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Aspects of Historicity in the Gospel of John: Implications for Investigations of Jesus and Archaeology

Paul N. Anderson

Of the many tensions characterizing the Gospel of John, one of its perplexities most needing to be addressed critically is the set of issues related to aspects of historicity.¹ On one hand, John is the most spiritual, theological, and symbolic of the canonical Gospels, leading scholars in recent decades to take seriously the literary features of the work. On the other hand, there is more archaeological, topographical, and apparently historical material in John than in any other Gospel, or even in all three combined.² It is no surprise, therefore, that many of the essays presented at the millennial conference on Jesus and archaeology held in Jerusalem (August 2000) dealt with issues and details alluded to *directly* in the Gospel of John. And yet, because the prevalent opinion among New Testament scholars ascribes little if any historical weight to the Fourth Gospel, this trend presents a formidable obstacle to the scientific investigation of Jesus and archaeology. Consider, for instance, the opinion of Edgar J. Goodspeed regarding the purportedly ahistorical nature of the Fourth Evangelist: "It must be remembered that topography and chronology were among the least of the author's concerns. His head was among the stars. He was seeking to determine the place of Jesus in the spiritual universe and his relations to the eternal realities.

1. Tensions between the humanity and divinity of Jesus, the Son's egalitarian or subordinate relation to the Father, embellished and existentialized presentation of Jesus' signs, heightened or diminished sacramentology, present or future eschatology, and literary unity or disunity in John have been addressed especially in P. N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6*, WUNT 78 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1996; Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1997); also included in *The Dialogical Autonomy of the Fourth Gospel — the Purpose, Development, and Meaning of John* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2006).

2. Professor von Wahlde's essay in the present collection examines over fifty archaeological and topographical passages in John, so the treatment of specific passages should be considered in his essay.

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These were the matters that interested and absorbed him, not itineraries and time tables, so that practical mundane considerations that might apply to Mark, Matthew, or Luke have little significance for his work.”³ Clearly, John is greatly interested in Christology, but does that mean its narrator had *no* interest in the empirical details he includes in his narrative? If John’s patent ahistoricity is a worthy thesis, this would be important to establish. This would mean that John’s archaeological and topographical references would be disconnected: severed from the events narrated, thus requiring an alternative explanation. However, if this modernistic thesis itself emerges as less than resilient when subjected to critical scrutiny, the historical-critical scholar must explore alternative means of accounting for the distinctive character of the Johannine witness. This is especially important, given the fact of John’s archaeological and topographical features, many of which appear also to be accurate.

Along these lines, several *serious errors* are made by otherwise critical scholars. (a) First, John’s differences with the Synoptics are wrongly understood as three against one, with John being the lone Gospel out. If John and Mark may be considered the *Bi-Optic* Gospels,⁴ John’s differences with the Synoptics are better considered one against one, with at least some of them consisting of an individuated perspective providing an alternative — perhaps intentionally so — to Mark. (b) Second, it is a gross error to assume that because John is *theological* in its tone it is *ahistorical* in its character and origin. By analogy, the crucifixion of Jesus was of paramount theological significance to early Christians, but this fact alone does not *prove* its ahistoricity. Spiritualized reflection more often follows upon significant events rather than concocting them, and critical judgment must be used in discerning whether a theological comment in John betrays a spiritualized reflection upon an event or whether it reflects a projection of a theological notion on to the narrative. Facile conjecture alone does not meet the test of critical scrutiny. (c) A third error is to fail to notice the many ways John’s traditional accounts appear more authentic than, and even historically superior to, those in the Synoptics. This is not to deny the many ways that the Synoptic presentations of Jesus are preferable to the Johannine; the point is that the multiplicity of issues between the Gospels must be consid-

3. See Edgar J. Goodspeed, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), p. 310.

4. See P. N. Anderson, “John and Mark — the Bi-Optic Gospels,” in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, ed. R. Fortna and T. Thatcher (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 2001), pp. 175-88. For the overall theory of John’s relation to the other traditions, see P. N. Anderson, “Interfluent, Formative, and Dialectical — a Theory of John’s Relation to the Synoptics,” in *Für und wider die Priorität des Johannesevangeliums*, ed. P. Hofrichter, TTS 9 (Hildesheim, Zürich, and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2002), pp. 19-58.

ered — in their complexity — rather than moving simplistically in one direction or another.

Critical scholars are notably aware of fallacies related to affirming too much historical certainty based on an inferred apostolic origin of a Gospel tradition, but the obverse, assuming that one or more historical incongruities demonstrate the pervasive falsity of that tradition's historicity, is equally flawed.⁵ This essay will endeavor to stay clear of such errors in the interest of analyzing critically the ways the Johannine witness might indeed be serviceable historically, and likewise where it is not. The goal of this essay is thus to evaluate critically the aforementioned opinions of modernistic scholars, seeking to cast new light on particular aspects of historicity in the Gospel of John, believing that such a prospect will inform the larger discussions regarding Jesus and archaeology. Before doing so, however, recent significant contributions on the subjects of archaeology, John, and Jesus deserve consideration.

Recent Breakthroughs on John, Jesus, and Archaeology

As a first consideration, the father of biblical archaeological studies, William Foxwell Albright, bolstered the historicity of the Johannine tradition impressively in his 1956 essay published in the *Dodd Festschrift*.⁶ (a) He challenged the

5. Note the overreaching approach of R. L. Sturch, "The Alleged Eyewitness Material in the Fourth Gospel," *Studia Biblica* 2 (1978): 313-27, who seeks to overturn the works of Westcott and Dodd in their connecting of apparent eyewitness details in John with the eyewitness claims of the redactor. While some details "resist elimination" (an admission of his positivistic bias), he claims that alternative explanations *prove* that arguing that the "Evangelist was an eyewitness of nearly all that he reported . . . cannot in fact be achieved" (p. 324). He comes close, however, to committing the all-or-none fallacy in the *other* direction. Questioning the certainty of A does not demonstrate non-A. This is the fallacy of arguing an inference from ignorance. A second error follows. While Sturch rightly points out that many of the Johannine details cannot be confirmed, he also commits errors in his inference of Johannine "mistakes." He wrongly assumes that the forty-six years of building the Temple is an error, when it corresponds well with Herod's reconstruction program having begun in 19 B.C.E.; his determination that the weight of the spices must be an "inaccurate detail" (simply because he imagines it so) also fails to convince. While Westcott may have overstated his own case, Sturch's essay nonetheless falls short of overturning the Johannine eyewitness claims either on the basis of hard evidence or sound reasoning. Given an "if B then A" syllogism, the discounting of B does not demonstrate non-A. This is the fallacy of denying the antecedent. Not only is the conjectural questioning of B weak in these cases, but the structure of the argument is also logically flawed. Genuinely critical scholars will challenge claims in all directions, not just traditional ones.

6. See W. F. Albright, "Recent Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of St. John," in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology: In Honour of Charles Harold Dodd*,

purported *religionsgeschichtlich* origin of John's material as having been contemporary Hellenistic and Gnostic religious mythology, showing that the background was on firmer footing as a Palestinian work of Jewish origin. (b) Albright then presented many examples of John's familiarity with Palestine before the First Revolt (66-70 C.E.), challenging later datings of John. These early Palestinian and Jewish references in John appear to have been connected with Diaspora Christian settings in the Hellenistic world, probably by means of orally conveyed tradition.⁷ (c) Archaeological finds in Jerusalem include a Roman stone pavement in the Antonia Tower (measuring 2,500 square meters, thus matching the Johannine *Lithostroton*) and the elevated ridge on which it stood (explaining the odd reference to the site in Aramaic, *gabbeta*, meaning ridge of the house).⁸ (d) The topographic references to the places near Shechem where John was baptizing (Jn 3:22-30) include "Aenon near Salim," corresponding with the headwaters of Wadi Far'ah (near modern Ainun — similar to the Aramaic word for "little fountain," which itself is near the town of Salim) (pp. 158-60). These places in Samaria also would intersect with the fact that some Samaritans were later found to be followers of John the Baptist. (e) Likewise, the recent discovery of Jacob's well in Sychar (in the modern Arabic, 'Askar) confirms the Johannine rendering (pp. 159-60). (f) The discoveries at Qumran have contributed an extensive understanding of Jewish dualism and models of redemption, making the Gnostic and Hellenistic cult inferences less and less plausible (pp. 160-70).⁹ In summation, "both the narratives and *logia* of John's Gospel certainly or presumably date back to oral tradition in Palestine, before A.D. 70; they were probably transmitted orally in the Diaspora for at least a decade — possibly two decades — before being put into writing" (p. 170). Albright's archaeological contribution forced biblical scholars to consider again significant aspects of Johannine historicity, having been sidestepped by the previous century or more of critical scholarship.

A second major contribution to the study of John, Jesus, and archaeology is

ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), pp. 153-71. The page numbers in the remainder of this paragraph refer to this essay.

7. Descriptions of Jesus as a *rabbi* and *didaskalos* are confirmed by pre-70 ossuaries, as are the common Jewish names: for Mary (*Maryam*), Martha (*Marta*), and Lazarus (*La'zar*) (Albright, "Recent Discoveries," pp. 157-58).

8. See also the extensive archaeological treatment of the Gabbatha site by J. F. Wilson, "Archaeology and the Origins of the Fourth Gospel: Gabbatha," in *Johannine Studies: Essays in Honor of Frank Pack*, ed. J. E. Priest, W. R. Clark, and R. L. Tyler (Malibu, Calif.: Pepperdine University Press, 1989), pp. 221-30, strengthening Albright's case further.

9. See also J. H. Charlesworth's important 1992 collection of essays connecting John with Qumran and thus the Essene movement: *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

the 1988 monograph of James Charlesworth,¹⁰ in which he outlines the top seven archaeological breakthroughs in the last half of the twentieth century. While Charlesworth does not call attention to this fact, amazingly *all seven of them* bear some connection with the Gospel of John! In addition to Johannine connections with the burned house in Jerusalem (confirming Jesus' double entendre prediction in Jn 2:19 that the Temple would be destroyed) in which stone jars for ritual purification were found (Jn 2:6) (pp. 106-8), the seven top archaeological breakthroughs are as follows: (a) The *seventh*-most-important archaeological discovery for Jesus studies is the discovery of Jewish synagogues in Palestine (pp. 108-15), and Charlesworth points out the locations of fifty-four of them (p. 110). Obviously, if Jesus preached in synagogues in Nazareth, Capernaum, and elsewhere, the widespread discovery of these ruins bolsters the plausibility of such presentations, especially in Mark and John (see Mk 1:21-29; 6:1-6; Jn 6:59). In addition, the discovery of what may have been the house of Simon Peter in Capernaum (adjacent to the synagogue) strengthens the account of the healing of Simon Peter's mother-in-law in Mk 1:29-34, which follows directly after the synagogue ministry of Jesus. It might explain also why the beginning of Jesus' ministry is connected with Nazareth (Jn 1:46) and Capernaum (Jn 2:12; 4:46).

(b) Charlesworth's *sixth*-most-important archaeological discovery for Jesus studies pertains to the walls and distinctive gates of Jerusalem (pp. 115-17). The distinguishing of various walls from those existent during the time of Jesus locates the traditional site of the crucifixion outside the city (although inside the Herodian third wall) as mentioned in Jn 19:20 and Heb 13:12. In addition, the only specific Jerusalem gate mentioned in the Gospels is the Sheep Gate,¹¹ described in Jn 5:2 as being near the pool of Bethzatha. The location of the Essene Gate as mentioned by Josephus is also in the region where Jesus' family and followers may have lived after his ministry, suggesting connections between the Essenes and the Palestinian Jesus Movement.

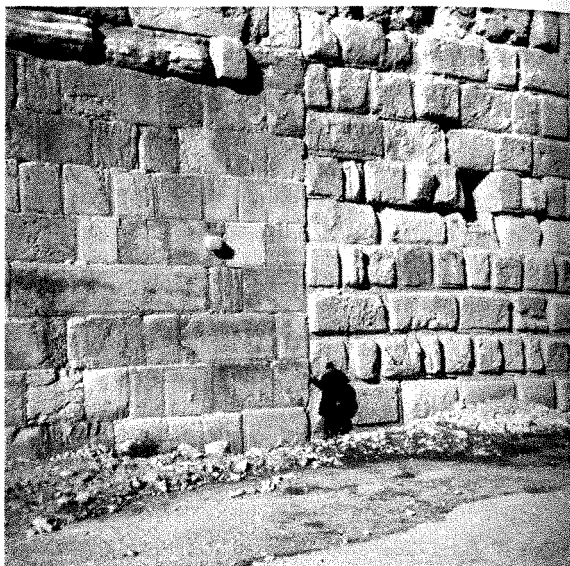
(c) The *fifth*-most-important discovery relates to the Temple Mount during the time of Jesus (pp. 117-19). The discovery of "double and triple Hulda gates" near which there were a massive stairway and passageways leading from the stables into the Temple area makes the driving out of oxen and sheep from the Temple area by Jesus in Jn 2:15 an entirely realistic scene — not just a con-

10. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (New York: Doubleday, 1988); see especially Charlesworth's fifth chapter, "The Jesus of History and the Archaeology of Palestine" (pp. 103-30). Page numbers referring to this work are placed in the following text.

11. Although see the reference to "the beautiful gate" of Acts 3:10, and note the Johannine (Solomon's Colonnade) detail included in Acts 3:11 and 5:12.

Figure 73. The seam that separates Herod's extension to the south and the earlier Eastern Retaining Wall of the Temple. N.B. the different constructions in the eastern retaining wall.

Courtesy J. H. Charlesworth



coction. Despite Charlesworth's preference for the archaeological detail in John, he nonetheless sides with the Synoptic view that the Temple disturbance led to the arrest and death of Jesus over and against the Johannine ordering of events. The huge stones found at the foundation of the Herodian Temple, and the way Josephus described the construction project, show Herod to have been the greatest builder in Palestine's history.¹² This being the case, the laudatory comments of Jesus' disciples about the magnificent stones and buildings in Mk 13:1 are confirmed by the archaeological evidence.

(d) The *fourth*-most-important archaeological discovery for Jesus Research is the discovery of two pools, just outside the Sheep Gate (cf. Jn 5:2) in Jerusalem, which appear to have been by five porticos — porches sheltering the four-sided circumference of the pools, with a fifth roof sheltering the area between the pools (pp. 119-20). Interestingly enough, until archaeologists began excavating this site, it was assumed that a five-portico pool must have been a Johannine fabrication — perhaps a theologized reference to the five books of Moses. With the discovery, however, of a central roof-structure supported by

12. An indirect reference to Herod's reconstruction project may be found in Jn 2:20, where the Jerusalem leaders exclaim that the project had been going on for forty-six years. As the reconstruction began in 19 B.C.E., according to Josephus (during the eighteenth year of Herod's reign; *Ant* 15.11.1), this would have marked that saying as taking place around 27 C.E., plausibly contributing to the chronological reliability of the Johannine rendering of an early Temple cleansing. If Jesus was born in 4 B.C.E., this would have been his thirtieth year.



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columns, and one on each of the four outer sides of the pool complex, the Johannine rendering is entirely accurate from an archaeological and historical standpoint. It was *not* a “fabricated” detail. Even the name of the pool, Bethzatha (not to be confused with Bethsaida, the home of Andrew and Peter as some manuscripts have), is corroborated by the reference in the *Copper Scroll* of Qumran (Cave 3, col. 11) to a pool in Jerusalem called Beth Eshdathayin (meaning “the place of the twin pools” [Charlesworth, p. 120]). In these and other ways, the scene described in Jn 5:1-15 is impressively corroborated by recent archaeological discoveries, taking the above arguments of Albright further.

(e) In *third* place is the discovery of material near Pilate’s Praetorium in Jerusalem, which appears to match very closely the presentation of the events, especially as rendered in Jn 18–19 (pp. 120-22). The Praetorium would have been the official residence of the governor, and because it was on an elevated ridge (*Gabbatha*, “high place,” in Aramaic; Jn 19:13), the Temple area could have been monitored effectively. From there Pilate would also have exercised his judgment (the judgment seat of Jn 19:13), and the discovery of the large stone pavement matches the Johannine description of the Lithostrotos, also in Jn 19:13. This area, discovered in the excavations of Herod the Great’s palace, is also mentioned by Josephus as “the Upper City” (p. 121), and once again the explicit references to topographical details in John are corroborated by the latest archaeological discoveries.

(f) The *second*-most-important discovery relates to the bones of a crucified man named “Jehohanan” (pp. 122-23). Actually, it is an ankle bone with a spike driven through it that is the most telling about the cruel Roman practice of crucifixion. Apparently, the victim would have had to raise himself up to breathe until death by suffocation transpired, thus making the dying process an extremely painful and prolonged one. This explains the surprise of Pilate in Mk 15:44 that Jesus had already died, and it explains why the soldiers would have broken the legs of their victims in order to hasten their death, as described in Jn 19:31-34. This also accounts, then, for the Johannine presentation of the soldier stabbing Jesus’ side with a spear. He was already dead, so his legs need not have been broken, thus “fulfilling” the Scriptures of Ps 34:20 and Zech 12:10. The fact that Jehohanan was also given a proper burial erodes the inference that victims of crucifixion were characteristically dumped into a pit rather than buried in a tomb as is reported of Jesus in the Gospels — especially characteristic of the presentation of Jesus’ crucifixion in *John*.

(g) Finally, the most important archaeological discovery for Jesus studies, according to Charlesworth, pertains to the growing evidence as to the site of the crucifixion (pp. 123-25). While Gordon’s Calvary indeed looks like “the Place of the Skull” (“*Golgotha*,” as described in Mk 15:22; Mt 27:33; and Jn 19:17) and is

outside the gate of the city (Heb 13:12), Charlesworth argues that the discovery that Herod's third wall was constructed *after* the death of Jesus plausibly confirms the traditional site of the crucifixion, found within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (pp. 123-24). The exposed rock on that site rose 13 meters above the rest, and if this were the rock on which Jesus was crucified, the Petrine reference to the stone rejected by the builders would have had a double meaning (Mk 12:10; 1 Pet 2:7; Acts 4:11). That the area was a quarry is echoed by Jn 19:41, as it mentions a new tomb in which no one had been buried. If Jesus were to have been buried near the site of the crucifixion as John's narrative suggests, both the traditional site and the Garden Tomb site would corroborate those connections. In all seven of these archaeological breakthroughs, John features prominently — and in some cases *uniquely* — among the earliest Christian witnesses! While Charlesworth does not comment explicitly on the implications of these top seven archaeological discoveries as having Johannine connections, the fact of those connections is highly significant for the present study.

A third major contribution to the study of John, Jesus, and archaeology are the extensive historical investigations into the historicity of the Johannine narrative that have been undertaken. While all of them cannot be mentioned here, the point should be made that these studies have not so much been disproved or countered by critical analyses posing superior alternatives; they have simply been stepped over or disregarded by Johannine and Jesus scholars (primarily the *latter*).¹³ Several of the most significant analyses of Johannine historicity over the last century include the following. (a) *First*, the work of Bishop Lightfoot (1904) amassed extensive evidence as to the internal and external "authenticity and genuineness" of the Johannine tradition.¹⁴ (b) *Second*, the discovery of the P⁵² Papyrus in the Rylands Library, analyzed by Colin H. Roberts,¹⁵ argues for a finalization of the Fourth Gospel by around 100 C.E. (rather than the middle or late second century C.E.), as it was already in circulation in Egypt by the first two or three decades of the second century. (c) *Third*, E. R. Goodenough, in his highly significant 1945 essay,¹⁶ posits sev-

13. This excellent observation was made by Mark Allan Powell, chair of the Historical Jesus Section of the SBL meetings, who responded helpfully to the paper by Paula Fredriksen in the 2002 Toronto "John, Jesus and History Consultation" meetings. Those papers will be published in a future collection.

14. Building upon the works of Westcott and others, this work by Lightfoot (*Biblical Essays* [London: Macmillan, 1904], pp. 1-198, in addition to his commentary) established critical foundations for defending the traditional view — a venture continued by many others.

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

16. E. R. Goodenough, "John: A Primitive Gospel," *JBL* 64 (1945): 145-82.

eral bases for reconsidering the originality of John, including John's independence from the Synoptics, omissions of virgin birth narratives and the institution of the Eucharist, and the distinctively unified character of the Johannine presentation of Jesus. (d) *Fourth*, in addition to other treatments of John's historicity, the 1960 book by A. J. B. Higgins poses one of the most measured treatments of aspects of John's historicity, including treatments of the healing of the official's son (4:46-54), the feeding/sea-crossing/discussion/confession narratives (6:1-71) in John and Mark, and Synoptic-like sayings of Jesus in John.¹⁷ (e) *Fifth*, the massive *magnum opus* of C. H. Dodd on historical tradition in the Fourth Gospel established significant bases for the originaive historicity of the Johannine tradition, outlining the independent developments of the passion narrative, the ministry of Jesus, the witness of John the Baptist, and the sayings of Jesus in John.¹⁸ (f) *Sixth*, Franz Müssner's treatment of the historical Jesus in John¹⁹ and the epistemological character of the Johannine Gospel as "anamnesis" — a memory of the ministry of the historical Jesus rendered in Johannine paraphrase — address plausibly most of the objections regarding the fact that Jesus' teachings in John are presented in the language and modes of the Fourth Evangelist. (g) *Seventh*, sustained energy has been invested in recovering the "priority" of the Johannine tradition, and John A. T. Robinson's postmortem monograph argues extensively for John's traditional priority rather than posteriority.²⁰ The above studies are but a sample of the most significant contributions to the critical analysis of John's historicity, and they deserve consideration for the critical scholar interested in a fair appraisal of the issues.

Impressively, the above findings demonstrate that John and Jesus specialists would do well to benefit from the latest archaeological and historical findings, and they demonstrate time and again how wrongheaded antihistorical treatments of Gospel narratives have tended to be. "The theological interests of the Evangelist" is one of the most pervasive phrases of *uncritical speculation and conjecture* employed by so-called scientific scholars seeking to account for a de-

17. Higgins, *The Historicity of the Fourth Gospel* (London: Lutterworth, 1960). Many other books and articles could be cited here, but Higgins's work is featured because of its particularly measured approach to the subject.

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

19. F. Müssner, *The Historical Jesus in the Gospel of John*, trans. W. J. O'Harah (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966). See also a broader discussion of the issues in P. N. Anderson, "On Jesus: Quests for Historicity, and the History of Recent Quests," *QRT* 94 (2000): 5-39; and P. N. Anderson, "A Response to Professors Borg, Powell and Kinkel," *QRT* 98 (2002): 43-54.

20. J. A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John*, ed. J. F. Coakley (London: SCM, 1985).

tail in one or more of the Gospels, and continuing discoveries demonstrate how flawed many such conjectures have been. In demonstrating the connectedness of Johannine, Jesus, and archaeological studies, Charlesworth rightly concludes his chapter by saying, "The Jesus of history is now less incomprehensible thanks to the archaeology of Palestine."²¹ What I would like to add is that *the same applies to the Gospel of John*.

Indeed, it is puzzling that while John contains more archaeological, topographical, and chronological data than all three of the Synoptic Gospels combined, many scholars still fail to allow the possibility of *any* historicity within the Johannine tradition. If one regards the Fourth Gospel as patently ahistorical, the extensive presence of "archaeological" material presents a considerable problem. Where did this material come from, and why was it included? Was it simply added for rhetorical or "realism" effect, or does it lend insights into the character and origin of the Johannine tradition? Then again, much of John's tradition is spiritualized and theological in tone — especially the elevated teachings of Jesus — and this is why a critical appraisal of aspects of John's historicity is required.

Aspects of Historicity in John

Just as it cannot be said that because John is theological it cannot be historical, it is also wrong to assert that identifying John's historicity displaces its theological interests. Some points may be made for historical reasons in John, and some may be made for theological reasons. Likewise, the origin of other material may be historical, but the origin of some material may be theological; each investigation must be carried out specifically, with particular reference to the issue at hand. This being the case, without discounting the apologetic interests of the Evangelist to lead the reader to faith (Jn 20:31),²² there are still aspects of historicity in John that are worthy of consideration in and of themselves. This is not to say they were entirely accurate, or even that their inclusion was motivated by historicizing interests; it simply is to argue that the phenomenology of these matters deserves to be investigated in determining aspects of historicity in John. This being the case, several Johannine features require critical consideration.

21. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*, p. 127.

22. See P. N. Anderson, *Navigating the Living Waters of the Gospel of John — on Wading with Children and Swimming with Elephants* (Wallingford, Pa.: Pendle Hill Press, 2000); also included in *The Dialogical Autonomy of the Fourth Gospel*, for a rhetorical analysis of how the reader is led toward a response of faith in John.

1. Rhetorical Claims to Firsthand Knowledge

The first fact to be considered is that the Johannine editor claims John's narrative is at least somewhat based on firsthand knowledge and testimony. In that sense John's editor makes a distinctive epistemological claim not found in the other Gospels. Whoever he may have been, the one who witnesses the death of Jesus and who was entrusted with the care of the mother of Jesus is mentioned as the Beloved Disciple (Jn 19:16-42), whose "testimony is true." Apparently after his death, the editor connects this person with three features: (a) he was the one engaged with Peter and Jesus in a dispute over honor and faithfulness, (b) he was the Beloved Disciple who leaned against the breast of Jesus (apparently between Peter and Jesus) in 13:23-25, and (c) he was the authorial source of the Johannine tradition (at least some of it) and was connected inferentially with the witnessing of the crucifixion by the communal assertion: "We know his testimony is true" (19:34-35; 21:18-25). While these claims do not necessarily imply that all of John is built on eyewitness material, it is also a fact that the identification of one or more fictive or spiritualized elements does not exclude the entirety of the Johannine narrative from the canons of plausible historicity.

Indeed, it might not be possible to know for certain who this figure was, and the Beloved Disciple clearly serves a typological function, representing ideal discipleship within the Johannine narrative. This being the case, however, it cannot be said that typological hero references cannot have been connected to a real person, who may have been identified before or after his death as the source of the Johannine witness. The extensive treatment of the Beloved Disciple by Charlesworth argues convincingly that whoever this person was, he is purported to have been the authoritative source of the Johannine witness — the one whose witness validates the Gospel of John.²³ While debates will continue as to who he might have been, several other claims also *cannot* be made.

First, it cannot be claimed that because this disciple presents an alternative view of "the Twelve" and Peter's authoritative place among them, he cannot have been one of the Twelve. Indeed, critiques of the use of the apostolic coin of authority may have risen from *within* the apostolic band rather than from without — especially if it were felt that such a coin were being co-opted by institutional aspirants within the church, perhaps even departing from the more informal and itinerant ministry of Jesus.²⁴ There probably never was a "single" perspective on Jesus' provocative ministry — even within his closest band of

23. J. H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John?* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1995).

24. See Anderson, *Christology*, pp. 195-251.

disciples — just as there was never a single, straightforward memory of Socrates' symposium, forcing a disjunctive choice between Plato and Xenophon. In all four canonical Gospels the disciples are presented as miscomprehending Jesus' actions and teachings and discussing among themselves what he possibly could have meant. A moderate level of dissonance among the apostles and between their respective traditions is thus a sign of realism and authenticity rather than fictive adulteration.

Second, it cannot be said that the character of the Johannine tradition is epistemologically counter to an individuated reflection on the ministry of Jesus. John's dialectical presentation of Jesus' deeds and words betrays the epistemological character of first-order induction rather than second-order deduction.²⁵ In that sense, John's dialogical presentation of christological tensions — in contrast, say, to the more monological character of the Johannine Epistles — suggests proximity to Jesus rather than distance from him.

Third, even though much of modern New Testament scholarship has come to accept the opinion that the first to connect the apostle John with Johannine authorship was Irenaeus, in his opposition to Marcion around 180 C.E., this claim is *not* true. A first-century clue to Johannine authorship can be found in Acts 4:19-20, which has hitherto gone totally unnoticed by all sectors of the debate.²⁶ In this passage Peter and John speak (the only time John is presented as speaking in Acts), and two characteristically crafted sayings are listed. The first is clearly Petrine: we must obey *God* rather than humans (see Acts 5:29 and 11:17 for similar God-versus-humanity rhetoric attributed to Peter). The second, however, bears an unmistakably Johannine ring to it: we cannot help but speak about what *we have seen and heard* (see the testimony of the Johannine Elder in 1 Jn 1:3 and that of Jesus in Jn 3:32 for this being a characteristically Johannine

25. See the cognitive-critical analyses applying the works of James Loder and James Fowler to the scientific investigation of the origin and development of Gospel traditions in P. N. Anderson, "Cognitive Origins of John's Christological Unity and Disunity," *HBT* 17 (1995): 1-24; also in J. H. Ellens and W. Rollins, eds., *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scriptures* (Westport, Conn.: Praegers/Greenwood Publishers, 2004), 3:127-48. See also Anderson, *Christology*, pp. 137-66.

26. See Anderson, *Christology*, app. VIII: "The Papias Tradition, John's Authorship and Luke/Acts," pp. 274-77. The point here is not to argue that all of John is a factor of eyewitness memory; even if some of it was claimed to have been such, this does not mean all of it was. The point is to assess critically the claim that *none* of John's material is firsthand information. Even John the Baptist (or whoever is speaking in Jn 3:31-36) bases his testimony about Jesus on the basis that Jesus is reporting *what he had seen and heard* from the Father (Jn 3:32). These connections are further bolstered by the likelihood that the Johannine tradition (probably in its oral form) has come to serve as one of Luke's sources in his departures from Mark (see Anderson, "Interfluent, Formative, and Dialectical," pp. 43-48).

motif). Now this is not to say that Luke was *right*, or that the identity of the Beloved Disciple is thereby confirmed necessarily as John, the companion of Peter (although note the proximity of John and/or the Beloved Disciple to Peter in all four Gospels). As critical scholars know, the traditional view has serious problems to it, and Papias also mentions another John, the Elder, who apparently stood as a bridge between the apostles and Polycarp. It is to say, however, that the first connecting of the apostle John with the Johannine tradition was *not Irenaeus, around 180 C.E.* It was Luke, *a full century before Irenaeus*, and whether he was right or misguided, this first-century clue to Johannine authorship, which has been totally overlooked on all sides of the debate, approximates a fact.

Fourth, while not all of John's material can be connected directly to first-hand information, there are also many references to *empirically derived information* in John. This is a literary fact. For whatever reason, references to *all five senses* are used in John. That which is *seen* by someone (in the ocular sense) is reported 98 times²⁷ (*blepō*, 1:29; 13:22; 20:1, 5; 21:9, 20; *eideō*, 1:39, 46, 47, 48, 50; 4:48; 5:6; 6:14, 22, 24, 26, 30; 9:1; 11:31, 32, 33, 34; 12:9, 21; 18:26; 19:6, 26, 33; 20:8, 20, 25, 27; 21:12, 21; *emblepō*, 1:36, 42; *theaomai*, 1:14, 32, 38; 6:5; 11:45; *theōreō*, 2:23; 6:2, 19; 7:3; 9:8; 14:17, 19; 16:10, 16, 17, 19; 17:24; 20:6, 12, 14; *ide*, 1:29, 36, 47; 3:26; 5:14; 7:26; 11:3, 36; 12:19; 16:29; 18:21; 19:4, 14, 26, 27; *idou*, 19:5; *optomai*, 1:50, 51; 16:16, 17, 19, 22; 19:37; *horaō*, 1:18, 34; 3:11, 32; 4:45; 6:36, 46; 8:57; 9:37; 14:7, 9; 15:24; 19:35; 20:18, 25, 29); that which is *heard* (in the auditory sense) is reported 30 times (*akouō*, 1:37, 40; 3:29, 32; 4:1, 42, 47; 5:24; 6:45, 60; 7:32, 40, 51; 9:32, 35, 40; 11:4, 6, 20, 29; 12:12, 18, 29; 14:24, 28; 18:21; 19:8, 13; 21:7); that which is *smelled* is reported twice (*ozō*, 11:39; *eplērōthē ek tēs osmēs*, 12:3); that which is *tasted* is reported once (*geuomai*, 2:9); and that which is *touched* is reported 4 times (*haptomai*, 20:17; *ballō*, 20:25 [2x's], 27). Even references to temperature are mentioned (*psychos*) in 18:18, as the factor of coldness explains why Peter and others were warming themselves around a charcoal fire (18:18, 25). Again, some of these reports of empirical perception may have been added for historicizing effect, and they certainly represent a central feature of Johannine authorization (1 Jn 1:1-3), but claiming that *all of them were* fabrications-and-nothing-more has no compelling substantiation; it must be regarded a scholarly fiction. The literary fact that John possesses more appeals to empirically derived information than any of the other Gospels — canonical or otherwise — seems to sup-

27. Many other times seeing and hearing verbs are used in John, not in the empirical sense, but in the ideational or perceptual sense. And a few other times, hearing and seeing are used in the eschatological or obedience sense. The above references, however, appear to be used in the empirical sense.

port the claim of the Johannine editor. Whoever these persons may have been, the late first-century Johannine editor connects readers with the Evangelist's reflections on the ministry of Jesus and its implications for later generations. In several ways, therefore, the Johannine claims to firsthand information are thus not without substantiation.

2. *Connections between the Jesus of Palestine and the Audiences of Asia Minor*

Like the Gospel of Mark, John connects the Aramaic language of Jesus and the Jewish customs of Palestine with Gentile audiences in other places. This is an aspect of historicity that Matthew and Luke do not represent in the same way. Luke fails to pick up on the Jewish material in Mark, probably because of his selectivity — it was not material important to his purposes in telling the story of Jesus as a good and just man to his Hellenistic audience. Matthew, on the other hand, probably felt that his Jewish audiences did not need to be informed of Jewish customs or diction, and this may be why he omitted these sorts of Markan details. John, however, retains even more of this material than Mark does, and this suggests the preservation of the Palestinian ministry of Jesus for later Gentile audiences — probably reflecting an interest in maintaining vivid features of the Johannine oral tradition. For instance, John preserves such Aramaic words as *rabbi/rabbouni* (Jn 1:38; 20:16), *Messias* (1:41; 4:25), *Bethzetha* (5:2), *Siloam* (9:7), *Gabbatha* (19:13, actually having a different name in Greek — *Lithostrotos* — rather than a translation), and *Golgotha* (19:17) and “translates” most of them into Greek for Hellenistic audiences.

Further, John “explains” Jewish customs for Gentile audiences, informing them of particular ritual and purification practices, thereby explaining why things had to happen the ways they did. The sorts of jars used for Jewish purification rites are described (2:6); the Passover of the Jews is contextualized (2:13, 23); Jews having “no dealings with Samaritans” heightens the tension in the story of Jesus’ encounter with the woman at the well (4:9); another feast of the Jews is mentioned (5:1); the Sabbath is mentioned as the day on which Jesus (perhaps provocatively) performed a healing (5:9, 10, 16, 18; 7:22, 23; see also 9:14, 16); a second Jewish Passover is mentioned (6:4); the Jewish Feast of the Tabernacles is noted (7:2); a third Jewish Passover is mentioned (11:55) with a reference to requirements for Jewish purification; events before the final Passover are mentioned with special importance (six days before, 12:1; before, 13:1); the Temple “where all the Jews gather” is described (18:20); it is explained that the Jews did not want to be made unclean for the paschal meal by entering the

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Roman Praetorium (18:28); the Roman appeasement practice of releasing a Jewish prisoner at Passover time is mentioned (18:39); Jewish authorities are rendered as not wanting bodies to be hanging on crosses on the Sabbath lest it (and they) be defiled (19:31); the embalming practices of the Jews are explained (19:40); and the Jewish day of Preparation and the ceremonial purity of the tomb are described (19:42).

These prolific references to Jewish religious customs function to build connections between the Palestinian ministry of Jesus and later Gentile audiences. In that sense, interests in connecting religious aspects of John's originative history with the developing history of the Johannine situation can be clearly inferred. John's material shows evidence of originating in Palestinian memory and being rendered later for a Hellenistic audience. Thus, the impressive points made by Albright and Charlesworth are here confirmed and expanded.

3. Archaeological and Topographical Content

As mentioned above, an impressive fact within the scientific study of Jesus and the Gospels is that John includes some of the most explicit archaeological and topographical references to be found anywhere among the Gospels. Particular places locating events in the ministry of Jesus are not only mentioned, but they are described with information that seems more empirically oriented than theologically motivated. Consider, for instance, John's descriptions of the places where John was baptizing: *Bethabara* (or *Betharaba*; "Bethany" was a later corruption) beyond the Jordan (Jn 1:28);²⁸ *Aenon* near *Salim* (a place John was baptizing "because there was much water there") is mentioned (3:23); and it is implied that a particular place of baptism was different from the one "beyond the Jordan" where John had pointed out Jesus earlier (3:26). The disjunctive emphasis here between these diverse places implies particular topographical knowledge — it was *there*, not *the other place*. Upon receiving a harsh welcome in Judea, Jesus returned to the place where John had been baptizing — across the Jordan — and in contrast to the Synoptics, it appears that Jesus and John had been ministering contemporaneously with each other for at least a

28. It is more likely to infer that "Bethany" was added later than to infer that *Bethabara* or *Betharaba* replaced the more commonplace name. The speculation that because Bethany was not across the Jordan the Evangelist has thus made an inexcusable geographical mistake, is itself based on a flawed assumption. Leading archaeological investigations in Jordan are currently excavating a site east of the Jordan River (not far from Jericho), which have found both the remains of a village and a former tributary to the Jordan that had once formed pools of water — confirming the Johannine account.

period of time (10:41; 3:24). It appears also that Jesus' trans-Jordan ministry was successful, and even Mark reports Jesus ministering in that region (Mk 10:1) on his way to Jerusalem.²⁹ John's connecting the ministry of Jesus to the ministry of John the Baptizer not only is more plausible in terms of its multidimensionality; it also introduces archaeological information apparently rooted in empirical knowledge.

Likewise, John calls special attention to places where Jesus ministered. In the north, the region of Galilee (Jn 1:43-44; 4:3; 6:1; 7:1, 9) and the Sea of Tiberias (6:1, 23; 21:1) are mentioned with special emphasis, and Cana of Galilee (2:1-11; 4:43-54) is described as the place where Jesus' first two signs were performed.³⁰ Capernaum is also described as the hub of Jesus' ministry; it is the home of the Roman official whose son was healed, the place to which Jesus often went with his disciples, and the home of the synagogue in which Jesus preached (2:12; 4:46; 6:17, 24, 59).³¹ From there Jesus travels to and from Judea several times (4:3, 47, 54; 7:1, 3; 11:7), and in doing so "must pass through" Samaria (4:4, 5, 7, 9) — a topographically correct detail.³² Bethany gets the attention of Jesus as the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus — all people whom Jesus loved — and it was their home in which the anointing of Jesus is reported to have taken place (11:1, 18; 12:1-8). An interesting mention is also made of a Judean village near Ephraim to which Jesus withdrew upon an unfriendly reception by the religious leaders after the raising of Lazarus (11:54), and this detail seems unlikely to have been motivated by rhetorical or verisimilitudinal interests. It adds nothing to the story, either symbolically or rhetorically; it simply is mentioned but not developed.

Perhaps the most vivid archaeological details in John are connected with

29. On the trans-Jordan ministry of Jesus, John's and Mark's accounts corroborate each other, although John's account presents the visit with a greater sense of realism. Upon an uneven reception at the Feast of Dedication (Jn 10:22), Jesus returns to the original site of John's baptism, continues to minister there, and many believe in him, acknowledging his ministry's supersession of the Baptist's.

30. See Anderson, "John and Mark," pp. 180-85, for an argument regarding John's augmentation of Mark.

31. Incidentally, a large home with a Roman bath has been discovered in Capernaum, adjacent to the impressive synagogue site. While the synagogue is second century C.E., the present ruins were probably constructed on the earlier synagogue that had been destroyed by the Romans in the middle-late first century C.E.

32. John distinctively portrays Jesus' ministry in Samaria, and this could not have been a feature derived from the Synoptics. Mark makes no mention of Samaria or Samaritans, Matthew's Jesus instructs his disciples *not* to visit any village in Samaria (Mt 10:5), and Luke describes an unfelicitous visit by James and John where the Jerusalem-bound Jesus and his band were unwelcome (Lk 9:52-56). [See Zangenberg's chapter in the present volume. — JHC.]

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Jesus' five visits to Jerusalem. They are described in graphic terms and refer to specific features rather than general ones. Jesus traveled "up to" Jerusalem's Temple courts for the Passover (2:13); he went "up to Jerusalem" for an unnamed Jewish feast to a pool named "Bethzatha," and particular knowledge of the site is mentioned. The Johannine tradition locates this pool near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem, and the detail that it is surrounded by five covered colonnades (5:1-2) has been verified by recent archaeological findings. Jerusalem's details are portrayed in vivid and graphic ways during the early part of Jesus' ministry, and in this respect John differs radically from the Synoptic presentation.

While the Jewish feast of Jn 5 is left unnamed, the Feast of Tabernacles is explicitly described in Jn 7-8. Jesus apparently waited until the middle of the feast to go up to the Temple courts to teach (7:14), and part of the discussion gravitated toward his having healed the paralytic on the Sabbath earlier (7:23). On the last day of the feast he continued speaking publicly and did so in the treasury area of the Temple (8:20). Upon fierce engagements with the Judean religious leaders over his authority, Jesus' claims to authentication were experienced as blasphemy, and they picked up stones to kill him (the standard penalty for blasphemy; see Lev 24:14-16), whereupon Jesus left the Temple area, escaping danger (Jn 8:59). Within the same region, the story of the blind man picks up, and after Jesus placed mud over his eyes (having made the mud with spittle), he is told to wash in the pool of Siloam, a site confirmed by archaeological investigation (9:7). At the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, Jesus is described as walking in the Temple area in Solomon's Colonnade (10:22-23), another site confirmed by archaeological discovery. Likewise, the middle part of Jesus' ministry in John is remarkably different from its Synoptic counterparts in that events in, and descriptions of, Jerusalem are vivid and extensive.

After the Last Supper, Jesus and his disciples crossed the brook of Kidron and entered the garden there (18:1), and this topographical presentation is entirely accurate. The way one would have gone to the Garden of Gethsemane or the Mount of Olives involved crossing that wadi. John also includes amazingly vivid information associated with the trial of Jesus — content found nowhere else in the Gospel narratives. Because he was known to the high priest (18:15), the "other" disciple (but not Peter) was allowed to enter the courtyard of the high priest, and describing who was inside and outside the gate sets the stage for Peter's first denial (18:16-18). In the trial before the high priest, Jesus said he spoke openly in the synagogue and the Temple, "where all the Judeans gathered" (18:20), and Jesus was led from Annas to Caiaphas to the Praetorium, where Pilate met with the Jewish leaders outside — apparently honoring their religious convictions against defilement (18:28-29). Having gone inside and outside several times, Pilate came out and sat on a juridical seat, in Hebrew

called *Gabbatha* (a term not actually translated into Greek; rather, the appellative name of the site in Aramaic, meaning “hill/ridge of the house” or perhaps “the palace mound”), on a site referred to in Greek as *Lithostrōton* (19:13), the stone pavement. Jesus then carried his cross to the Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew was called *Golgotha* (19:17), and the location of the crucifixion is mentioned as being near (and therefore outside) the city — a detail unique to John among the Gospels (19:20; although see Heb 13:12 for a more explicit reference). Knowledge of the surrounding area is suggested by the reference to the place Jesus was crucified having been near a garden and a new tomb in which no one had been buried (Jn 19:41). When Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb, she saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb, and she later announced the resurrection of Jesus to the disciples (20:1, 18).

In these many references the Johannine narrator draws on knowledge of Galilean and Judean topography in ways that could not possibly have been concocted without some degree of familiarity. It is also true that familiarity could have originated from other sources or reports, but as the evidence for such hypotheses is lacking, a more plausible inference is that the Johannine tradition did have a considerable degree of origination in at least some sort of firsthand Palestinian experience. Once again, the judgment of Albright and others is confirmed regarding John and archaeological material.

4. *Aspects of Spatiality and Topographical Incidentals*

In addition to direct archaeological and topographical references, John has many spatial references and allusions to incidental physical realities within the ministry of Jesus. For instance, explicit distances are reported estimating how far one thing or event was from another. Bethany is described (accurately) as being fifteen stadia (about two miles) from Jerusalem (11:18), and particular distances to the shore are mentioned twice. When the disciples set off rowing across the lake to Capernaum, in contrast to the Markan general reference (the middle of the lake), the distance they had rowed was reported as twenty-five or thirty stadia (Jn 6:17-19) when Jesus appeared to them. Given that the lake is about seven miles across, this reference to three or four miles is not too far from the target. After the disciples had returned to their familiar fishing work, the boat was reported as about two hundred *pēchōn* (about one hundred yards) from the shore when they beheld postresurrection Jesus on the shore (21:8-9). These specific spatial references are unique to John among the Gospels.

In less direct ways, spatial uses of *anabainō* (“ascend” or “go up”) and *katabainō* (“descend” or “go down”) appear as topographical incidentals in

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John. Jesus and the disciples “went up to” Jerusalem (2:13; 5:1; 7:8, 10; 11:55; 12:20), Jesus “ascended to” the Temple (7:14), and Peter “came up” out of the water into the boat (21:11). Conversely, Jesus and his disciples “descended to” Capernaum (2:12; 4:47, 49), the paralytic spoke of “descending into” the water (5:7), and the disciples “climbed down into” the boat (6:16). For the one who has traveled in Israel, elevation plays a major role in the experience of travel. As the way to Jerusalem would literally have involved climbing uphill, and traveling to Capernaum would always have involved going downhill, these incidental references to elevation betray the same sort of familiarity as measured references to spatiality. In that sense, spatial and topographic references appear to be used with knowing intentionality in John.

Other incidental topographical references make themselves manifest in John, suggesting familiarity with particular places featured in the narrative. For instance, the reference to there being plenty of water in Aenon near Salim functions to explain why John was baptizing there rather than the Jordan (3:23). The report of Jesus’ visit to Jacob’s well (the one Jacob had given to Joseph, his son) in Sychar of Samaria includes the incidental note that the well was deep, making it difficult to procure water, and the contact with the Samaritan woman is explained by Jesus’ having had to go through Samaria on the most direct route between Jerusalem and Galilee (4:5). Within that discussion, knowledge of Samaritan worship conventions is demonstrated, and a universalizing point is made as a reconciling of northern and southern Semitic cousins. Neither the mountain of Samaria (Gerizim) nor Jerusalem is the credited place of worship (4:19-24); rather, worship must be in Spirit and in Truth. The Roman name is given for the Sea of Galilee, that is, “of Tiberias” (6:1; 21:1), and after the feeding of the multitude, Jesus fled again to the mountain alone (6:15). He was later found on the other side of the lake (6:25) by the crowd, which had crisscrossed the lake in boats, coming from the town of Tiberias, looking for Jesus. A reference is then made about the Bread of Life discourse having been delivered at the synagogue of Capernaum (6:59), and even some of Jesus’ followers departed and followed him no longer (6:66). Lazarus’s tomb is described as a cave with a stone lying in front of it (11:38), and after the ambivalent reception of the raising of Lazarus Jesus withdrew to the wilderness area near the village of Ephraim and remained there with his disciples (11:54). The location of the anointing was the home of Lazarus and his sisters (12:1-8), and the crowd that had come for the (Passover) feast met Jesus on his way to Jerusalem (12:12).

In these and other ways, incidental asides further suggest familiarity with the places and sites in which the events during the ministry of Jesus are purported to have taken place. One might indeed have known of Palestinian geography from afar and might have thrown in names of places in realistic-

sounding ways, but the incidental references to the terrain of Jerusalem and the Temple area, the water in Aenon near Salim, the depth of Jacob's well, needing to pass through Samaria on the way to and from Jerusalem, and having to go "down to" Capernaum all give the sense of firsthand familiarity with the topography being described. As a subtle aspect of historiography, these incidentals and spatial references to places and their descriptions may be more telling than information that is more broadly known. The very fact of their indirect character makes it more difficult to imagine their having been concocted for ulterior reasons.

5. Aspects of Personal Familiarity

Another kind of familiarity implies knowledge of personal relationships, even connecting people with the places from which they hailed. Philip, Andrew, and Peter were from the town of *Bethsaida* (1:44; 12:20-21), and the present-day Bethsaida archaeological site on the north side of the Sea of Galilee shows evidence of fishing implements in it. Mentioned only in John is Nathanael, an authentic *Israelite* in whom there is nothing false, whom Jesus saw (and "knew") under a fig tree (1:45-48). In 21:2 it is mentioned that Nathanael hailed from *Cana* of Galilee. No explicit connection is made, though, between the encounter with Nathanael at the end of Jn 1 and the wedding of Cana at the beginning of Jn 2. In contrast to the authenticity of the Israelite Nathanael, the only southern disciple — Judas son of Simon — was mentioned as being from *Kerioth* in Judea (6:71; 12:4; 13:2). Pains are also taken by the editor to clarify that another Judas was *not* Iscariot, so as not to be confused later with the traitor (14:22). During the debate with the *Ioudaioi*, Jerusalem leaders declare their firm conviction that Christ would not come from the northern region of *Galilee*, but from Bethlehem, the city of David (7:41-52). *Bethany* is mentioned as the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (11:1, 18; 12:1), and the one sought by the soldiers was none other than "Jesus of *Nazareth*" (18:7). During the crucifixion and after the resurrection, Mary of *Magdala* features prominently (19:25-26; 20:1; 18), and the man named Joseph, who provided a tomb for Jesus and who requested the body of the Lord, is identified by his place of origin: *Arimathea* (19:38). Thus, many people are identified by their geographic place of origin in John.

A second kind of personal familiarity in John relates to particular knowledge of people and their situations. This feature is especially vivid regarding Jesus' followers within his immediate band. *Andrew* (1:40, 44; 6:8; 12:22) is described distinctively in John as the one brother of Peter. *Nathanael* is mentioned only in John and is declared by Jesus to be an Israelite in whom

there is no deceit (1:45-49; 21:2). *Philip* is featured more prominently in John than in all the other Gospels combined (1:43-46, 48; 6:5, 7; 12:21, 22; 14:8, 9). *Thomas* (11:16; 14:5; 20:24, 26-29; 21:2) is given the nickname *Didymos* (the Greek word for “twin,” parallel to the Hebrew word for twin underlying the name “Thomas”; 11:16; 20:24; 21:2). While they are not mentioned by name, “those of Zebedee” are mentioned only in the last scene (21:2). The Aramaic word for rock — *Cephas* — is added to the Greek word for rock — *Petros* — with reference to *Simon’s* appellative (1:42), and Peter (1:40, 44; 6:8, 68; 13:6, 9, 24, 36, 37; 18:10, 11, 15-18, 25-27; 20:2-4, 6; 21:2, 3, 7, 11, 15, 17, 20, 21) is identified as the son of a man named *Jonas* (1:42; 21:15-17). *Judas* is portrayed in characteristically negative light in John (6:71; 12:4; 13:2, 26, 29; 18:2, 3, 5), and his role as a keeper of the money (the holder of the money bag, into which he occasionally dipped) is contributed to the narrative as a reason for the disciples misunderstanding why he left the supper when he did. Also, upon the mention of *another disciple named Judas*, the main point to be made is that he was *not* Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed the Lord (6:71; 12:4; 13:2, 26; 14:22). Two unnamed disciples are mentioned in John (1:35, 37; 21:2), and a singular unnamed disciple is also noted (18:15, 16; 20:3, 4, 8). The anonymous *Beloved Disciple* features prominently and climactically in the Johannine narrative (13:23; 19:26, 27; 20:2; 21:24). It is he who leaned against the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper, who alone among the Twelve was present at the crucifixion and to whom Jesus entrusted the care of his mother, who arrived at the empty tomb with Peter (allowing him to enter first), who pointed out the resurrected Lord to Peter on the lakeshore, and it is he who is credited with being the authorial source of the Johannine tradition.

The followers of Jesus are thus described with a great deal of personal familiarity. Their interests and foibles are drawn into the narrative as explanations regarding why some things turned out the way they did.

Beyond the immediate band of Jesus’ disciples, other persons are also described with special familiarity in John. One of the interesting facts about these aspects of connectedness is that some of them cluster around leading persons and family groups. Most distinctively, the family circle of the high priest features prominently in John. *Annas* (18:13, 24) is singled out as *the father-in-law of Caiaphas*, the high priest that year (11:49; 18:13, 14, 24, 28), and the trial interviews and courtyard scenes are portrayed as happening in their homes. Uniquely in John, the servant of the high priest is mentioned by name, *Malchus*, and not only is it specified that this was the one whose ear was cut off (by *Peter* — another detail unique to John; 18:10), but the courtyard scene identifies the third fireside questioner of Peter as *a relative of the man whose ear Peter had severed* (18:26). These familiarities with otherwise unmotivated connec-

tions contribute to the plausibility that the “*other disciple*” may indeed have been known to the high priest, as asserted in 18:15-16. Even that comment serves to explain an odd detail: one disciple was admitted to the courtyard, but Peter had to wait by the gate until the other disciple was able to convince a servant girl (Peter’s first questioner) to let him inside. This sequence of events does little to further the plot, and it seems unlikely to have been contributed as a factor of literary interests.

Regarding Jesus’ family, *Jesus’ brothers* are described as *not* believing in him (an odd detail to have concocted; 7:3, 5, 10), *Joseph* is referred to as the acknowledged father of Jesus (1:45; 6:42), and while *the mother of Jesus* is described as playing roles in two narratives, she is not mentioned by name (2:3; 19:25).³³ The *family of Lazarus* is also given special prominence in John, and both the final miracle and the anointing of Jesus in their house feature these bonds of connectedness. *Lazarus* is described as a close friend whom Jesus loved (11:1, 2, 5, 11, 14, 43; 12:1, 2, 9, 10, 17), and it is also emphasized that Jesus loved his sisters *Mary* (11:1, 2, 19, 20, 28, 31, 32, 45; 12:3) and *Martha* (11:1, 19, 20, 21, 24, 30, 39; 12:2). *John the Baptist and his circle* also play major roles in the pointing out of Jesus in John (1:6-8, 15, 19-35; 3:22-30), and *the followers of Jesus* are likewise described as gathering in familial ways before and after the crucifixion. Special prominence, for instance, is given *Mary Magdalene*, as she is not only the first to encounter the risen Lord (19:25; 20:1, 18), but also shares her witness with the others as *the apostle to the apostles*.

Beyond these familial circles, other figures are featured with special familiarity in John. While *Nicodemus* comes to Jesus by night (3:1, 4, 9; 7:50; 19:39), he is presented as assisting in the preparation of Jesus for his burial, and he also lends aid to *Joseph of Arimathea* (19:38), the one who generously donated the unused tomb and the one who requested the body of Jesus from Pilate. *Barabbas* is described as a thief (18:40), and of course, *Pilate* is described dramatically as “the impotent potentate” at the trial scene (18:29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 38; 19:1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 19, 21, 22, 31, 38). In addition, several unnamed actors also are featured in the Johannine narrative, and these include *the steward and the servants* at the wedding miracle (2:7-10), *the Roman official and his son who was sick* in Capernaum (4:46-53), *an unnamed boy* who contributed his lunch (6:9), and *the Greeks who come to Jerusalem* to see Jesus (12:20-22). More promi-

33. Anonymity here, though, should not be construed to imply nonidentity. If the anonymity of the Beloved Disciple is taken as an indicator that this figure could not have been a known apostle, such as John or Thomas, by extension, the anonymity of “the mother of Jesus” must be taken as a statement *against* her identity as Mary. Neither of these is a sound move; rather, anonymity here, as for the Beloved Disciple, probably implies familiarity and respect rather than a disavowal of identity.

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nently, *the woman of Samaria* becomes an effective evangelist to her people (4:7, 9, 11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 25, 27, 28, 39, 42), and *Samaritans, Jerusalemites, Judeans, Galileans, Hellenists, and Romans* play significant roles in the unfolding of the Johannine narrative — in addition to the nameless *crowd*.

While some of these features can indeed be explained as narrative devices employed to make the material seem more realistic, and some positive and negative presentation (for instance, the unbelieving crowd, Judas Iscariot, and the Beloved Disciple) is crafted for rhetorical reasons, one cannot claim on the basis of evidence that *all* (or even most) of these aspects of familiarity are devoid of historical or personal knowledge. In fact, the opposite seems implied by the character of these connections. They emerge in the story in ways that are sometimes unmotivated by the context, and aspects of relationality and personal familiarity get introduced to the narrative in ways that seem to “explain” unusual turns of events. Sometimes, however, their introduction adds very little to the story, and the only explanation is that the writer or narrator simply included a detail that for whatever reason appears to have borne more significance for the writer or narrator than the reader or hearer. For these reasons, Johannine aspects of personal familiarity fit better within the canons of traditional narration than fictive imagination. They may even reflect a degree of Johannine historicity, idiosyncratic as they may be.

6. Chronological References in John

While time is developed “kairotically” in John, it is also used chronologically in ways that imply intentionality. While the coming of the “hour” of Jesus is used about his glorification (2:4; 4:21, 23; 5:25, 28; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:21, 25, 32; 17:1), and while the climactic “hour” will have come for the disciples in the near future (11:9; 16:2, 4), *hōra* is also used in explicitly chronological ways in John. Jesus called his first disciples at the “tenth hour,” suggesting the end of the day when finding somewhere to spend the night would have been a concern (1:39). Jesus met the woman at the well at the “sixth hour,” obviously a noontime event during the heat of the day (4:6). Jesus healed the Roman official’s son from afar at the “seventh hour,” a specific time that was remembered as the coincidence of Jesus’ word and the boy’s recovery (4:52-53, although seven is also used symbolically at times). The crucifixion is also mentioned as taking place at the “sixth hour,” locating the event in the middle of the day (19:14),³⁴ and upon the

34. Obviously, these numerological references could have denoted symbolic references: tenth could have implied the Ten Commandments, and six could have implied one short of a

entrustment of the mother of Jesus to the Beloved Disciple, things changed for them “from that time on” (19:27). Also, the early part of the day is mentioned three times in John (18:28; 20:1; 21:4), and the evening or darkness is mentioned four times (3:2; 6:16; 13:30; 20:19). In these ways the hour or the time of day is used both figuratively and chronologically in John, apparently with intentionality in both ways.

In the same way, “day” is used about a season of time in John (8:56; 9:4; 11:9, 53; 12:7; 19:31), and while it is at times used eschatologically (the “last” day; 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48), it also is used with apparent chronological intentionality. In general terms, the passing of several days is mentioned (2:12), and an emphasis is made on the *same* day wherein several events occurred (5:9; 20:19). More frequently, however, the explicit numeration of days is also used, and the association appears to be a chronological one. The wedding in Cana was on the third day (suggesting a brisk walk indeed if Jesus and his disciples were implied to be traveling from the south to Cana of Galilee; 2:1); the “temple” of Jesus’ body would be raised up in three days (2:19-20); Jesus remained in Samaria two days after the encounter with the Samaritan woman (4:40, 43); and because he waited for two days before traveling to Bethany (11:6), Lazarus had been dead for four days by the time he arrived (11:17). The anointing of Jesus was reported to have taken place six days before the Passover (12:1), and Jesus is reported to have appeared to his disciples eight days after his earlier appearances (20:26).³⁵ Indeed, studies of numerology suggest symbolic meanings of numbers — a clear matter in the three days of 2:19-20 — but symbolic use does not imply a different timetable for the duration of Jesus’ being in the tomb, nor does it prove that other time references were fictive. In these ways days are used generally and eschatologically in John, but they most commonly appear to be used with reference to chronological knowledge.

As a measure of time, the year is not explicitly used symbolically in John, although some scholars will attempt to make connections between numbers and symbolic associations. This being the case, particular years are mentioned (11:49, 51; 18:13), and the duration of time is several times measured in years.

perfect seven or half of the complete number twelve. It is a fact, however, that when there is nothing in the text to suggest an embellished symbolization of the numbers, such inferences must remain in the category of fanciful exegesis.

35. Again, as with hours, the numbers of days get developed symbolically in John, especially tied to days of creation in Gen 1-2 and other references to days in Hebrew Scripture. There is little if any value to such moves, however, given that commenting on the significance of the days is left undeveloped in the Johannine narrative. The inference must be made as a factor of the interpreter’s ingenuity, rather than an apparent rhetorical device employed by the Evangelist.

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The amount of time it has taken to rebuild the Temple is mentioned in passing as forty-six years (2:20, a dating that would locate the beginning of Jesus' ministry around 27 C.E.); the paralytic had been ill for thirty-eight years (a possible but unlikely reference to the thirty-eight years Israel had wandered in the wilderness; 5:5); and the age of Jesus is described as not yet fifty (not necessarily a claim that he *was* fifty; 8:57). Besides the many references to particular feasts in Jerusalem, the time of year is mentioned, or at least alluded to, in John. The mentioning of much grass at the feeding locates the event during the springtime (6:10), and the Feast of Dedication includes a mention of the wintertime setting in which it would have taken place (10:22). Indeed, references to time are used symbolically in John, but it would be an inexcusable mistake to assume that *none* of John's references to time intended to further some aspect of chronological knowledge. This is not to claim they were accurate, although many seem as though they could have been. The point is to assert that most claims of either their ahistoricity or their error are either fanciful or do not square with the character of the material. They are possibilities, but they fall short of critical demonstration.

7. The Fact of Empirical Detail in John

While some of the Johannine details are used rhetorically to further a point being made by the narrator, most of John's details do not appear to function in that way. They simply appear to reflect empirically derived details. In that sense they bear the closest resemblance to some of the material in Mark, perhaps reflecting the sort of material connected to oral traditions in contrast to the redacted uses of written Mark by Matthew and Luke. This is a highly important fact. It is often assumed that John's illustrative detail was added by a second-hand narrator as a means of "historicizing" the drama — the sort of thing that is assumed to have been common practice among ancient historians.³⁶

36. While Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius* is often cited as the prime example, it cannot be assumed that there is no historical or firsthand information present in this narrative, or in all others regarding the heroic figure of Apollonius of Tyana. Indeed, much of the memory of Apollonius appears legendary and even embellished, but this likelihood does not in itself establish an alternative explanation for all reports about him. Likewise, to require all graphic detail in ancient historical narrative to have been a factor of "historicized dramatizing" supposedly would prove that Josephus's illustrative account of his own life must have been added fictively. Once again, the logic here is flawed. An even greater problem with attributing John's illustrative detail to "historicizing" additions — similar to contemporary conventions — is that the two closest examples, Matthew and Luke in their uses of Mark, demonstrate the exact

In addition to the many sensorily associated details mentioned above are these: Jesus is reported to have seen Nathanael under the fig tree (1:48); six ritual purification jars made out of stone are described as holding two or three *metrētas* of water each (2:6); Jesus is described as driving the animals out of the Temple area with a whip he had made out of cords (2:15); even 200 denarii would be insufficient to buy enough food to feed the multitude (6:7); the place where the 5,000 men were reclining for the feeding is described as having "much grass" (6:10); the food distributed and eaten is described as "barley loaves" (6:9-13) and *opsarion* (a prepared sort of fish rather than raw fish; 6:9, 11; 21:9, 10, 13) numbering five and two respectively; stones are picked up to kill Jesus (the prescribed punishment for blasphemy in the Torah; 8:59); Jesus made mud out of spittle and applied it to the blind man's eyes (9:6-15); worry over the opening of the tomb is associated with a bad odor (11:39); Lazarus emerged from the tomb with his hands and feet wrapped in strips of linen and with his face covered by a cloth (11:44); when the nard was prepared for the anointing of Jesus, its fragrance filled the house (12:3), and the high value of the perfume, described as worth 300 denarii, even raised an objection from Judas (12:5); Jesus was welcomed on his way into Jerusalem by a crowd waving palm branches (12:13); before washing his disciples' feet Jesus put on the clothes of a servant (13:4f.); not only was it night when Judas departed (13:30), but the soldiers and guards are described as bringing lanterns and torches to the garden for the arrest of Jesus (18:3); it was the *right* ear of the servant "Malchus" that was severed by Peter (18:10); the chilly temperature in the high priest's courtyard accounted for servants and disciples alike gathering to warm themselves around a charcoal fire (18:18); the sound of the cock's crowing was heard immediately after Peter's third denial (18:27); a crown of thorns was placed on Jesus' head by the soldiers, and they threw a purple robe around him (19:2, 5); the inscription ordered by Pilate was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek (19:20); Jesus was crucified between two men by four soldiers (19:18, 23); Jesus' clothing was divided into fourths and taken by the soldiers (19:23), but the seamless tunic of Jesus, woven from top to bottom in a single piece, was not divided, but the soldiers cast lots for it (19:23-24); a hyssop stick was used to lift a sponge dipped in a jar of sour vinegar to Jesus, which he drank (19:29-30); from the side of Jesus flowed water and blood (19:34-35); the spices are described as being a mixture of myrrh and aloes of about 100 *litras* in weight (19:39); Mary Magdalene came to the tomb

opposite! Matthew and Luke add units of tradition, but overall they omit names of persons and places and other illustrative details (see Anderson, *Christology*, pp. 185-92). This material is most prevalent in Mark and John, suggesting oral tradition in contrast to such secondary redactions as Matthew and Luke.

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on the first day of the week early, while it was still dark, and found the stone had been removed from the tomb (20:1); an unnamed disciple and Peter arrived at the tomb and looked into it, seeing both the strips of linen cloth lying in one area and the headcloth folded up and located separately (20:5-7); it was in fear and behind closed doors that the disciples had gathered before the Lord appeared to them (20:19, 26); Thomas looked at the flesh wounds of Jesus (20:25-27); the disciples were instructed by Jesus to cast their nets on the right side of the boat (21:6); before jumping into the water, naked Peter threw on his coat (21:7); bread and fish were being cooked on a charcoal fire by Jesus on the shore (21:9); and the disciples' nets were not broken despite the number of large fish being as high as 153 (21:11).

As the above analysis suggests, John's narrative exhibits aspects of historicity in a variety of ways, not just one or two. Indeed, this may be one of the reasons for disagreements among scholars as to the historicity of the Johannine witness. Because one part of John's narrative fails to measure up to a particular mode of historicity, it is too easily assumed that none of it is historical. This is known as the all-or-none fallacy, which is equally problematic in whatever direction it is leveled. Another fallacy involves assuming that all aspects of historicity within a narrative need to be a particular form of historicity for them to be considered authentic. As the critical scholar distinguishes one aspect of John's historicity from another, each can be interpreted accordingly and thus more adequately. In that sense, asking *how* a narrative might be true is pivotal for being able to ascertain *whether* it might be true. The failure of scholars to make such distinctions is a leading reason for confusion and disagreement among them. Again, that some of the above examples might appear questionable from a blunt historicity standpoint does not mean that none of the above details is true, or that an alternative presentation of Jesus deserves to displace the Johannine automatically.³⁷ Discerning the particular aspects of John's historicity allows one's judgments to be more nuanced and measured — and one's claims to be more modest — and thus less likely to be false. Of course, the central importance of this issue is the degree to which our understanding of Jesus is enhanced by a clearer understanding of John and archaeology. Implications, then, follow accordingly.

37. Observe, for instance, the way M. Casey Maurice (*Is John's Gospel True?* [London: Routledge, 1996]) seizes upon aspects of John's differences with the Synoptics, claiming they are "inaccurate," thus leading to his central charge that John's renderings of Jesus (and especially John's christological claims) are "profoundly untrue." This case is hardly less apologetic than Craig Blomberg's defense of John's "historical reliability" (*The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2002]). The point here is that overstated claims for and against particular aspects of John's historicity do not necessarily apply to the others; each must be assessed on its own terms and weighed accordingly.

Implications for Archaeology and Jesus Research

The above analysis demonstrates that the bases for excluding the Gospel of John from the canons of historicity — and therefore from Jesus studies — are not as compelling as the prevalent opinion among modern biblical scholars has assumed. Conversely, neither is the above analysis intended to argue that everything in John is the result of eyewitness contact with Jesus; much of it shows evidence of later reflection, and it probably was the last of the canonical Gospels to be finalized (likely around 100 C.E.). It is also plausible that much of John's material came from secondhand or thirdhand accounts, rather than firsthand ones, despite the apparent presence of ample firsthand material.³⁸ What the above study does demonstrate, however, is that the Gospel of John is far closer to the historical Jesus than most scholars have claimed or thought for almost a century. Reasons for challenging John's historicity are often good ones, given John's theological interests, spiritualized character, and variance from the Synoptics, but a verdict of radical and pervasive ahistoricity is overreaching and wrong. While John's christological and spiritual interests are clear, it cannot be claimed now that the Evangelist's "head was in the stars" with topography and chronology being "the least of the author's concerns." Much of John's tradition appears authentic and even superior to the presentations of Jesus in the Synoptics, and this has extensive implications for Jesus studies.

Because John deserves to be considered within the mix of historical traditions, this must have an impact on historical Jesus studies. A more nuanced and balanced approach than assuming three "historical" Gospels versus a maverick "spiritual" Gospel might view the insight of Clement differently. Seeing John's as a "spiritual Gospel" might imply spirituality of insight rather than aloofness, just as the "bodily" aspect of the Synoptic witness might imply for Clement the outward structure of Jesus' ministry rather than facticity proper.³⁹ Indeed, both the Synoptics and John were *spiritual and corporal* in their interests, so their modernistic relegation in one direction to the exclusion of another is unsupported by the evidence and probably miscomprehends Clement's point to begin with. A more

38. Sturch, in "The Alleged Eyewitness Material in the Fourth Gospel," does outline several kinds of material that may have come from conjecture or secondhand knowledge, although suggesting a possibility is far short of demonstrating a likelihood — let alone a certainty.

39. In Hans Küng's impressive treatment of the implications of Jesus studies for Christian faith (*On Being a Christian* [New York: Pocket Books, 1966]), he reminds us that truth is beyond mere "facticity" (pp. 415-16). A modernistic reading of Clement's dictum might equate *sōmatika* with "facts" and therefore "truth," but this is likely a flawed reading of Clement. He might have been equating "truth" with the spiritual character of John, alluding to John's veracity rather than its distance from reality.

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nuanced approach to the Synoptic and Johannine presentations of Jesus might thus involve a fresh consideration of the Markan and Johannine perspectives, appreciating the particular historical and spiritual points they make. As bi-optic presentations of Jesus' ministry, both perspectives deserve renewed critical consideration in performing state-of-the-art investigations of the historical ministry of Jesus. The fallacy is to primatize one perspective to the exclusion of the other.

This being the case, several implications for archaeology and Jesus studies follow. First, archaeological and topographical content in John should be taken seriously by scientific archaeologists. A priori claims to a Gospel's historicity or ahistoricity should be left on the shelf in deference to the first-order investigations that archaeological studies provide. When this is done, the evidence will speak for itself. Thus, the full benefit of archaeological information in John and the Synoptics may be valued and employed fully on its own merits instead of being marginalized due to preconceived grids of exclusion, which themselves are less than established.

Second, it also could well be that the archaeological material presented in John will be of great value if more nuanced means of approaching John's relation to the Synoptic traditions are employed.⁴⁰ In that sense, John's "independence" should be understood as *autonomy and nondependence* rather than isolation, and "influence" should be understood as possibly going both ways, thus involving *interfluence and engagement* rather than literary borrowing only. This will allow more measured judgments between the traditions, allowing scholars to appreciate ways that preferences for particular Synoptic and Johannine presentations of Jesus might be critically ascertained.

Third, aspects of the Synoptic renderings of Jesus' ministry more likely to be historically reliable include the following: (a) Jesus' teachings about the kingdom of God in parables probably do represent a clearer portrait of the teaching ministry of Jesus than the more christological "I Am" sayings of John. The latter reflect the Evangelist's preaching and teaching about Jesus in his own paraphrastic forms. (b) Jesus' use of short, pithy sayings illustrating the wisdom and way of the kingdom in the Synoptics is also probably more characteristic of his actual teaching ministry than the more interpretive Johannine discourses, although John still contains at least eighty of these pithy sayings. (c) Jesus' healing and exorcising ministries and his sending out his disciples to do the same, as presented in the Synoptics, seem authentic. (d) Jesus' confronting of religious authorities and cleansing the Temple as prophetic challenging of purity laws restricting access to God in the Synoptics indeed seem authentic and worth building on. (e) Jesus'

40. See Anderson, "John and Mark — the Bi-Optic Gospels" and "Interfluent, Formative, and Dialectical."

dining with "sinners" and healings on the Sabbath were intended as provocations intended to call attention to the renewal of Israel's covenant with God. (f) Jesus' extolling the love of God and love for others as fulfillments of the Law is indeed worth building on in understanding the intentional mission of Jesus. (g) Jesus' death and appearances as narrated in postresurrection consciousness, as represented in the Synoptics, have a fair amount of reliability to them. In at least these ways, the presentations of Jesus in the Synoptics are worthy material for constructing an understanding of the historical Jesus and his mission.

Fourth, aspects of the Johannine rendering of Jesus' ministry more likely to be historically reliable include the following: (a) Jesus' relationship with John the Baptizer in declaring the prolific availability of purification contributes significant insights for understanding the ministries of John and of Jesus. (b) Jesus' early cleansing of the Temple as an inaugural prophetic sign designed to get the attention of religious authorities and others regarding his message, explaining opposition to Jesus throughout his ministry, is worthy of critical consideration. (c) Jesus' ministry over more than one year, allowing the movement to build momentum, seems more plausible than the single-year ministry apparent in the Synoptics. (d) Jesus' public ministry beginning in settings other than the home of Simon Peter's mother-in-law and vicinities suggests a more public inauguration of his ministry as a complement to Mk 1. (e) Jesus' going to and from Jerusalem, as most observant Jews would have done in the first century C.E., and his performing signs in the south as well as the north, seem more plausible than the Synoptic presentations of a single visit to Jerusalem and an exclusively Galilean ministry. (f) Jesus' last supper being a common meal rather than a Passover meal seems more likely, as the seder references in the Synoptics are readily explicable as representing emerging Christian practice rather than historicity proper. (g) Jesus' teaching about the life of the Spirit and unmediated access to God's leading and love matches the view of the charismatic and itinerant teacher of the Synoptics, despite being couched in a Johannine paraphrase. In these ways at least, John's material contributes significantly to our understandings of the historical Jesus and his ministry.

Finally, considering different aspects of John's historicity (and likewise of John's literary, spiritual, and theological interests) prevents one from making sweeping generalizations regarding the epistemological character of Gospel material. Indeed, John has a great deal of rhetorical material and apologetic interest,⁴¹ but this does not mean that such features can account for the episte-

41. Consider the dialogical modes of revelation and rhetoric (Anderson, *Christology*, pp. 104-7, 194-240, 259-63) and the rhetorical thrust of the Fourth Gospel (Anderson, *Navigating the Living Waters of the Gospel of John*).



Figure 74. Caesarea Maritima, Roman aqueduct built by Herod the Great. The Mediterranean Sea is on the left.

Courtesy J. H. Charlesworth

mological origin of all of its material. Aspects of historicity include: at least some sensorily derived firsthand content, evidence of complementarity to Mark, attempts to connect Hellenistic audiences with earlier Palestinian and Jewish aspects of Jesus' ministry, reflections of the evolving history of the Johannine situation,⁴² archaeological and topographical content, spatial and topographical incidentals, aspects of personal and relational familiarity, chronological and sequential references, and the fact of empirical data in John. In at least these ways, aspects of historicity in John have extensive implications for performing state-of-the-art investigations of Jesus, and they likewise cast invaluable light on the character, origin, and development of the Johannine tradition itself.

While interpreting John's christological and theological interests remains a historic source of controversy, neither historicity nor ahistoricity should be confused with theology proper. Conviction for or against John's christological claims should not drive the acceptance of John's apparently historical material; neither should one's appraisal of the latter determine the former. Like theology, historicity must be explored on its own terms and assessed accordingly — whether this Evangelist had his head “in the stars” or not. Indeed, “practical and mundane considerations” *can also be genuine interests* of those interested in “the spiritual universe” and “eternal realities.” The scandal of the Fourth Gospel is that it purports to address *both* poles, while negotiating the tension in between. It is the error of monological interpreters to insist on one pole at the expense of the other — a liability of traditionalistic and critical interpretations of

42. Consider the four crises inferred in a dialogical reading of Jn 6 (Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*); see also Anderson, Outline III in “Matters Johannine — Outlining the Johannine Riddles,” in *The Dialogical Autonomy of the Fourth Gospel: “A Historical Outline of Johannine Christianity — a Longitudinal Consideration of the Johannine Dialectical Situation.”*

John's historicity alike. While much of John is theological, to claim that all of its content — or even most of it — must be ascribed to canons of ahistoricity and concoction is more than the authentically critical scholar will want to claim. Given the multifarious aspects of John's historicity, this study will indeed have extensive implications for critical investigations of Jesus and archaeology.

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