the Galilee*, p. 49.

⁶⁸ See the admission by Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q*, p. 434.

⁶⁹ Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 42.

Jesus was not from a mixed race; he is perhaps the most Jewish Jew of the first century and his Jewish blood is too obvious to discuss. He was a deeply Torah-observant Jew and worshipped in the Temple. As Luke T. Johnson warns, in his criticism of M. Borg, we must avoid any semblance of Marcionism and avoid depicting Second Temple Judaism so that it is a foil for Jesus, contrasting harsh legalism with divine compassion.⁷⁰

In *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels* (1988), Sean Freyne, under the influence of the Johannine expert, C.K. Barrett,⁷¹ wisely warned us not to jettison John when exploring Jesus and his world: ‘Despite the Fourth Gospel’s widely recognized theological concerns there is a surprising amount of detail as the work develops, especially of a geographical nature’.⁷² *Inter alia*, Freyne notes the mention of Cana in Galilee, Aenon near Salim, Sichar, and Bethesda.

Finally, at least five major insights help shine light on geography in Jesus research. Recently, challenging new insights have converged to assist a better comprehension of the Jewishness of Lower Galilee and its Judean connection in Jesus’ time. First, probably only in a small section of western Galilee, notably in the area of Asochis (the Talmudic Shihin), were there Jews since the First Temple period. According to Josephus (*Ant.* 13.337) on a certain Sabbath, Ptolemy Lathyros took 10,000 captives from Asochis.⁷³ The reference to Shabbat indicates the captives were Jews. Second, Aviam clarifies the prosopography: ‘For a period of more than four hundred years, from the sixth century to the second century BCE, there is no information about Jewish life in the Galilee’.⁷⁴ That indicates that probably there were no significant Jewish settlements in Galilee during those centuries. Third, the author of 1 Maccabees, our only impressive historian in the Jewish apocryphal

⁷⁰ L.T. Johnson, *The Real Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), p. 44.

⁷¹ C.K. Barrett, ‘St. John: Social Historian’, *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 10 (1986), pp. 26–39.

⁷² S. Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), p. 116.

⁷³ The author of 2 Kgs 21.19 and 24.1 also indicates some Israelites lived in western Lower Galilee, probably not far from where Sepphoris would be built.

⁷⁴ Aviam, *Jews, Pagans and Christians in the Galilee*, p. 42.

works, reports that Simon (142/3–135/4 BCE) led ‘the Jews in Galilee’ (ἐκ τῆς Γαλιλαίας) to Judea (εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν) with much rejoicing (1 Macc. 5:23).⁷⁵ Fourth, Josephus reports that the Hasmoneans, from Jonathan to Jannaeus, sought to conquer Galilee and connect it to Judea; this report implies that the Hasmoneans settled Judeans in Lower Galilee (cf. *War* 4.104–105; see also 1 Macc. 11–12). In favor of this assumption is the archaeological discovery that only with the Hasmoneans was olive-oil production an export commodity in Galilee, and especially at Gischala among Jews (cf. also *War* 2.590–595; *Vita* 23; b. *Menachot* 85b; *Sifri Devarim* 316).⁷⁶ Moreover, the earliest Miqvaot are located at Keren Naftali, Gamla and Sepphoris, and they are Hasmonean. These earliest Miqvaot in Galilee are in two out of three sites mentioned in the ‘Baraita of the fortified cities from the time of Joshua Ben Nun’. Thus, Rappaport can assume that by the time of Jannaeus, the Hasmonean leaders had settled Judeans in the area of conquered Galilee.⁷⁷ Fifth, archaeological explorations in many sites in Lower Galilee indicate that Jewish settlements there began in the Hasmonean period (esp. between 135–76 BCE) and are culturally connected with Judea (and not Syria [Tyre and Sidon] or Samaria).⁷⁸ By the time of Jannaeus (104–76) Galilee,⁷⁹ especially in the middle and

⁷⁵ L. Finkelstein rightly points out that Simon was ‘able to evacuate the Jews of Galilee and Gilead to Judea’ (*The Cambridge History of Judaism*, II [ed. W.D. Davies and L. Finkelstein; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], p. 305).

⁷⁶ M. Aviam, ‘The Beginning of Mass Production of Olive Oil in the Galilee’, in *Jews, Pagans and Christians in the Galilee*, pp. 51–58. Aviam illustrates why a ‘survey of the literary sources and the archaeological finds suggests that the mass production of olive oil did not gain its place of importance in the rural life of the Galilee until the Hasmonaean period (in earlier periods, production was limited mainly to the domestic level)’ (ibid., p. 56). Many of the oil presses are found in Jewish towns and villages.

⁷⁷ U. Rappaport, ‘The Hellenistic Period and the Hasmonaean State (332–37 B.C.E.)’, in M. Stern (ed.), *The History of Eretz Israel* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitshak Ben-Tsevi, 1981; in Hebrew). I am grateful to discussions with Aviam on this publication.

⁷⁸ See M. Aviam, ‘The Hasmonaean Dynasty’s Activities in the Galilee’, in *Jews, Pagans and Christians in the Galilee*, pp. 41–50.

⁷⁹ For a map showing the extent of the kingdom of Jannaeus, see *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, II, p. 341, Fig. 2.

east, was dominated by Jews and Gamla in the Golan had become a Jewish town.⁸⁰

If these five insights regarding the origins of Jews in Lower Galilee—in villages like Nazareth—are correct, then they produce two challenging conclusions for the study of the historical Jesus. First, they give credence to the report that Jesus' family had relatives in Judea and in the hill country west of Jerusalem (Lk. 1). Second, they help us perceive some historical data behind the mythological Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke and through the kerygmatic claim that Jesus is the Messiah because of his Davidic roots. That is, while Jesus might have been born in Nazareth (as Mark and John may imply), his ancestry could have originated in Bethlehem, the City of David.⁸¹

7. John's Traditions of Jesus' Speeches May be Grounded in Pre-Synoptic Traditions

Jesus' long discourses in John are so different from his parabolic speeches in the Synoptics that customarily scholars dismiss Jesus' saying in John either as creations or as heavy redactions by the Fourth Evangelist. Almost always scholars do not consider the possibility that these speeches were crafted and shaped from living traditions that evolved through many stages of oral history. Clearly, Jesus' sayings in John are shaped by the theological Tendenzen of the Fourth Evangelist, but it is also certain that at least some of these are derived from earlier traditions. The best example is found in Mt. 11.25-27; the saying is well known but deserves repeating:

At that time Jesus said, 'I thank [or praise] you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will [or, for so it was well-pleasing in your sight]. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him [NRSV].

⁸⁰ S. Gutman, 'Gamla', in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (ed. E. Stern; 4 vols.; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 2.459-63.

⁸¹ Clearly, it is also possible that the family was returning to Lower Galilee because they were related to the Jews who were liberated by Simon.

As has been known for centuries, this passage in Matthew has a distinct Johannine ring to it. The tradition obviously antedates Matthew, because it appears also in Luke:

At that same hour Jesus [lit. he] rejoiced in the Holy Spirit [some mss ‘in the Spirit’] and said, ‘I thank [or praise] you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will [or for so it was well-pleasing in your sight] [Lk. 10:21-22; NRSV].

These passages in Matthew and Luke, and clearly anterior to those gospels, reveal a quarry from which the Fourth Evangelist seems to have mined then developed his well-crafted sayings of Jesus. Thus, while Jesus’ teachings in John serve the Evangelist’s own interest, they cannot be judged to have been created *de novo* by the Evangelist; at least some of them have a pre-Johannine history. The study of the transmission of Jesus’ sayings is almost always limited to the Synoptics as in Bultmann’s *History of the Synoptic Tradition*; yet this influential study makes unreliable assumptions as E.P. Sanders demonstrated long ago.⁸² There are no set rules for the development of tradition.

8. *Jesus’ Authority and High Esteem are not Uniquely Johannine*

To dismiss John’s account of Jesus’ message because it has too high self-esteem fails to recognize that many of Jesus’ sayings in the Synoptics represent a very high self evaluation.⁸³ This high esteem was pointed out by David Flusser in ‘Hillel and Jesus: Two Ways of Self-Awareness’. Basing his work on Matthew and Luke, Flusser argued that the divine element is found not only in Socrates and Hillel but also in the Christ of faith and the historical Jesus; he opined that ‘the highest expression of Jesus’ exalted self-awareness’ is preserved in Mt. 11.28-30.⁸⁴

⁸² E.P. Sanders, *Tendencies of the Synoptic Gospels* (SNTSM, 9; London: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

⁸³ See K. Haacker, “‘What Must I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?’” Implicit Christology in Jesus’ Sayings about Life and the Kingdom’, in J.H. Charlesworth with Petr Pokorný (eds.), *Jesus Research: An International Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 140-53.

⁸⁴ Flusser, in J.H. Charlesworth and L.L. Johns (eds.), *Hillel and Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), p. 74.

A purely confessional or christological reading of the Gospel will fail to reveal that all the Evangelists portray Jesus with a very high self-understanding. Perhaps this evidence derives from Jesus, who certainly should not be expected to misperceive the miracles he performed, the effect he had on others, and the authority that accompanied his own pronouncements. All of us need to recognize that a so-called high Christology is not uniquely Johannine. If John uses ἐγώ 465 times, let us not forget that Matthew uses the pronoun 210 times, Mark 104 times, and Luke 215 times. In fact, ἐγώ is found 1713 times in the New Testament.⁸⁵ For example, Matthew six times in chapter five reports authoritative claims by Jesus; see 5.22; 5.28; 5.32; 5.34; 5.39; 5.44.

Far too many New Testament specialists are influenced by the ἐγώ εἰμι, 'I am', statements in John, imagine that such a formula appears only in John, and conclude that it is a creation of the Fourth Evangelist. In fact, the expression ἐγώ εἰμι on the lips of Jesus is not peculiar to John. As P. Pokorný pointed out, the 'I am' formula appears long before the first century in self-introductions by a deity (Exod. 3.14; 20.2) and is used by Jesus in Mark.⁸⁶ According to Mark, when Jesus announces himself to the High Priest he reputedly used the expression ἐγώ εἰμι: 'But Jesus said: "I am (ἐγώ εἰμι)"' (Mk 14.62). According to Mark, followed by Matthew, when Jesus was walking on the sea Jesus tells his disciples: 'I am (ἐγώ εἰμι); do not fear' (Mk 6.50; Mt. 14.27). Matthew concludes his gospel with the Great Commission in which the expression reoccurs: 'I am with you (ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι) all the days' (28.20). Three times Luke reports the expression ἐγώ εἰμι in Jesus traditions (Lk. 21.8; 22.70; 24.39).

Although the expression ἐγώ εἰμι is associated with Jesus, it is attributed to others. Luke allows Gabriel (1.19) and even the centurion (7.8) to utter the expression. John allows John the Baptizer to say ἐγώ εἰμι (1.20).

⁸⁵ See R. Morgenthaler, *Statistik des Neutestamentlichen Wortschatzes* (Stuttgart: Gotthelf-Verlag, 1973), p. 91.

⁸⁶ P. Pokorný, *Jesus in the Eyes of his Followers* (The Dead Sea Scrolls & Christian Origins Library, 4; North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 1998), p. 81.

John has a high Christology; that is not debated. What seems lost is the perception that high Christology is not uniquely Johannine and that such elevated claims may not be pure creations. Does not Mark stress that Jesus spoke authoritatively? Thus, to ignore John's witness to Jesus is to miss evidence of authentic Jesus tradition that may be hidden in redacted speeches. Obviously, no historical person named Jesus of Nazareth went around Galilee making the christological claims we find in John, but these very pronouncements may reflect earlier traditions that come to us via passages that are now highly edited by the Fourth Evangelist.

9. Names and Anonymity: No Rules Govern the Transmission of Traditions

The study of the Synoptics' transmission of Jesus traditions⁸⁷ and the examination of the two versions of the Lord's Prayer⁸⁸ indicate that no rules govern and shape such transmissions. No putative universal rules protect traditions or shape them for later needs as they evolve through time. Formulae, such as 'what I received I delivered', certainly define the transmission of the sayings of the Rabbis and are well known in *Pirke Aboth* and Paul's letters (e.g., 1 Cor. 11.25), but these are not rules that control or govern the recording and copying of a tradition. A tradition does not always expand, as we know from studying how Matthew and Luke abbreviate Mark and how a full manuscript of *Astronomical Enoch* is reduced to relatively succinct chapters.

While this point is almost universally recognized, many scholars see names appearing in John and make two assumptions: First, they assume the names appear for the first time because John is much later than any of the Synoptics. Second, they presuppose that the appearance of a name is due to the need to clarify ambiguities in a narrative. Surely, this method of thinking implies one thinks about the Gospels in the order

⁸⁷) See esp. Sanders, *Tendencies of the Synoptic Gospels*.

⁸⁸) See esp. Charlesworth, with M. Harding and M. Kiley (eds.), *The Lord's Prayer and Other Prayer Texts from the Greco-Roman Era* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994).

they now appear in our Bibles: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and then finally John. The expression ‘when we come to John’ implies that one should read the Synoptic Gospels first. That assumption mars methodology and perception. No one should imagine that the Gospels are placed in a chronological order in our canon, yet thinking sometimes is corrupted by such unexamined thoughts.

We New Testament scholars readily admit that names are added to the developing gospel tradition. Luke’s believing centurion is revealed to be ‘Longinus’;⁸⁹ Matthew’s three anonymous wisemen receive names (Gaspar, Balthasar, Melqon).⁹⁰ The two men crucified with Jesus are eventually supplied with names (Dysmas and Gestas).⁹¹ Moreover, Veronica (= Bernike), who had the golden cloth with Jesus’ portrait,⁹² appears so late in the tradition that we have no doubt judging this legend to be creative history. While all these names should not be judged to be historical, we should remember that there is no rule that names found in some documents but not others are clearly supplied and thus unhistorical.

Scholars customarily dismiss as unhistorical John’s specification of the name of the servant whose ear was cut off by Peter. They argue that John supplements the Synoptics, that we should expect ‘Malchus’ to be supplied since names are added as the tradition develops, and the name seems a good guess for a servant of royal figures, since it represents that he ‘belongs to the king’. Yet, there are problems with each of these arguments. Many New Testament scholars will not agree that John was written to supplement the Synoptics. Names should not be judged *prima facie* to be clearly added when they appear in one gospel but not another. And names that fit a narrative are not necessarily supplied by the narrator. Malchus can be the name of a servant. Eutychus, despite the meaning ‘fortunate’, is considered authentic historical tradition (Acts 20.9) and slaves usually receive names appropriate to the

⁸⁹ *The Letter of Pilate to Herod*; see J.K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 223.

⁹⁰ See W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* (2 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1989 [5th edn], 1990 [6th edn]), I, p. 364.

⁹¹ W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* (6th edn), I, p. 406 [the *Gospel of Nicodemus*].

⁹² See the Pilate Cycle of texts; e.g., Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, p. 215.

needs they supply: Chrestos, ‘the useful one’, Philo, ‘the friendly one’, Sophos, ‘the skilled one’.

Let us all admit that there are reasons to doubt the authenticity of the character ‘Malchus’. Yet there are also reasons to be suspicious that ‘Malchus’ may not be an addition to the tradition. It admirably fits the historical event, that is not doubted; perhaps John may here provide a reliable tradition that contains history (Jn 18.10).

Likewise, allegedly creative episodes may preserve history. The Gospel of John highlights Mary Magdalene and Thomas. We must not conclude that Malchus and other names are highlighted since John is fond of adding names. The Fourth Evangelist clearly shows interest in these persons named but within a narrative that is defined by anonymity. For example, the author never provides a name for Jesus’ mother and he introduces the ambiguous ‘the other disciple’.⁹³

10. John has Knowledge of Pre-70 Judaism that is Superior to the Synoptics

Virtually all scholars have learned that Jesus was a Jew and that his life and teachings must be understood in terms of Palestinian Judaism. Such a point was emphasized by Schlatter⁹⁴ and emphasized by Hengel who added that any possible so-called pagan influences in earliest Christianity were most likely already in Palestinian Judaism which was heavily influenced by Hellenistic culture.⁹⁵ John’s knowledge of Palestinian Jewish practices is evident in his theological reflections on the Feast of Booths; these, as Raymond E. Brown perceived, ‘reflect an accurate knowledge of the festal ceremonies in the Jerusalem Temple area’.⁹⁶

⁹³ On ‘ambiguity’ in John’s narrative, see J.H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995).

⁹⁴ A. Schlatter, *Die Geschichte des Christus* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1977 [original 1923]), p. 8.

⁹⁵ M. Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul* (trans. J. Bowden; London: SCM, 1983), p. xiv. Also see Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (2 vols.; trans. J. Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974).

⁹⁶ Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, p. 92.

Furthermore, in the past decade, major archaeological advances have been made that impinge on Jesus research.⁹⁷ Not all of them are mentioned in the informative *Jesus and Archaeology*, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*, and *Excavating Jesus*.⁹⁸ How archaeology sometimes indicates historical data in John is intimated by Paul N. Anderson and Urban von Wahlde in *Jesus and Archaeology*.⁹⁹ Many leading archaeologists now admit that John preserves valuable information about pre-70 Jerusalem and Judea.

Scholars, like Sanders and Fredriksen who have shown skills with scientific inquiry, have concluded that there could be no centurion in Capernaum (Mt. 8), perhaps to guard the border between Galilee and Perea, because no road led from this Jewish village northward or eastward. The recent discovery of a long stretch of perhaps the *via maris* in Migdal, south of Capernaum,¹⁰⁰ and a massive road near the monumental stairs to the Augusteum at Horvat Omrit, north and northeast of Capernaum, supply evidence that most likely a road existed near Capernaum.¹⁰¹ If a road led from Beth Shean to Panias, then the objections against a centurion being present in or near Capernaum (Mt. 8.5-13) disappear or are at least muted.¹⁰²

It is also evident that Peter's house most likely has been located in Capernaum and that Mark accurately imagines the type of houses in this village. They were thatched-roofed, as Mark implies in 2.4, and not made of tile as Luke reports in 5.19 (διὰ τῶν κεράμων; a passage missing in the Syriac witnesses). Excavations at Gamla and Yodefath (the

⁹⁷ For a summary, see J.H. Charlesworth, 'Hat die Archäologie Bedeutung für Jesus-Forschung?' *Evangelische Theologie* 68 (2008), pp. 246-65.

⁹⁸ Charlesworth (ed.), *Jesus and Archaeology*; J.L. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000); J.D. Crossan and J.L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001).

⁹⁹ Paul N. Anderson, 'Aspects of Historicity in the Gospel of John: Implications for Investigations of Jesus and Archaeology', pp. 587-618, and Urban von Wahlde, 'Archeology and John's Gospel', pp. 523-86, in Charlesworth (ed.), *Jesus and Archaeology*.

¹⁰⁰ I am indebted to Father Stefano De Luca for many insights and with whom I have enjoyed excavating in Migdal.

¹⁰¹ See the map of Roman roads in Galilee in Aviam, *Jews, Pagans and Christians in the Galilee*, p. 13; also see his discussion of Roman roads in Galilee on pp. 133-38.

¹⁰² For a decade, I have benefited from discussions with Dr. Aviam who took me to many hidden sites in the Galilee and with whom I opened the excavations at Khirbet Beza.

only excavated cities reflecting social groups) prove that the villages or cities contained a mixture of wealthy and average people as dwellers. Thus, we should jettison categories like ‘peasant’ for three main reasons: The term developed from socio-economic models that seem anachronistic for pre-70 Galileans; the Rabbis refer to day-laborers in Lower Galilee;¹⁰³ and most of the Galileans owned their own lands.¹⁰⁴ While no large stone jars were found at Gamla or Yodefath, a stone-making installation is located outside of Nazareth and is either first or second century CE. Moreover, a major pottery industry was centered both at Yodefath and at Kefar Hananyah.

When we turn specifically to John, many archaeological and architectural details are now appearing significant since what appeared to be imaginative is proving to be real. For example, only in John does Jesus make a whip to attack the tables of the money changers in the Temple. If the Hanuth (the area for shops and the large animals to be sacrificed) moved within the Temple precincts in 30 CE,¹⁰⁵ then Jesus would never have seen bulls and cows within the Sanctuary earlier. It is easy to imagine how he was able to fashion a whip from the straw or tethering robes in the underground corridor of the passageways in the southern area of the Sanctuary, and the laws of purity did not apply to this extension of the Temple Mount by Herod the Great.¹⁰⁶ The importance of archaeology for John and Jesus research will be elaborated later in this essay.

Suffice it now to clarify that John has access to some traditions that are independent of the Synoptics and some of these were already in a written form. Among them, I think we can discern a collection of signs (σημεία), some Johannine dialogues, and especially John’s passion story and resurrection accounts.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ See U. Leibner, *Settlement and History in Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Galilee: An Archaeological Survey of the Eastern Galilee* (TSAJ, 127; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), p. 293.

¹⁰⁴ See J.H. Charlesworth and M. Aviam, ‘Überlegungen zur Erforschung Galiläas im ersten Jahrhundert’, in C. Claußen and J. Frey (eds.), *Jesus und die Archäologie Galiläas* (Biblich-Theologische Studien, 87; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2008), pp. 93-127. Dr. Aviam argues for a middle class in his PhD dissertation <details?>.

¹⁰⁵ b. *Sanhedrin* 41.1; b. *Aboda Zara* 8.2; see Bahat, ‘Jesus and the Herodian Temple Mount’, in Charlesworth (ed.), *Jesus and Archaeology*, pp. 306-307.

¹⁰⁶ This fact is clarified by D. Bahat, ‘Jesus and the Herodian Temple Mount’, in Charlesworth (ed.), *Jesus and Archaeology*, pp. 300-308.

¹⁰⁷ See a similar judgment by Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, p. 35.

Finally, while the Synoptics are not always synoptic, John is often synoptic with them. This is certainly true in the passion narrative where all four gospels, despite glaring differences, do share the same general pattern and flow of the story: arrest, appearance before priests and then Pilate, crucifixion, burial and resurrection. Yet, there is more. John (implicitly) and Mark (explicitly) report that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptizer and that Jesus was a disciple of this John but eventually broke with him and went to Galilee to teach and serve. In all Gospels Jesus speaks with unparalleled authority and without depending on the authority of a rabbi. All Evangelists, and also Paul, report that Jesus proclaimed the dawning of God's Rule and that the preferred word for the Creator is 'Abba'. Jesus' ministry begins in Galilee and ends in Jerusalem. The four Evangelists are more 'synoptic' than we have thought by calling only the first three 'the Synoptics'.

In comparing John with the Synoptics too many scholars commit the Bretschneider error. In 1820, Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider argued that the Synoptics should be preferred since three votes against one settles any debate about which 'source' to use for discerning the historical Jesus.¹⁰⁸ If Matthew and Luke depend on Mark, then three independent witnesses are reduced to one. Mathematically, it is Mark versus John; that is, one versus one. While each gospel is theologically shaped, each contains history behind kerygmata. Our task is not to ignore either but to work with both, and all relevant sources and *realia*, in search of meaningful historical traditions that allow us to portray the Jesus from Nazareth.

A New Paradigm: Do Not Ignore any Data, Especially John

1. Five Influential Opinions

In evaluating a possible paradigm shift,¹⁰⁹ one should perceive at the outset a major point made by W.R. Farmer in 1967 and accentuated

¹⁰⁸ K.G. Bretschneider, *Probabilia de evangelii et epistolarum Joannis apostoli indole et origine eruditorium iudiciis modeste subiecit* (Leipzig: J.A. Barth, 1820).

¹⁰⁹ For my earlier thoughts, see 'From Old to New: Paradigm Shifts Concerning Judaism, the Gospel of John, Jesus, and the Advent of "Christianity"', in J.H. Charlesworth with Petr Pokorný (eds.), *Jesus Research: An International Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 56-72.

by B.F. Meyer in 1979.¹¹⁰ Farmer and Meyer stress that while Schleiermacher depended on John, Baur on Matthew, and Hirsch (and many others) on Mark, the critic should not give such preeminence to only one Gospel. We should acknowledge that each Gospel may provide invaluable data concerning the historical Jesus. That point brings us to John who is too often judged the odd-man-out.

In assessing the *status quaestionis* regarding the appropriateness of using John in Jesus research, it is possible to perceive a growing tendency to include John. This recent trend was foreshadowed by C.H. Dodd's well-known *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*¹¹¹ and Raymond E. Brown's publications, including *The Death of the Messiah*.¹¹² Brown rightly warned against assuming 'facilely that the Synoptic Gospels are recording the historical fact and that Jn has theologically reorganized the data'. He rightly judged that 'the critics have played us false in their minimal estimate of the historicity of the Fourth Gospel'.¹¹³ Much later, in 2003, Brown (1928–1998), with the help of Francis J. Moloney's editing, opined: 'Today there is a growing tendency to take seriously many of the historical, social, and geographical details peculiar to narratives found only in the Fourth Gospel'.¹¹⁴ With these promising insights, I now boldly choose five luminaries to illustrate the point that John should be, and is being, used in Jesus research.

¹¹⁰ W.R. Farmer, 'An Historical Essay on the Humanity of Jesus Christ', in W.R. Farmer, C.F.D. Moule and R.R. Niebuhr (eds.), *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), see esp. p. 105; I am indebted to B.F. Meyer for this citation; see his endorsement of this point by Farmer in *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1979), p. 72.

¹¹¹ C.H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

¹¹² R.E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 2 vols. (New York and London: Doubleday, 1994). For a brilliantly written expose of John's passion narrative, see vol. I, pp. 33–35. Brown's study of the passion narrative led him to follow 'the thesis that John wrote his PN independently of Mark's' (vol. I, p. 83).

¹¹³ R.E. Brown, *New Testament Essays* (Garden City: Image Books, 1965), p. 271.

¹¹⁴ Obviously this opinion must antedate 1998, the year of Brown's death, yet he listed scholars who scarcely, even then, should be labeled representatives of 'today'. That is, Brown noted 'the works of Albright, Higgins, Leal and Stauffer'. See Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, p. 91.

1. In the voluminous *A Marginal Jew* (1991–), J.P. Meier not only claims that the ‘major source of our knowledge about the historical Jesus is ... the four canonical Gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John)’¹¹⁵ but shows how each Gospel intermittently provides valuable historical data. Meier does not relegate the use of John to the Passion; he indicates that John helps us comprehend the historical relation between Jesus and John the Baptizer who was Jesus’ teacher.
2. In *The Historical Jesus* (1998), Theissen and Merz offer the insight: ‘[I]t is also clear that John presupposes sources with a Synoptic stamp both in the narrative tradition and in the sayings tradition. But he seems to refer back to them independently of the Synoptics.’ They point out that John’s version of the centurion at Capernaum (Jn 4.46–54) ‘can hardly be understood as a direct revision of the corresponding miracle story in Q (Matt 8.5–13; Luke 7.1–10), because the part which goes beyond Q (John 4.52f.) expresses that naive view of miracle which the redactional passage John 4.48 criticizes’.¹¹⁶
3. In ‘Historiographical Characteristics of the Gospel of John’, in *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple* (2007)¹¹⁷, Richard Bauckham argues that John’s account of Nicodemus is reliable. The Nicodemus of John 3 was a member of the wealthy Gurion family known from rabbinic texts. Likewise, Bauckham offers some thoughtful reasons why we should not ignore Lazarus in spite of the silence in the Synoptics about such a Lazarus. While I differ with Bauckham’s views on the importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for comprehending John and his claim that John 21 was part of the original composition, I think it evident that he offers

¹¹⁵ J.P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York and London: Doubleday, 1991), I, p. 41. Moloney (I think rightly representing Brown) saluted Meier for his ‘careful use of Johannine material in his discussion of the material in his second volume, subtitled “Mentor, Message, and Miracles”’. See Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, p. 93.

¹¹⁶ Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, p. 35.

¹¹⁷ R. Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), pp. 93–112.

some good reasons to use the Fourth Gospel for reconstructing the historical Jesus.

4. In *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus* (2006), P.N. Anderson published the first voluminous book which seeks to show that John is imperative in Jesus research. His book is more than an exhortation to include John in the study of the historical Jesus; it is a polemic against the myopic use of the Synoptics. It seems clear that Anderson's insight regarding the dialectical thought in John removes the reasons for positing an editor's insertion that is late, non-historical and ecclesiastical. Admitting that the Synoptic's presentation of Jesus is 'at many turns ... still to be preferred over the Johannine', yet at other turns Anderson insists, 'the Johannine presentation of Jesus is historically preferable over the Synoptics'.¹¹⁸ One should not caricature Anderson; he knows that 'the Johannine Jesus is clearly crafted in the image of the evangelist's own convictions'.¹¹⁹ Yet, Anderson strives to point the way away from 'the de-historicization of John' and the 'de-Johannification of Jesus' which is hailed by too many as a critical consensus. Anderson shows that the alleged agreement among scholars is by no means a 'consensus' and is hardly 'critical'.
5. In *The Fourth Gospel in Four Dimensions* (2008), D.M. Smith publishes for the first time four essays that focus on history in John: 'The Gospel of John in its Jewish Context', 'The Problem of History in John', 'Jesus Tradition in the Gospel of John' and 'Redaction Criticism, Genre, Narrative Criticism, and the Historical Jesus in the Gospel of John'. He also adds a fifth: 'The Historical Figure of Jesus in First John'. Smith seeks to demonstrate that there is some historical basis in John's narrative presentation of Jesus. Smith argues that the Fourth Gospel's claim to be based on an eyewitness (21.24 and 19.35) should 'be taken seriously, although not at face value'.¹²⁰ Smith contends: 'John is an

¹¹⁸) P.N. Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2006), p. 154. Anderson sent me a copy of this book when the present essay was almost completed. I am impressed how similar we are in many ways.

¹¹⁹) Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus*, p. 46.

¹²⁰) D.M. Smith, *The Fourth Gospel in Four Dimensions* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), p. 81.

independent Gospel, and its claim to be based on an independent witness is worth taking seriously'¹²¹. Smith adds: '*Redaction criticism* does not prove John's independence of the Synoptic Gospels, but at least suggests that at many points John may know alternative traditions that are arguably historical.'¹²²

With a balanced nuance, Smith encapsulates a new trend in Jesus research and the importance of John in supplying historically reliable data. Smith sees why John has not been used: '[T]he distinctive Johannine portrayal of Jesus, his opponents, and controversies does not accurately represent the historical figure of Jesus or his milieu'.¹²³ Smith also perceives why John should be used and exhorts scholars to comprehend: 'John's narrative, as distinguished from the portrayal of Jesus, often appears quite plausible historically just at those points at which it differs from Mark or the Synoptics. Arguably, John presents factually data that are irrelevant to his theological purposes or even contravene them.'¹²⁴ Smith even speculates that John, in its earliest form, is conceivably 'prior to it'¹²⁵ and that it is even imaginable that Luke may have referred to the earliest form of John as one of the eyewitnesses upon which he based his work (Lk. 1.1-4).¹²⁶

We have chosen to indicate five leading scholars have now argued that John must be included in Jesus research; they are Meier, Theissen with Merz, Bauckham, Anderson, and Smith.¹²⁷ Other distinguished and gifted scholars devoted to Jesus research include John.¹²⁸ Prominent

¹²¹ Smith, *The Fourth Gospel in Four Dimensions*, p. 111.

¹²² Smith, *The Fourth Gospel in Four Dimensions*, p. 118. Original emphasis.

¹²³ Smith, *The Fourth Gospel in Four Dimensions*, p. 110.

¹²⁴ Smith, *The Fourth Gospel in Four Dimensions*, pp. 110-11.

¹²⁵ Smith, *The Fourth Gospel in Four Dimensions*, p. 116.

¹²⁶ Smith, *The Fourth Gospel in Four Dimensions*, p. 118.

¹²⁷ P. Borgen, from 1959 to 1993, argued that John and not only the Synoptics preserve valuable historical information. See esp. Borgen, 'John and the Synoptics in the Passion Narrative', *NTS* 5 (1959), pp. 246-59.

¹²⁸ M.A. Powell also notes a shift in Jesus research in the direction of appreciating the traditions in John; see Powell, "Things that Matter": Historical Jesus Studies in the New Millennium', *World & World* 29.2 (2009), pp. 121-28.

among them are Ben F. Meyer,¹²⁹ Paula Fredriksen in *Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews*¹³⁰ and in *From Jesus to Christ*,¹³¹ Amy-Jill Levine in *The Misunderstood Jew*,¹³² and Bruce Chilton in *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography*. Although Chilton puts great emphasis on the Targumim, he includes in Jesus' life episodes unique to John, including his tutorial relation to John the Baptizer, the wedding at Kana, and the reviving of Lazarus, arguing that 'strong elements of Jesus' actual practice flicker through John's symbolic picture' (p. 244).¹³³

2. All Sources Should be Surveyed and Not Dismissed at the Outset

I have come to appreciate how archaeology, topography, symbology and sociology, as well as the traditions preserved in the Pseudepigrapha, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, help me comprehend better and imagine the world of Jesus and his life within it. Jesus traditions are clearly preserved in Paul's letters and perhaps in some so-called apocryphal compositions. When we study the extra-canonical gospels, however, we can appreciate more fully the reserve, focus and attention to the pre-cross Jesus found in the intra-canonical gospels.

¹²⁹ While B.F. Meyer argued that John does not present us with memory but highly developed religious reflection, he admits that John retains significant historical information on the beginnings of Jesus' ministry, the reason for Jesus' death, and the Easter experience of his disciples. See Meyer, 'Jesus Christ', *ABD* 3.774.

¹³⁰ P. Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews* (New York: Knopf, 1999).

¹³¹ Fredriksen sees that John's 'information is historically more sound' than the Synoptics in 'the probable duration of Jesus' ministry, the Sanhedrin's concern for the political consequences of his preaching, the pitch of popular messianic excitement around Passover, the extent of the Jewish authorities' involvement on the night of Jesus' arrest, the date of his arrest relative to Passover'. *From Jesus to Christ* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 198-99.

¹³² A.-J. Levine wisely observes that 'the New Testament texts preserve for Jews part of our own history', (*The Misunderstood Jew* [New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006], p. 8), that the 'popular image of Jesus as a "peasant" often serves not to connect him to his fellow Jews but to distinguish him from them' (p. 9), that Jesus probably wore 'fringes' (*tzitzit*) (p. 24), that Jesus not only dresses like a Jew, 'he eats like a Jew as well. He keeps kosher; that is, he keeps the dietary requirements established in Torah' (p. 24), and that John's version of the 'Cleansing of the Temple ... accentuates the point' that is crucial: not exploitation but making the holy place a business center (p. 153).

¹³³ B. Chilton, *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography* (New York and London: Doubleday, 2000).

Scholars who use only the Synoptics as sources for understanding the historical Jesus err in missing the early and independent traditions in John and fail to grasp a major point in historiography. Long before the Gospels, appearing for example in Polybius, is the warning that a good historian must use all sources, or witnesses, and examine them for their reliability in search of historical truth.¹³⁴ In *Excavating Q*, John S. Kloppenborg Verbin rightly points out that Q ‘is an important source for the historical Jesus, but it is only one of several’.¹³⁵ We have seen that John belongs to those other sources.

3. *Archaeology Proves Pre-70 Historical Data in John’s Narrative*

Today, most New Testament scholars recognize they should be informed of pre-70 Judaism and the vast amount of archaeological evidence from that time and from ancient Palestine. Yet, too many of those who publish in the area of Jesus research have never excavated in the Holy Land and do not seek to comprehend the methods, techniques and tasks of archaeologists. To appreciate the purpose of archaeologists seems as important as to be abreast of challenging developments. For our present purposes, I have chosen to highlight briefly only four archaeological discoveries that help us perceive that John must be used in Jesus research.

First, John knows that stone vessels reflect Jewish purification rites. An aside in John 2 is archaeologically significant. The Synoptics do not mention the importance of stone vessels, yet John states that in Cana there were ‘six stone jars standing there for the Jewish rights of purification’ (2.6).¹³⁶ This is a major datum that is grounded in Jesus’ time and place. Stone vessels have been found at the two sites vying for this ‘Cana’: Khirbet Kana and Kefer Kana.¹³⁷ Stone vessels are designed for

¹³⁴ See, e.g., Polybius, *Histories* 12.27. Polybius warns that we must not only study written sources but also interrogate ‘living witnesses’, and study topographies.

¹³⁵ Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q*, p. 352.

¹³⁶ See C. Claussen, ‘Turning Water to Wine: Re-reading the Miracle at the Wedding in Cana’, in J.H. Charlesworth with Petr Pokorný (eds.), *Jesus Research: An International Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 73–97.

¹³⁷ Some of this information has not yet been published, but see P. Richardson, ‘Khirbet Qana (and Other Villages) as a Context for Jesus’, in Charlesworth (ed.), *Jesus and Archaeology*, pp. 120–44.

preserving the contents from ritual pollution, and they are found not only in the Upper City of Jerusalem but also in many sites of Lower Galilee especially the villages known to the historical Jesus. Almost all the stone vessels date from the time of Herod the Great to 70 CE, although some sites for manufacturing stone vessels continued in Lower Galilee, notably just outside Nazareth. In this one particular example, John is more reliable than the Synoptics and the tradition makes appropriate sense in pre-70 Jewish settings when the Temple authorities were mandating ritual purity for all Jews in Palestine. Moreover, when John reports that the miracle in Cana was ‘the first of his signs’ (2.11), the comment fits well with the Jewish emphasis on signs found in Josephus, Pseudo-Philo (LAB), and in other early Jewish texts.

Second, John alone has knowledge of Jerusalem’s architecture. As I have stated elsewhere, John’s description of Jerusalem and its environs is frequently now supported by the latest archaeological discoveries. Many archeologists only recently are finding that John is indispensable in recreating and imagining pre-70 Jerusalem and the context of Jesus’ life and mind.¹³⁸ The placing of Lazarus, a leper, in Bethany (Jn 11.1-17) is in line with the proscriptions in the *Temple Scroll* that a place for lepers is to be located east of the Holy City (11Q19). The description of Lazarus’ tomb and the stench of the corpse (11.38-44) fits precisely the tombs around Jerusalem—many of which are caves (Jn 11.38)—and the need for many glass vessels for perfume (unguentaria) to be placed near the corpse. Only John reports the massive stones in the pavement of Pilate’s palace: the *Lithostrotos* and *Gabatha* (Jn 19.13) which is a Hebrew word that does not translate the Greek and must be the name used by Semites in Jerusalem for the place. Now, massive pre-70 slabs of enormous stones are discovered precisely where Pilate’s palace, formerly Herod’s palace, had been located. John appears to report accurately the *Bēma*, the ‘high seat’ (19.13) where Pilate would sit and render judgment. These descriptions were either ignored or considered embellishments to an exciting narrative.

Other details that seem incidental in John’s story are now appearing to be historical, according to archaeological discoveries in Jerusalem.

¹³⁸ J.H. Charlesworth, ‘Pour savoir ce qu’était Jérusalem avant sa destruction, il faut lire Jean’, *Le Point* 1 (December 2008–January 2009), pp. 24-25.

Among them are the following: the house and courtyard of Annas (18.13), the house of Caiaphas (18.24), Golgatha (19.17), the *hanuth*, ‘meat market’, where the large animals for sacrifice were held, a garden tomb (19.17), and a room in which the disciples gathered (20.19–29). It is clear, John provides more amazing details about pre-70 Jerusalem. John knew that Solomon’s Portico was an ideal shelter from the cold winter blasts (10.22–23). Only John reports that there is a pool with five columned porticoes north of the Temple and a large pool probably south of it. Among early historians of Jerusalem, especially Josephus, only John reports these pools with surprising accuracy. Scholars thus judged these details to be created for theological or christological purposes. Now each pool has been located and each antedates the destruction of the area by Roman armies. The Pool of Bethesda (Bethzatha) does have five porticoes and the columns can be seen today lying on the ground. The Pool of Siloam (9.1–12) was exposed recently when a sewer pipe burst. This pool appears to be the largest mikveh (Jewish bath for ritual purification) that antedates 70 CE. It had been buried under the debris from the First Jewish Revolt which ended in the burning of Jerusalem including the Temple. In addition, a monumental stairway leads from the Pool of Siloam to the Temple gates.

Third, John alone knows *termini technici* characteristic of early Jewish thought before 70 CE. For example, he uses the term ‘Sons of Light’ which has been found in the most important document for understanding the Qumranites, the *Rule of the Community*. A highly developed dualistic paradigm of light versus darkness or good and evil once thought to be present only outside Palestine is now evident within Jewish Palestinian thought of the second century BCE. The Logos concept draws our minds not to Heraclitus and the Stoics but to the Jewish debates over Sophia, Wisdom, and the divine intermediaries.

Fourth, John preserves Palestinian debates anchored in problematic Hebrew scriptures. Only one example must now suffice. Genesis reports that God completed his creation on the sixth day and rested on the seventh day. Yet, Gen. 2.2 in Hebrew means: ‘And God completed on the seventh day the work he had been doing.’ That means God worked on the seventh day. John seems to know the debates over interpreting this verse to mean that God did not work on the seventh day (the reading of the Septuagint). John, knowing these competing traditions, has

Jesus respond, with a surprising knowledge of the Hebrew of Gen. 2.2: ‘My Father is working still, and I am also working’ (5.17). Jesus was working, as his Father, on Shabbat (5.16). Thanks to focused scientific archaeological work, it is now clear that scholars err in using only the Synoptics as sources for understanding the historical Jesus.

Why, then, have so many scholars devoted to Jesus research rejected John or tended to ignore his account? If it is because John is theological and ideologically motivated then the choice is misinformed. The Synoptics are theologically and ideologically shaped; and we have seen, in studying the Pesharim (the Qumran commentaries on Scripture), that history is often transported via theological, and ideological, documents.¹³⁹

Conclusion

We may summarize a few points. To many of us who specialize in first-century Jewish thought, Josephus seems to edit his *Antiquities* to better represent historical episodes somewhat bowdlerized in the *War* due to more maturity and reflection, less dependence on the Flavians, and perhaps more precise documentation in Roman archives. Matthew and Luke heavily edit Mark, their main source, but they never seem to change Mark for historical accuracy. They redact Mark to introduce theological and christological viewpoints. Thus, scholars agree that each Evangelist—Mark, Matthew and Luke—sacrifices historical data for theological purposes and does so in ways that contrast to the other intra-canonical Gospels. Yet this consensus provided by those devoted to the *Redaktionsgeschichtliche Schule* never changed the categorization of the first three Gospels as ‘Synoptic’. Since World War II we have seen how un-synoptic are the Synoptics, and at the same time we are now perceiving how synoptic in places are all four Gospels, especially but not only in the passion narratives.

The dawning of the Kingdom of God, ‘God’s Rule’, is Jesus’ authentic proclamation. The vast majority of New Testament experts reject

¹³⁹ This is demonstrated in Charlesworth, *The Pesharim and Qumran History* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

Ritschl's depiction of God's Rule in Jesus' message as an ethical exhortation. Almost all follow, *mutatis mutandis*, Johannes Weiss's insistence that Jesus' Kingdom talk must be understood in the terms and perspectives developed within the Jewish apocalypses and apocalyptic literature.¹⁴⁰ Yet, most New Testament scholars focus all their work only on Matthew, Mark and Luke as they seek to comprehend God's Rule. The *terminus technicus*, however, is also apparent in John and is presented at the outset when Jesus instructs a teacher of Israel: 'Amen, amen, I say to you, unless one is born anew (or from above), one cannot see the Kingdom of God (*tēn basileian tou theou*)' (3.3). He then adds: 'Amen, amen, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, one cannot enter the Kingdom of God' (*tēn basileian tou theou*; 3.5). These teachings reflect Jewish apocalyptic eschatology and help us comprehend Jesus' fundamental message.

In conclusion, as J.D.G. Dunn pointed out, we must allow John to be John and not to read his narrative with our minds on the Synoptics and how he differs from them.¹⁴¹ Scholars who myopically employ only the Synoptics as sources for understanding the historical Jesus miss the independent and reliable traditions in John. They also violate the canons of historiography: The historian should use and sift for insight all available data and witnesses to the events being represented. That methodology is imperative in Jesus research,¹⁴² which is not like the various

¹⁴⁰ J. Weiss, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (Göttingen, 1892). See Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (trans. R.H. Hiers and D.L. Holland; Philadelphia: Fortress/London: SCM, 1971).

¹⁴¹ J.D.G. Dunn, 'Let John be John—A Gospel for its Time', in Peter Stuhlmacher, *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien* (WUNT, 28; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1983), pp. 309–40.

¹⁴² M. Borg and others, who criticize my own studies, miss the point that I coined this term, 'Jesus research', to refer to the study of Jesus that appeared around 1980 and was not primarily motivated by theology or Christology and includes Jews, like Vermes and Flusser. Prior to 1980, the study of Jesus was considered a Quest and before the eighteenth century the study of Jesus was frequently confused with worship of him as the Christ, by Christians. Often many Jews dismissed the New Testament and Jesus; both were judged to be misguided, even diabolical. See G. Theissen and D. Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung* (NTOA, 345; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), p. 4 n. 8.

‘Quests’; it is the scientific search for reliable historical data in the life of ‘Jesus, the son of Joseph’ (Jn 6.42).

In the process of being faithful to historiography, we must avoid two psychological errors. The first is the manipulation of texts to ascertain something historically valid. The second is the tendency to resist historical information in seeking to be scientific and objective, as well as the fear of being judged one who allowed faith to provide answers. Each tendency is well demonstrated in Jesus research over the past three centuries.

Two questions remain to be explored. First, is there a paradigm shift in Jesus research that indicates John should also be used? Here is my answer for discussion: It is not too early to discern a shift in the use of sources. A subtle change may be discerned in contemporary research: For almost a century scholars tended to use only Mark and the other Synoptics and ignore John, and often to expunge his historical veracity. Then, some scholars began to use the Synoptics and refer occasionally to John. Now, more and more specialists on John and Jesus research are using Mark as well as John without judging one to be always superior to the other. The Society of Biblical Literature’s Group on ‘John, Jesus, and History’ is bringing together Johannine experts who are devoted to John and the study of the history preserved within it, including reliable traditions that take us back to the historical Jesus. The first triennium (2002–2004) ‘showcased invited papers from leading biblical scholars on topics pertaining to the relationship between the Johannine literature and the study of the historical Jesus’.¹⁴³ In their second triennium (2005–2007) this SBL Group focused on ‘aspects of historicity’ in John, and in its third triennium (2008–2010) the Group emphasized ‘glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine lens’.¹⁴⁴

What is new? Here is how I would evaluate the present development towards a burgeoning consensus: John is recognized as highly developed

¹⁴³) These are the words of a member of the steering committee, John Thatcher; see *John, Jesus, and History* (ed. P.N. Anderson, F. Just and T. Thatcher; SBL Symposium Series, 44; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), vol. I, p. 9.

¹⁴⁴) I am grateful to Paul Anderson for this information. Volumes of the JJH SBL Group are as follows: *Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel*, vol. II (ed. P.N. Anderson, F. Just and T. Thatcher; Leiden: Brill/Atlanta: SBL Press, 2009) and *Glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine Lens*, vol. III (c. 2011).

but so was Jewish thought in the first century. John is independent of the Synoptics and has special sources that need to be evaluated for their historical value. John has amazing details about pre-70 Jerusalem and archaeologists are frequently able to prove John's historical accuracy.

Second, should scholars call for a paradigm shift in the study of the historical Jesus so that all data is included for assessment, including evidence that seems to lie hidden behind the kerygmatic Christology of John's narrative? The evidence surveyed above indicates that the obvious answer in terms of historiography and reliable historical data is 'yes'. When Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter exhort us to replace the criterion of *dissimilarity* with *historical plausibility*, they help us comprehend that 'distinctions between Judaism and early Christianity are not in themselves an adequate methodological basis for Jesus research'.¹⁴⁵ Their more refined methodology helps us find historical gems in the Johannine mines, since John, unlike the Synoptics, is so complex in its two horizons: it is so Jewish and it is so anti-Jewish, and the story of Jesus by John sails not only between the two but within them.

We began this essay with one focused question: Is it wise to ignore the Fourth Gospel in re-constructing the life, mission and message of Jesus from Nazareth? The answer is 'no'. It is now time to move beyond the caricaturing of John as a non-historical theological treatise, a judgment that has plagued scholars since they interpreted Eusebius's report that Clement of Alexandria correctly characterized the Synoptics as factual but John as 'spiritual'. I do not think that Clement was defining John as mythological, legendary and unhistorical (*EH* 6.14.7).¹⁴⁶ John's highly interpreted story of Jesus is becoming a telescope to peer back into first-century Jerusalem so we may see not only Jewish stone vessels and mikvaot but also the shadows of a Galilean bringing healing and a renewed oneness with the Father.

Is it possible, then, to observe a paradigm shift from ignoring John and focusing only on the Synoptics to including John and sometimes giving priority to some of the traditions preserved in it? Yes.

¹⁴⁵ Theissen and Winter, *Quest for the Plausible Jesus*, p. 25.

¹⁴⁶ One of the pillars of the Jesus Seminar is that the Synoptics allow us to find the historical Jesus but John presents a 'spiritual gospel'. R. Funk *et al.* (eds.), *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), p. 3.