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# Peder Borgen's Bread from Heaven—Midrashic Developments in John 6 as a Case Study in John's Unity and Disunity (A Foreword to Bread from Heaven)

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# Peder Borgen's *Bread from Heaven*— Midrashic Developments in John 6 as a Case Study in John's Unity and Disunity

*A Foreword by Paul N. Anderson*

AMONG THE WEIGHTY TREATMENTS of the Gospel of John over the last half-century, one of the most incisive has been *Bread from Heaven*, by Peder Borgen.<sup>1</sup> As the unity and disunity of the Fourth Gospel had been debated extensively among Johannine scholars for the previous half-century, approaching this issue from a text-based comparative standpoint posed a new window through which one could assess key issues and contribute to the larger discussions. Whereas Rudolf Bultmann and Wilhelm Bousset had envisioned the context of John's composition as Hellenistic Christianity leading into Gnostic trajectories, Borgen focused on particularly Jewish writings as John's primary backdrop—albeit within a diaspora Hellenistic setting.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, the writings of Philo and the Palestinian

1. Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo*, NovTSup 10 (1965; reprint, Leiden: Brill, 1981).

2. Rudolf Bultmann, in volume 2 of his *Theology of the New Testament*, Kendrick Grobel, trans. (1955; 2nd ed., Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), situates the historical position of John as being situated within Hellenistic Christianity (3–14). Wilhelm Bousset in his *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*, John E. Steely, trans. (1913, 5th ed. 1965; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970) had done the same, separating Palestinian Christianity from Hellenistic Christianity (69–152) and locating Johannine Christology within the latter sector of the early Christian movement (211–44). These moves, of course, assumed Johannine movements into Gnosticism rather than taking seriously the facts of John's Jewishness and Palestinian affinities.

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midrashim offer a text-based way forward in discerning the origin and development of John's presentation of the feeding and sea-crossing in the ministry of Jesus in John 6, followed by ensuing discussions and the confession of Peter. Given the numerous explicit and implicit cases of John's citing of Jewish biblical motifs, if the case could be made for the Johannine narrator's following Jewish patterns of thinking and writing, then implications would extend to understandings of the Johannine tradition's origin and contextual development, elucidating also its character and meaning.

If John 6 can be considered "the Grand Central Station of Johannine critical issues,"<sup>3</sup> Peder Borgen's 1965 monograph, *Bread from Heaven*, proved to be one of the most incisive and important monographs on that pivotal chapter.<sup>4</sup> With extensive implications for addressing a host of other New Testament issues—including the unity and disunity of John's narrative, relations between Johannine and synoptic traditions, and the socio-religious context of the Fourth Gospel—Borgen's work augurs hard for a unitive view of the Johannine text. Rather than seeing John's story of Jesus as an amalgam of disparate sources, or as dependent on the Synoptics, Borgen explores a number of commonalities between contemporary Jewish writings, including the writings of Philo and the haggadic midrashim. In so doing, new glimpses are also availed onto the dialectical Johannine situation, including an antidocetic thrust in addition to Johannine-synagogue engagements. The enduring impact of Borgen's work shows the Fourth Gospel to represent a self-standing Jesus tradition, combined with Jewish engagements of biblical texts, contributing to homiletic expansions upon memories of the ministry of Jesus for later generations. The implications are extensive, indeed.

3. Paul N. Anderson, "The *Sitz im Leben* of the Johannine Bread of Life Discourse and Its Evolving Context," in R. Alan Culpepper (ed.), *Critical Readings of John 6*, BIS 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1997) 1–59, here 1.

4. This is the judgment of Robert Kysar, who regards it to be the most significant study of John 6 at the time, in his *Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel: An Examination of Contemporary Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg 1975) 124. For an analysis of his treatment, see Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6*, WUNT 2.78 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996; 3rd printing with a new introduction, outlines, and epilogue, Eugene: Cascade, 2010) 52–61.

## Borgen's Approach

In addition to noting John's literary features and their religious background, Borgen also gives special attention to the existential application of these concerns in addressing the needs of later audiences. In a fuller treatment than Bultmann's work had earlier provided,<sup>5</sup> Borgen examines the exegetical writings of Philo as a means of comparing John's presentation of Jesus within a diaspora context. Borgen also does something similar to what J. Louis Martyn performed three years later, analyzing Johannine history and theology as a two-level reading of the narrative.<sup>6</sup> Unlike Martyn, however, Borgen gives special attention to Palestinian midrashim as a means of analyzing grounded parallels with the origin of John's narrative, and his engaging the writings of Philo provides a parallel analysis in a Hellenistic context. In these ways, Borgen's work not only sheds light on the operations of the Fourth Evangelist as a Jewish purveyor of written tradition, but it also delivers an advance upon historical understandings of the ministry of Jesus, despite the Johannine Gospel's being finalized several decades later. That being the case, Borgen's work bears implications for understanding the Jesus of history as well as the Christ of faith.

Borgen's interest in the subject, however, came about somewhat by accident. Feeling that recent interpreters had not taken seriously the degree of authority commanded by Jewish Scripture in the Johannine narrative, Borgen began examining biblical quotations—in particular, John 6:31, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat." In his own words, Borgen describes his initial intrigue and emerging hypotheses to be tested:

Interestingly, an important observation was made in the waiting room at the Main Railroad Station in Copenhagen. I had to wait for some time on a train, and sitting on a bench I looked at the text of John 6 in my Greek New Testament. I noticed that words from the Old Testament quotation were also found in the *subsequent* verses. I picked up a pencil and underscored the repeated words and learned how each word and phrase was interpreted. The last word in the Old Testament quotation in John 6:31, "to eat," was added in v. 49, and it was then in the center of the exposition in vv. 49–58. Thus, an element of a systematically structured exposition

5. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, G. R. Beasley-Murray, trans. (1971; reprint, Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2014).

6. J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (1968, 1979; 3rd ed., Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

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can be traced. With these observations made, I searched for examples of parallel expository activity, in the Jewish *midrashim*, and particularly in the expository writings of Philo of Alexandria. It can also be examined how various biblical traditions may be alluded to and also may be woven into the exposition. In this way it is seen how a received and given text is applied and used in a meaningful way in new situations to new persons and groups. On this basis received and applied aspects of meanings are brought together.<sup>7</sup>

That earlier set of insights is clearly visible in the ways Peder Borgen then developed his research project as evidenced in his first major monograph. At the outset (chapter 1), he declares his thesis in the light of previous history-of-religions approaches to John: “This study is based on the fact that Philo and John both interpret the Old Testament, and that in so doing they both expand on the pericope of manna—the bread from heaven.”<sup>8</sup> As a means of posing a comparison/contrast with John 6:31–58, Borgen lays out six relevant Palestinian midrashic texts for analysis: *Exodus Rabbah* 25:2 (linking Ps 104:14; Deut 11:11; Num 21:17 and Exod 16:4); 25:6 (linking Num 21:17 and Exod 16:4); *Moses I* 201–202; *Exodus Mekilta* 16:4 (linking Deut 33:28 and 14); *Petirat Moses* (linking Exod 16:4 and Num 21:17); and *Moses II* 267. Borgen first compares these texts with each other, noting similar ways they address the “bread from heaven” motif, and he further compares these findings with haggadic traditions featured in Philo’s exegesis: *Mut.* 258–260a (Exod 16:4); *Congr.* 170, 173–174 (Deut 8:2); and *Leg. All.* III 162, 168 (Exod 16:4). Borgen then performs an analysis of John 6:31–58, showing similarities and differences between these three sets of midrashic expansions upon a key manna text (Exod 16:4, “he gave them bread from heaven to eat”), demonstrating similarities and differences, followed by their implications.

Borgen goes on to explore commonalities in contemporary homiletical patterns in the writings of Philo and Paul, and also the Palestinian midrashim, noting instances of exegetical paraphrase and subordinate quotations from Hebrew Scripture (chapter 2). Identifying commonalities in terms of midrashic method in patterns and terminology in John 6 (vv. 31–33, 34–40, 41–48, 49–58), Borgen thus demonstrates Jewish exegetical operations within the Johannine Bread of Life discourse (chapter 3). From

7. Shared in personal correspondence, September 2016.

8. Borgen, *Bread from Heaven*, 1.

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there, Borgen performs detailed analyses of the heavenly philosophy of the synagogue and encyclical schools in Alexandria (Philo, *Mut.* 253–263; chapter 4) and of the heavenly order of the Jews in contrast to pagan life in Hellenistic culture (Philo, *Leg All.* III 162–168; chapter 5). Upon those bases, Borgen explores the unique vision of God in Jesus as the son of Joseph in John 6:31–58, elucidating the Jewish background of John 6 and its sharpened rhetorical thrust as a challenge to emerging Docetists, who are unwilling to accept the fleshly humanity of Jesus (chapter 6).

Within the context of contemporary New Testament scholarship, it is notable that Borgen builds upon the work of his mentor, Nils Alstrup Dahl, who had also levied a pointed set of critiques against the Hellenization and Gnosticization of the Johannine tradition. Pushing back against Bultmann's minimizing the Jewish and Old Testament background of the Fourth Gospel, Dahl argues that the evangelist represents the Jewish idea that "Israel is the center of the world."<sup>9</sup> The Fourth Evangelist, however, reinterprets that Jewish missional identity, showing Jesus as the King of Israel—of whom Moses and the prophets wrote—constructing a christocentric and forensic view of history. In the distinguishing of those who are from above and from below, however, John's dualism is closer to Qumranic Judaism than full-blown Gnosticism. It reflects affinity with the ethos and operations of Jewish Merkabah mysticism, which builds upon Scripture in its rhetorical appeals.<sup>10</sup> In constructing his argument on the Jewishness of John, Dahl builds on the work of Eduard Schweizer, while also flagging the danger of separating the universalizing Christ of faith from the Jewish Jesus of history, especially within docetizing Christian developments. According to Dahl,

The christological interpretation of Old Testament visions and theophanies, therefore, seems to have a polemical note directed against a type of piety which made the patriarchs and prophets heroes of the mystical visions of the heavenly world. Even a docetic Christology may have been supported by allegorical interpretations of the Old Testament. Over and against such tendencies, John bears witness to the true humanity of Jesus and to the reality of his death (6:41–2, 61; 19:35).<sup>11</sup>

9. Nils Alstrup Dahl, "The Johannine Church and History," in John Ashton (ed.), *The Interpretation of John*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997) 147–67, here 152; first published in W. Klassen and G. F. Snyder (eds.), *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962) 124–42.

10. *Ibid.*, 160–64.

11. *Ibid.*, 164.

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Behind the constructive work of Borgen, the formative work of Dahl is thus evident. Rather than seeing the Fourth Gospel as truncated from a Palestinian context, John's presentation of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah/Christ is foundationally rooted in Jewish typological and exegetical engagements of Scripture, and its ethical dualism reflects a Jewish worldview, albeit developed in a diaspora context. While earlier tensions with Jewish leaders in Judea and later tensions with Jewish communities among the mission churches are evident, Borgen also notes the fact that John's incarnational motifs are designed to target docetizing members of the Johannine situation, implying a multiplicity of rhetorical thrusts. Like the letters of Ignatius, which target Judaizing and docetizing threats within the context of Roman imperial pressures, John's crafting of the Bread of Life discourse not only invites true adherents of Moses to receive the true heavenly manna that Jesus gives and is; it also challenges Gentile members of the audience to embrace his real suffering and death.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, in performing the most intensive investigation of Jewish exegetical and midrashic practices underlying any text within the Gospel of John, Borgen makes significant advances not only in Johannine studies but also in showing how the writings of Philo and the Palestinian midrashim might serve as a backdrop for understanding the writings of Paul and other writings of the New Testament. Additionally, in illuminating the existential targeting of audiences within the Johannine situation, Borgen shows the dialectical character of Johannine Christianity to be more complex and polyvalent than recent studies had imagined.<sup>13</sup> These and other strengths

12. Thus, the emerging Johannine situation reflects a highly dialectical set of engagements within the evolving Johannine situation. See treatments of Samaritan and Galilean-Judean tensions—Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, NovTSup 14 (1967; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017); Johannine-Jewish tensions—J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology*; Johannine-emperor cult tensions—Richard J. Cassidy, *John's Gospel in New Perspective: Christology and the Realities of Roman Power* (1992; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015); Johannine-Docetist tensions—Udo Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John: An Investigation of the Place of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine School*, Linda M. Maloney, trans. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); Johannine-hierarchical Christian tensions—Ernst Käsemann, *A Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17*, Gerhard Krodel, trans., New Testament Library (1968; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017). Borgen's work thus supports and corroborates most of these developments in sketching contextual factors affecting what R. Alan Culpepper refers to as *The Johannine School* (1975; 2nd ed., Atlanta: SBL, 2007) and what Raymond E. Brown refers to as *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1979).

13. In addition to C. K. Barrett's essay "The Dialectical Theology of St John," in his

are among the advances made by Peder Borgen's important monograph, *Bread from Heaven*.

## The Significance of John 6: A Showcase of Johannine Critical Issues and Their Solutions

Borgen's selection of John 6 as a case study for his work proved a pivotal move in New Testament scholarship, as it is within this chapter that a number of critical issues converge. Given that Rudolf Bultmann's commentary identified four of John's five major literary sources being discoverable within this chapter, including aspects of the text's disordering and reordering, assessing the literary unity and disunity of John 6 bears several weighty implications.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, John's theological tensions within this chapter demand critical consideration. If John 6 presents signs-narratives deriving from an alien source that are existentialized by the evangelist, or if the revelation-sayings material reflects the Gnostic Redeemer-Myth countered by the evangelist's incarnational thrust, or if a redactor has added Eucharist-cultic material to counter the evangelist's purportedly antisacramental stance, these issues would be important to address.<sup>15</sup> In analyzing similarities and differences between John and the Synoptics, John 6 also gives the most extensive set of parallels outside of the Passion Narrative. Therefore, John's relation(s) to the Synoptics would also hinge upon a close analysis of this text.<sup>16</sup>

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*New Testament Essays* (London: SPCK, 1972) 49–69, see also Paul N. Anderson, "From One Dialogue to Another: Johannine Polyvalence from Origins to Receptions," in Stephen Moore and Tom Thatcher (eds.), *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism: The Past, Present, and Future of the Fourth Gospel as Literature*, Resources in Biblical Studies 55 (Atlanta: SBL, 2008) 93–119.

14. Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 209–37; cf. my overview in the foreword to Bultmann's commentary (2014, i–xxviii) and a more extensive analysis in *Christology*, 33–251.

15. Therefore, as Robert Fortna has argued, it is not simply the stylistic unity of the Fourth Gospel that requires consideration; it is also the contextual and theological Johannine tensions that must be engaged critically, if the full spectrum of John's riddles is to be addressed. R. T. Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor: From Narrative Source to Present Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 6, 16–22.

16. C. K. Barrett, for instance, argues that the similarities between John 6 and Mark 6 and 8 point to the possibility that John may at least have had access to Mark, and perhaps other synoptic traditions. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (1955; 2nd ed., Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978). A similar case was argued by B. H. Streeter in *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1924).



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These are some of the reasons John 6 is so pivotal, not only in Johannine studies but also in terms of gospel-relations studies, New Testament theological analyses, the history of early Christianity, and even historical-Jesus research overall. John 6 offers the most solid bases for examining what Ashton named the two great Johannine riddles addressed by Bultmann: (a) *John's place in the development of early Christianity*, and (b) *John's central governing thrust*.<sup>17</sup> It also serves as a basis for ascertaining the keys to many of the other Johannine riddles, and thus John 6 provides a number of planks on which to base a solid overall Johannine theory with extensive implications.<sup>18</sup> This is why John 6 is so central to understanding the panoply of Johannine critical issues, as findings on this pivotal text bear within themselves extensive implications.<sup>19</sup> These may also be reasons as to why Borgen was directed by Dahl to consider the socioreligious provenance of John 6 as a means of posing alternative ways forward in the critical addressing of the Johannine riddles. Some of these key issues are as follows.

First, as the water of life and bread of life themes are propounded by Jesus in Galilee in John 4 and 6, and as the Jerusalem healing of the lame man in John 5 is referenced also in John 7, Bultmann infers *a transposition of these chapters*. He thus assumes the original order was chapters 4, 6, 5, 7, which requires an inference of disordering followed by a theory of rearrangement—probably by another hand.<sup>20</sup> Assuming that such a re-positioning of major sections of John may have taken place, Bultmann extends a disordering-rearrangement set of inferences to dozens of other

17. John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (1991; 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 2–11, argues that the greatest contribution of Bultmann's magisterial paradigm was that it addressed these two great Johannine riddles, and yet he fails to note that John 6 is the classic text upon which these and other riddles must be explored and tested. See, for instance, a fuller treatment of thirty-six of the Johannine riddles (a dozen theological, historical, and literary riddles displayed and assessed) in Paul N. Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction to John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011).

18. Added to the 2010 third printing of Anderson, *Christology*, is a series of solid planks upon which to base a new overall Johannine theory regarding John's dialogical autonomy (xxxv–lxxxix). See also Anderson, *Riddles*, 125–55.

19. Note for instance, that in contrast to Martyn's identifying a single partner in dialogue between the Johannine leadership and its audience (synagogue leaders), no fewer than four partners in dialogue can be inferred when performing a history-and-theology reading of John 6; cf. Anderson, "Johannine Bread of Life Discourse," 24–58.

20. The transposition of John 5 and 6 was followed by Schnackenburg and a few others: Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, Kevin Smyth, trans. (New York: Seabury, 1982) 2:73.

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texts (a total of ten with relation to John 6 itself),<sup>21</sup> which avails him license to rearrange other sayings material as a means of “exposing” the poetic and strophic character of an inferred Gnostic-sayings source.<sup>22</sup>

Second, within Bultmann’s *source-critical approach*, assuming there was no self-standing Johannine tradition on its own, Bultmann infers the evangelist’s making use of a *Sēmeia* Source and a Revelation-Sayings Source as a means of constructing the feeding narrative and its ensuing discussions and discourses in John 6. Building, then, on the other signs material in John, Bultmann infers a self-standing miracle source designed to convince audiences that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah/Christ. This hypothetical source is inferentially parallel to Mark, accounting for the origin and character of John’s distinctive presentation of Jesus’s works. Additionally, Bultmann extends his theory of disordering and rearrangement, allowing for the rearranging of more than half a dozen units of material within the sayings of Jesus in John 6, which, when rearranged, appear more similar to what one might imagine a Gnostic poetic discourse to have sounded like. Assuming the Johannine Prologue was also a part of this Mandaean tradition, Bultmann accounts for the origin and character of John’s distinctive discourses and sayings of Jesus, accordingly. He then poses stylistic evidence to support his identification of these two sources, arguing that the signs source displays features of “Semitising Greek,” while the sayings source displays features of “Hellenised Aramaic.”

Third, Bultmann infers *the addition of the so-called eucharistic interpolation* (John 6:51c–58) on the assumption that the Fourth Evangelist was an antisacramentalist, and that the redactor was an ecclesial revisionist. In contrast to other source-critical inferences, these verses display no stylistic differences with the narrator, leading Bultmann to infer that the redactor must have “imitated the style of the evangelist” in this case. Bolstered by the view that John 6:51c–58 required participation in the Eucharist for salvation to be obtained, vv. 53–54 clearly seem at odds with the evangelist’s christocentric soteriology. If one has no life and is thus damned apart from participating in cultic instrumentalism, such a requirement is indeed at diametric odds with the evangelist’s seeing Christ as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6) and worship in spirit and in truth being independent of form and place (4:21–24). Thus, if the redactor added John 21, featuring

21. Anderson, *Christology*, 80.

22. For a thorough analysis of the theological, stylistic, and contextual evidence for Bultmann’s operation, see *ibid.*, 70–136.

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something like a sacramental meal on the shore, with overtones of futuristic eschatology associated with referencing the death of the Beloved Disciple, Bultmann infers the same redactor's contribution to have involved the adding of this section at the end of the Bread of Life discourse. Therefore, if John 6:51c–58 is ritualistically eucharistic, it is likely to represent a later interpolation.

These theological concerns point to a more direct set of tensions involving a fourth set of issues: *differences of theological Tendenz*, possibly reflecting different religious backgrounds of the signs material and the sayings material in John 6. In Bultmann's view, the miracles in the Fourth Gospel originated from a *Sēmeia* Source reflecting a *Theios Anēr* Christology, which the evangelist sets straight in existential directions. This accounts for the disparaging of signs faith in John 4:48 and 6:26, in tension with affirming those who believe without having seen in 20:29. Further, the agency of the *Logos* and the work of the Revealer in the Johannine Gospel are thought to prefigure the later-more-common Gnostic Redeemer-Myth, bolstering further Bultmann's inference of the evangelist's utilization of disparate sources. Thus, the evangelist's incarnational theology is set in dialectical tension with the high Christology of the sayings material in John, accounting for a number of John's theological riddles as representing dialogues external to the thinking of the evangelist.

A fifth issue—one with which Bultmann and Borgen would agree—involves *the relation of John's tradition to those of the Synoptic Gospels*. Whereas Barrett, and to some degree Streeter before him, inferred John's indebtedness to the Synoptic Gospels, and Mark in particular, Bultmann and Borgen see John's tradition as independent and self-standing.<sup>23</sup> John 6 thus provides the premier case study for determining Johannine-Synoptic relations, as it is in this chapter that the only miracle in all four Gospels—the feeding of the five thousand—is found (Matt 14:13–21; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–15; cf. also the feeding of the four thousand: Matt 15:32–39; Mark 8:1–10). Additional similarities include the sea crossing (Matt 14:22–33; Mark 6:45–52; John 6:16–21), debates over the meaning of the feeding, and the

23. Borgen's earlier essay on the subject had questioned views regarding John's dependence on the Synoptics, "John and the Synoptics in the Passion Narrative," *NTS* 5 (1959) 246–59. He later wrote several other essays on the subject, and these are gathered in his collection of essays, *The Gospel of John: More Light from Philo, Paul and Archaeology*, *NovTSup* 154 (Leiden: Brill, 2014): "Gospel Traditions in Paul and John: Methods and Structures; John and the Synoptics" (67–77); "John and the Synoptics" (121–46); "The Independence of the Gospel of John: Some Observations" (147–64).

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confession of Peter shortly thereafter (Matt 16:16; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20; John 6:68–69). If there were thus one unit within John's narrative wherein similarities and differences with other first-century narratives could be tested—other than the Passion narratives—John 6 would be it.

Therefore, Borgen has chosen well in selecting John 6 as a case study for testing the Fourth Gospel's theological and literary unity and disunity. First, if John 6 follows on John 5, the need for an extensive theory of disordering and reordering is diminished; Borgen shows that John 6 follows logically on the statement of Jesus in 5:46. Second, if the order within John 6 flows coherently as a unity, the narrative makes sense as it stands—focusing on the manna and bread motifs throughout the chapter. Third, Borgen shows how the signs and discourses actually flow together in an apparent traditional unity, and the Jewish-exegetical backdrop of the chapter demonstrates its text-based integrity. Fourth, if verses 51–58 follow the previous discussion without reflecting a theological disruption, the intrusive work of a redactor becomes superfluous. That is precisely what Borgen demonstrates, as these verses are not explicitly or instrumentally eucharistic, but they flow from expansions on the biblical texts associated with Exod 16:4. Fifth, while the similarities between John 6 and parallel passages in the Synoptics are intriguing, so are the differences. Borgen thus demonstrates how the Johannine discourses and dialogues in John 6 actually reflect expansions upon the ministry of Jesus in the earlier part of the chapter, in addition to the midrashic developments that ensue. They are not synoptic-dependent; rather, they stem from Palestinian midrashic debates over the ministry of Jesus and its interpretations, casting light upon earlier and later stages in the Johannine tradition's development.

While Borgen spells out the synchronic implications of his findings more extensively in later works, their basis is already established in the outcomes of his first monograph.<sup>24</sup> In addition to providing a compelling case study for the autonomy and unity of the Johannine tradition, Borgen makes two further contributions that continue to impact Johannine studies to this day. These contributions address the two great Johannine riddles set forth by Ashton, above: John's provenance within the development of early Christianity and the central theological thrust of the Fourth Gospel.

24. See especially his essay arguing for the continuity between John 5 and 6 in Peder Borgen, "John 6: Tradition, Interpretation and Composition," in Culpepper, *Critical Readings of John 6*, 95–114; see also "The Unity of the Discourse in John 6," in his *Logos Was the True Light, and Other Essays on the Gospel of John*, Relieff 9 (Trondheim, Norway: Tapir, 1983) 21–22.

## **Borgen's Advances on the Two Great Johannine Riddles: John's Provenance and Central Thrust**

In addition to posing a compelling case for the compositional synchronicity of the Johannine narrative, Borgen also contributes further advances along other lines. In following Dahl's lead, Peder Borgen performs the most extensive comparison-contrast to date between John's tradition and the writings of Philo and the Palestinian midrashim. As parallels are evident between the ways the Fourth Evangelist and roughly contemporary Jewish authors worked with biblical texts interpretively and rhetorically, it is now uncontroversial to see the Fourth Gospel as an essentially Jewish document.<sup>25</sup> While John was finalized in a Hellenistic setting, the thoroughly Jewish character of the Johannine tradition argues for a setting in Palestine as the origin of its tradition, and that likelihood casts light upon the ministry of Jesus and its reception among Jewish leaders in Galilee and Judea as well as its later developments.<sup>26</sup> In providing a text-based analysis of similarities between treatments of Jewish interpretive expansions on biblical texts and the narration of signs, dialogues, and discourses in John 6, Borgen poses a correction to Bultmann's answer to the first of the great Johannine riddles: John's provenance. In the contribution of Borgen, the Johannine narrative has not departed from its Jewish ethos in its engagement with the Hellenistic world; rather, it maintains its Jewishness, even within a diaspora setting. This development poses three weighty implications.

First, Borgen's work makes unprecedented contributions toward understanding *the originative character of the Johannine tradition*, as well as early engagements over its subject, Jesus the Galilean. Borgen's analysis of the Palestinian midrashim shows that Jewish engagements of Scripture in

25. This case is argued by C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel of John & Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1975); John Ashton sees John's provenance as being rooted in the apocalyptic worldview of Qumranic Judaism, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*; Gail Yee sees the Jewish feasts embodied in the Johannine Jesus, *Jewish Feasts and the Gospel of John* (Wilmington: M. Glazier, 1989); Daniel J. Boyarin sees John's Logos theology as essentially Jewish, "The Gospel of the *Memra*: Jewish Binarianism and the Prologue to John," *HTR* 9 (2001) 243–84; Ben Reynolds sees the Son of Man in John as fulfilling Jewish apocalypticism, *The Apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of John*, WUNT 2.249 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

26. Therefore, the debates between Jesus and Jewish leaders as portrayed in John 6 display midrashic exchanges, which could have taken place in Galilee or Judea, if not during the ministry of Jesus, certainly among his later followers and their interlocutors—before the move to a Hellenistic setting—as well as continuing on within later synagogue-Johannine exchanges; cf. Anderson, "Johannine Bread of Life Discourse," 24–58.

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John 6 not only reflect the later developments of the Johannine tradition; it also shows how the Jewish leaders of Palestine might have used Scripture rhetorically in their engagements with Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>27</sup> That being the case, in John 6 we have not simply an exegetical development of Exod 16:4 as a proem text by a homiletician; we have echoes of debates with religious leaders in Galilee over Jesus's ministry and its authorization, in which biblical texts are cited, interpreted, and used rhetorically as means of procuring more bread (the crowd and the Jewish leaders) or asserting the authorization of Jesus. That being the case, we have in John 6 an alternative temptation narrative—where compelling Jesus to produce (more) bread, scriptural references are cited by discussants, which Jesus overturns with further scriptural citations—but in a more realistic way than the Q narratives preserved in Matt 4:1–11 and Luke 4:1–13.<sup>28</sup>

A second contribution of Borgen's work is that because it demonstrates clear parallels with how a contemporary Jewish interpreter of Scripture in a diaspora setting might have engaged Mosaic and manna-related texts, it also informs *the evangelist's engagement of audiences in the emerging Johannine situation*. Of course, a multiplicity of midrashic and homiletical patterns abound within ancient Jewish literature, and as Borgen himself shows, manna texts are used in a variety of ways. Whereas midrashic explorations of a proem biblical text such as Exod 16:4 are featured in Rabbah 25:1–8 and elsewhere, references to Scripture in other settings often simply serve primarily the interests of the interpreter.<sup>29</sup> For instance, Philo of Alexandria provides ample parallels for understanding how the manna motif was characteristically used in other socioreligious settings—sometimes exegetically, but most often rhetorically.

A fascinating detail is that when engagements of the manna motif are analyzed in Philo, as well as the Palestinian midrashim, manna is only used as a proem text about 15 percent of the time. Rather, the majority of

27. Of course, these midrashim were finalized much later, but if they convey a *topos*-based approach to Scripture engagement among Jewish leaders in Galilee and Judea, their parallels with John 6 may indeed convey soundings of the sorts of debates that might have ensued within the first level of the Johannine tradition's development. Cf. Anderson, "Johannine Bread of Life Discourse," 11–17.

28. Raymond E. Brown comments on these parallels, noting that we have a parallel temptation narrative in John 6 to that of the Q tradition in the Synoptics (261–64), "Incidents That Are Units in the Synoptic Gospels but Dispersed in John," in his *New Testament Essays* (Garden City, NY: Image, 1965) 246–71. Cf. Anderson, *Christology*, 201–2.

29. Jacob Neusner, *Midrash in Context: Exegesis in Formative Judaism*, Brown Judaic Studies 141 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988) xvii.

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its uses (85 percent) are rather brief references in which manna is used rhetorically as a proof text, bolstering another point.<sup>30</sup> Especially clear are the treatments of manna in *Mut.* 252–263 and *Leg. All. III* 161–178, where one finds (a) a main point of argument, (b) discussion in dualistic terms, (c) references to God’s giving manna as a rhetorical support of the main point, (d) continued discussion and implications, (e) a reiteration of the main theme in the light of the present discussion.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the main thrust of *Mut.* 252–263 is that while the man of virtue may resort to actions from below (Abraham’s resorting to progeny through Hagar), God’s provision through Sarah is like the heavenly food—manna—which nourishes abundantly. Further, whereas the main text of *Leg. All. III* 161–178 is Gen 3:14 (not Exod 16:4), God’s judging of the serpent in the garden of Eden differentiates the needs of the human body from those of the soul; the nourishment of the latter is the Word of God, like manna descended from heaven. Therefore, whether arguing that the Jewish synagogue schools are superior to the Greek encyclical schools in Alexandria (Philo) or whether the teachings of Jesus are superior to the stances of the synagogue leaders there or elsewhere in the diaspora mission (John), God’s giving heavenly manna provides a rhetorical trump card to be played as the last word within these socioreligious situations.<sup>32</sup>

A third contribution is that Borgen argues compellingly the likelihood that there were several phases and sets of audiences within the longitudinal Johannine situation, so *taking seriously the antidocetic thrust of John 6* is just as important as noting its engagements with Jewish audiences. In exploring the parallels with the Ignatian letters, Dahl and Borgen are on solid ground. While the third generation of the Jesus movement clearly remained engaged with Jewish communities in the diaspora, however, it cannot be said that dialogues with members of local synagogues were the only groups to be engaged.<sup>33</sup> Even before the move to an Asia Minor setting (if the traditional view is assumed) the Johannine Jesus movement seems to

30. Anderson, *Christology*, 58–61.

31. “Appendix VII: Philo’s Use of Manna as a Secondary Text,” in *ibid.*, 272–73.

32. Anderson, *Christology*, 194–251; Anderson, “Johannine Bread of Life Discourse,” 17–24.

33. This is the greatest weakness of the Martyn hypothesis; in seeking to elucidate the second level of history in the Johannine tradition, he obliterates the first. Cf. Edward W. Klink, “The Overrealized Expulsion in the Gospel of John,” in *John, Jesus, and History*, vol. 2, *Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel*, Early Christianity and Its Literature 2 (Atlanta: SBL, 2009) 175–84.

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have been engaging religious leaders in Jerusalem, reflecting north-south debates between Galileans and Judeans. Along these lines, religious authorization was an issue, as centralized religion stood in resistant tension with the charismatic prophetic challenge from the hinterlands. Another set of dialectical engagements involved competition between followers of John the Baptist and Jesus—tensions between the followers of charismatic and prophetic leaders. These engagements within Palestinian Judaism are palpable in the Johannine narrative, reflected in the ways Jesus's reception in Jerusalem is presented and the ways John serves as the primary witness to Jesus's Messiahship. With the move to a Gentile-mission setting, however, engagements with other groups come into play, and Borgen's building on the writings of Ignatius points the way forward.

Within the writings of John and Ignatius, four further dialectical engagements come to the surface. These include engagements with local Jewish leaders and docetizing teachers, within the presence of Roman persecution, to which Ignatius poses a monepiscopal and structural approach to church leadership as a means of addressing these crises. While Ignatius references Judaizers who challenged adherence to Jesus as the Christ (*Magn.* 10), emphasizing Jewish law and customs (*Magn.* 8; *Phila.* 6)—including the keeping of the Jewish Sabbath (*Magn.* 9)—he also warns of false teachers, who include heretics and Docetists (*Eph.* 7, 9, 16). Those called heretics poison the potion of Christ, introduce division and false doctrine, deny the way of the cross, and abstain from the eucharistic commemorating of the suffering and death of Jesus (*Tral.* 6; *Phil.* 2; *Smyrn.* 4, 7). Further, the Docetists (*Eph.* 7, 20; *Tral.* 11) deny the human history of Jesus and his ministry—especially his death on the cross—and against these divisive ministers, Ignatius points to the importance of maintaining unity in the church under a single appointed bishop as the means of countering divisive threats. After all, within Ignatian ecclesiology, unity with the single bishop and his community implies unity with the one Lord, Jesus Christ (*Eph.* 1–6, 20; *Magn.* 2–6, 13; *Tral.* 1–3, 7, 13; *Phil.* 2–4, 7–8; *Smyrn.* 8–9; *Polycarp* 5–6). And, of course, the Roman persecution against Christian leaders and his own impending martyrdom are acutely on his mind, so he advises believers to be strong against the empire and its demands—exhorting the way of the cross in solidarity with Christ and his communities of faith (*Eph.* 1, 9, 12, 21; *Rom.* 2–10).<sup>34</sup> With these connections being the case, Ignatius's em-

34. Cyril Charles Richardson, "Ignatius and John," in *The Christianity of Ignatius of Antioch* (1935; New York: A.M.S., 1967) 68–80; see also his "Evidence for Two Separate



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phasis upon receiving “the bread of God” bears with it clear martyrological associations, likely reflecting echoes of John 6 (*Eph.* 5, 20; *Rom.* 4, 7). In elucidating the Palestinian and Hellenistic developments of John’s story of Jesus, Borgen’s work thus affirms the synchronicity of the Johannine tradition while illuminating the diachronicity of the Johannine situation.

Having addressed the first of the great Johannine riddles by showing the Jewishness and unity of the Johannine tradition while also featuring its place in the development of Hellenistic Christianity, Borgen thus lays the groundwork for addressing the second great Johannine riddle: John’s *Leitmotiv* (central thrust). If there were a central motif and guiding theological thrust of the Johannine witness, it would have to feature God’s sending of the Son, out of love for the world, that humanity might respond to the divine initiative, in faith, leading to the enjoyment of abundant life, in the here and now as well as in the hereafter.<sup>35</sup> Such themes are sounded in the Johannine Prologue (1:1–18), passages denoting the central structure of John’s Christology (3:31–36; 12:44–50), the prayer of Jesus (John 17), and the purpose statement of the evangelist (20:30–31).<sup>36</sup> Along these lines, Borgen establishes a firm basis for a Jewish agency schema rooted in Deut 18:15–22, which addresses several of the other Johannine riddles, as well.

While Borgen develops the Prophet-like-Moses agency schema more fully in his later works,<sup>37</sup> he builds in the present book a case for the agency of the Son as sent by the Father, rooted in the halakhic concept of agency (pp. 158–64). Within this juridical model of sending and representation, the one who is sent is in all ways like the one who sends him, and this similitude relates not only to the mission of the agent but also to his person. Therefore, Jesus’s representation of the Father and desire to carry out his will in John 6:38–40 show that Jewish principles of agency are at work in John’s presentation of Jesus as the Messiah/Christ. Given that bread from

Heresies” as an argument for a Judaizing threat and a Docetizing threat in Ignatius, with implications for the dialectical Johannine situation (81–85). On an analysis of Ignatius’s Letters with relation to John 6, see Anderson, *Christology*, 119–27.

35. This set of themes is outlined by William R. G. Loader, “The Central Structure of Johannine Christology,” *NTS* 30 (1984) 188–216; Loader, *Jesus in John’s Gospel: Structures and Issues in Johannine Christology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017).

36. Anderson, *Christology*, 17–31.

37. See especially Borgen’s essay “God’s Agent in the Fourth Gospel,” in Jacob Neusner (ed.), *Religions in Antiquity: In Memory of E. R. Goodenough* (Leiden: Brill, 1968) 137–48; published also in John Ashton (ed.), *The Interpretation of John*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997) 83–95.

heaven is also associated with wisdom, agency, and even the Torah, John's "I am" formulas cohere with the representative agency schema of halakhic mysticism in ways that legitimate his authority. Therefore, rather than seeing Johannine Christology as rooted in the Gnostic Redeemer-Myth, the Mosaic agency schema poses a closer history-of-religions parallel, and its use would have been at home within the Palestinian phase of the Johannine tradition's development as well as its later diaspora phases.

### Further Johannine Riddles

In addition to Borgen's demonstrating the Jewishness of John's narrative and its central thrust, he addresses other Johannine riddles as well. First, if a grounded Jewish approach to agency—that of a Prophet-like-Moses typology—is seen as operative within the Johannine narrative, signs and discourses come to be seen as *more unitive in their thrust*. Therefore, the relation between signs, dialogues, and discourses appears more integrated than form-critical analyses have allowed, and the plausibility of John's tradition being a self-standing reflection on the ministry of Jesus, rather than a narrative derivative from the Synoptics or alien sources, is compellingly bolstered. Borgen's later work on Deut 18:15–22 also provides a basis for further developments of the *shaliach* (sending) motif as John's central thrust, providing a key to John's overall literary unity. For instance, if 1 John 1:1–3 reflects an embrace of the Gospel's story of Jesus by Johannine believers, the *Logos* hymn underlying John 1:1–18 can be seen as a cross-cultural expansion upon the Jewish agency motif in Hellenism-friendly ways.<sup>38</sup> This central theme, rendered in developing ways, poses a key to John's literary unity despite its development within an emerging situation.

A second Johannine riddle addressed by the Mosaic agency underlying John's story of Jesus is the Father-Son relationship—one of the great theological puzzles throughout Christian history. Theologically, rather than seeing the Father-Son relationship in John as comprising disparate theologies—one subordinated (the Father is greater than I; I can do nothing except what the Father commands) and the other egalitarian (I and the Father are one; if you have seen me, you have seen the Father)—these are best seen

38. Paul N. Anderson, "The Johannine *Logos*-Hymn: A Cross-Cultural Celebration of God's Creative-Redemptive Work," in R. Alan Culpepper and Jan G. van der Watt (eds.), *Creation Stories in Dialogue: The Bible, Science, and Folk Traditions; Radboud Prestige Lecture Series*, BINS 139 (Leiden: Brill, 2016) 219–42.

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not as contradictory but entwined. Within a Mosaic agency schema, the Son's words, works, and being are identical with the Father because he does nothing except what the Father instructs. As Borgen develops later, supported by presentations of the agency motif in Merkabah mysticism, the agent is in all ways like the one who sent him.<sup>39</sup> In that sense, the egalitarian and subordinated presentation of the Father-Son relationship in the Fourth Gospel conveys not disparate Christologies; rather, it represents flip sides of the same coin: *the Mosaic agency schema rooted in Deuteronomy 18*.<sup>40</sup> Further, when a more extensive analysis is performed between the Father-Son relationship in John and the septuagintal rendering of Deut 18:15–22, no fewer than twenty-four parallels can be found. Most strikingly, the proof of Jesus's being the prophet predicted by Moses is the fact that his word comes true—the sign of his authenticity.<sup>41</sup>

A third riddle addressed by Borgen's contribution involves historical inquiry. Given that the presentation of Jesus as the Mosaic prophet only appears in the Gospels and speeches of Peter and Stephen elsewhere in the New Testament (Acts 3:22; 7:37) and is absent from theological developments in christological hymns and teaching materials, it is unlikely to represent simply a later theological conviction applied to earlier narratives. It might even reflect *some of the debates surrounding the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth*, as his provocative deeds elicited challenges from religious leaders in Jerusalem, leading to his legitimation of his ministry. For instance, if Jesus's healings on the Sabbath, disturbance in the temple, dining with "sinners" and radical teachings evoked controversy among religious leaders—a certain likelihood—might he have defended his mission on the basis of claiming to represent the Father, as predicted by Moses (Deut 18:15–18)? If Jesus of Nazareth received legal pushback from Jewish leaders regarding his provocative actions based upon the Law of Moses, might he also have responded with a prophetic claim to Mosaic authority, citing Mosaic prophetic agency as a support of God's continuing word for his people? Borgen's work thus provides a grounded way forward in understanding more fully the Jesus of history as well as the Christ of faith—precisely because it offers a plausible basis for understanding Jesus as an eschatological

39. Borgen, "God's Agent."

40. Contra A. C. Sundberg, "Isos tō Theō Christology in John 5:17–30," *BR* 15 (1970) 19–31.

41. Paul N. Anderson, "The Having-Sent-Me Father: Aspects of Agency, Encounter, and Irony in the Johannine Father-Son Relationship," Adele Reinhartz (ed.), *Semeia* 85 (1999) 33–57.

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prophetic figure, appealing to continuing revelation as a basis for his love-based challenge to religious legalism.<sup>42</sup> Thus, Borgen's work addresses the first level of history, which Martyn's work largely sidesteps.

On the second level of history, however, a fourth Johannine riddle is also addressed, as John's presentation of Jesus as fulfilling the agency typology of Deut 18:15–22 also *casts light upon later engagements in the history of the Johannine situation*. Whether Johannine Christianity flowered in Ephesus, Alexandria, or elsewhere, it is without question that tensions between Jesus adherents and local synagogue leaders in Greco-Roman settings would have arisen, especially over convictions that Jesus was the Messiah/Christ and Son of the Father. Here we see a shift from an emphasis upon Mosaic observance of Sabbath-law to a Mosaic emphasis on monotheism. However the *Birkat ha-Minim* may have originated,<sup>43</sup> it certainly came to function as a means of disciplining perceived ditheism in the name of Jewish monotheism. Ironically, in the leveraging of Mosaic authority on the Shema ("Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD" [Deut 6:4 RSV]), the Johannine tradents defended their convictions on the basis that the Scriptures point to Jesus, and that Moses wrote of him (John 5:39, 46). Therefore, in showing multiple times and ways that God's word was fulfilled in Jesus, including the fact that his word came true and thus confirming the Mosaic typology, the Jewish leaders inconceivably refused to believe. Thus, like the chained prisoners in Plato's allegory of the cave, they refuse to embrace the light, for that would expose the reality of their understandings and platforms being based on scaffolding of human origin rather than the divine (John 1:10–13; 3:18–21).<sup>44</sup> The fullest irony comes as the religious leaders who accused Jesus earlier of blasphemy commit the same at the crucifixion: chanting that they have no king but Caesar (John 8:59; 19:15).

42. In these ways, John's story of Jesus receives a corroborative impression from the Synoptics. Not only is Jesus presented as the Son who is sent from the Father to do God's bidding in Mark 12:1–12, but the emphasis upon the revelatory work of the Spirit is also clear in Mark 13:11 and Luke 12:12. Thus, Jesus's assertion that all will be "taught by God" in John 6:45 embraces a pneumatic Mosaic tradition sounded in Num 11:29 and in the citing of Isa 54:13. Anderson, *Christology*, 206–7.

43. As an alternative to the Martyn hypothesis, Jonathan Bernier argues that the *Birkat* was early (ca. 30 CE), in Jerusalem, and politically targeted—challenging Galilean messianic movements, not a theological motivation primarily: *Aposynagōgos and the Historical Jesus in John: Rethinking the Historicity of the Johannine Expulsion Passages*, BINS 122 (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

44. Anderson, *Christology*, 197.

## Responses to Borgen's *Bread from Heaven* and Further Developments

The responses to Borgen's monograph were strongly favorable from the beginning, albeit with a few questions here and there. Virtually all of the major reviews directly following its publication heralded it as a major contribution in elucidating the Jewish background and operation of the Fourth Gospel.<sup>45</sup> Particular concerns were expressed regarding other Jewish sources that could have been accessed, or studies that might have been engaged more fully,<sup>46</sup> but overall the reviews felt the work was compelling.<sup>47</sup> J. Louis Martyn describes Borgen's work as "breathhtakingly ingenious" and believes Borgen's Jewish midrashic case to be well established. Not surprisingly, though, Martyn takes issue with Borgen on whether the admonition on eating and drinking the flesh and blood of Jesus was aimed at a docetic target rather than a Jewish one: "Jews who lodge a demand on orthodox typology."<sup>48</sup> Martyn thus argues for a singular focus of engagement in the Johannine situation—leaders of the local Jewish synagogue. According to Barnabas Lindars, "The thorough treatment of the Johannine ideas and the Christological teaching of the discourse makes this a book which no serious student of the Fourth Gospel can afford to neglect."<sup>49</sup>

45. Major reviews of Borgen's *Bread from Heaven* include Sverre Aalen, *NTT* 67 (1966) 227–60; B. E. Gärtner, *JBL* 86 (1967) 244–45; Albert Vanhoye, *Biblica* 48 (1967) 469–70; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *BZ* 12 (1968) 143–45; George Dunbar Kilpatrick, *TZ* 23 (1967) 439–41; Barnabas Lindars, *JTS* 18 (1967) 192–94; J. Louis Martyn, *JBL* 12 (1967) 143–45; Marie-Emile Boismard, *RB* 74 (1967) 140–41; Gerhard Delling, *TLZ* 92 (1967) 426.

46. George Kilpatrick (*TZ* 23:6, 1967) mentions alternative bread associations: ambrosia in the writings of Homer, the fruit of the tree of life in the Gilgamesh Epic, and the theme of bread in Joseph and Aseneth; Barnabas Lindars (*JTS* 18:1, 1967) comments on the value of J. W. Bowker's essay for Borgen's study: "The Origin and Purpose of St. John's Gospel," *NTS* 11 (1964) 398–408.

47. Schnackenburg (*BZ* 12 [1968] 143–45) and Boismard (*RB* 74 [1967] 140–41) feel the case is strong, and in the extensive doctoral critique by Jacob Jervell and Sverre Aalen (*NTT* 67 [1966] 227–60), Jervell feels that the establishing of a primary Jewish backdrop of John does not preclude Gnostic influence altogether, and Aalen is not convinced about Borgen's internal-external inferences regarding the opponents.

48. Martyn (*JBL* 12:1, 1967) rejects the linking of 1 John and the Gospel of John, and therefore questions the presence of Docetists in the Johannine situation. On this score, however, Martyn seems invested in consolidating the Johannine adversaries into a monolithic Jewish threat rather than seeing a more realistic diversity of dialectical targets in the evolving Johannine situation.

49. Lindars, review of *Bread from Heaven* (*JTS* 18:1, 1967) 194.

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A particularly pointed critique of Borgen's work came from Georg Richter, who asserted (following Bultmann) that John 5:51c–58 was indeed a redactor's insertion, as its eucharistic thrust was at odds with the evangelist's christocentric thrust, highlighted in John 20:31. To this critique, Borgen responded that the theme of "belief" is likewise missing from vv. 41–51b, and that the theme of "life" was present at least five times in vv. 51c–58 as well as in vv. 33–51b. Borgen thus argues that Richter is inconsistent in his defining of what is christological in John and what is not, and his championing the unity of John 6 was affirmed by both Schnackenburg and Dunn.<sup>50</sup> Appreciation for Borgen's work over the years is expressed in the eighteen essays comprising his *Festschrift*, showing that his work continues to make a difference.<sup>51</sup> Borgen was engaged by several scholars in *Critical Readings of John 6*, and he responds to those and other essays in his preface to the present volume.

In addition to the above works, Peder Borgen has continued to make important contributions to New Testament studies internationally. In terms of Philonic studies, Borgen's work not only illumines the Johannine writings, but it has also proved helpful in understanding the Pauline writings.<sup>52</sup> Borgen has also continued to enlighten understandings of the Jewish character of the Johannine tradition, including its autonomy and relations to the Synoptics.<sup>53</sup> And Borgen has continued to enlighten our

50. Georg Richter, "Zur Formgeschichte und literarischen Einheit von Joh 6:31–58," *ZNW* 60 (1969) 21–55. See Borgen's response: "Bread from Heaven: Aspects of Debates on Expository Method and Form," in his *Logos was the True Light, and Other Essays of the Gospel of John*, Relieff 9 (Trondheim, Norway: Tapir, 1983) 32–46. Concurring with Borgen are Rudolf Schnackenburg, "Zur Rede vom Brot aus dem Himmel: Eine Beobachtung zu Joh 6,52," *BZ* 12 (1968) 248–52, and James D. G. Dunn, "John VI—a Eucharistic Discourse?," *NTS* 17 (1971) 328–38.

51. *Neotestamentica et Philonica: Studies in Honor of Peder Borgen*, David E. Aune, Torrey Seland, and Jarl Henning Ulrichsen, eds., NovTSup 106 (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

52. Peder Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for His Time*, NovTSup 86 (1997; Atlanta: SBL, 2005); "Two Philonic Prayers and Their Contexts: An Analysis of *Who is the Heir of Divine Things* (*Her.*) 24–29 and *Against Flaccus* (*Flac.*) 170–75," *NTS* 45 (1999) 291–309; "Philo's *Against Flaccus* as Interpreted History," in Karl-Johan Illman et al. (eds.), *A Bouquet of Wisdom: Essays in Honour of Professor Karl-Gustav Sandelin* (Turku, Finland: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2000) 41–57; "The Gospel of John and Philo of Alexandria," in J. H. Charlesworth and M. A. Daise (eds.), *Light in a Spotless Mirror: Reflections on Wisdom Traditions in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: Continuum, 2003) 45–76.

53. Peder Borgen, "Observations on the Targumic Character of the Prologue of John," in *Logos Was the True Light*, 13–20; "Observations on the Midrashic Character

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understandings of the Johannine situation, including the challenges faced by Jewish populations in the Greco-Roman world, living under the Roman Empire in the late first century CE.<sup>54</sup> Along these lines, several movements in scholarship are evident.

First, given that the Jewish character of John's ethos is affirmed by Borgen's work, implications also call for better understandings of the character of what Daniel Boyarin describes as "Hellenistic Judaisms" in the early Christian era. In drawing in the works of Philo and the midrashim, the writings of Paul, John, and Hebrews can be seen as "prima facie evidence for a Hellenistic Jewish cultural koine, undoubtedly varied in many respects but having some common elements throughout the eastern Mediterranean."<sup>55</sup> Just because Hellenistic elements adorn a New Testament text, this does not imply a separation from Judaism. Rather, it reflects developments within first-century CE Judaism itself, "as the Palestinian method of interpreting Scripture."<sup>56</sup> Given the fluidity of interpretation, connections between John 6:31–58 are not simply tied to Exod 16:4, but they appear to have

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of John 6," in *ibid.*, 23–31; "Some Jewish Exegetical Traditions as Background for Son of Man Sayings in John's Gospel (Jn 3,13–14 and Context)," in Marinus de Jonge (ed.), *L'Évangile de Jean* (Leuven: Leuven University Press) 243–58; "The Use of Tradition in John 12:44–55," *NTS* 26 (1979) 18–35; "John and the Synoptics: Can Paul Offer Help?," in Gerald F. Hawthorne and Otto Betz (eds.), *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament: Essays in Honour of E. Earle Ellis for His 60th Birthday* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 80–94; "The Independence of the Gospel of John: Some Observations," in F. Van Segbroeck et al. (eds.), *The Four Gospels: Festschrift for Frans Neiryneck*, BETL 100 (Leuven: Peeters, 1992) 1815–33; "The Scriptures and the Words and Works of Jesus," in Tom Thatcher (ed.), *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007) 39–58.

54. "Creation, Logos and the Son: Observations on John 1:1–18 and 5:17–18," *Ex Auditu* 3 (1987) 88–97; *Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism* (1996; 2nd ed., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998); "The Gospel of John and Hellenism," in R. Alan Culpepper and Clifton Black (eds.), *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996) 98–123; "Emperor Worship and Persecution in Philo's 'In Flaccum' and 'De Legatione ad Gaium' and the Revelation of John," in Hubert Cancik, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Peter Schäfer (eds.), *Geschichte – Tradition – Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996) 3:493–509.

55. Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, Critical Studies in Jewish Literature, Culture, and Society 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) 14.

56. James M. Reese, *Hellenistic Influence on the Book of Wisdom and Its Consequences*, AnBib 41 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970) 96; Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, John Bowden, trans. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1974).

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engaged other manna-related texts such as Ps 78:24, perhaps reflecting resorting to memory and loose associations with a biblical theme within ongoing homiletical deliveries.<sup>57</sup> Implications of these analyses also suggest that Johannine Christianity in its diaspora setting was less of a sectarian enclave—despite affinities with Qumran writings—and more reflective of faith communities within a cosmopolitan setting. Thus, John's cultic and religious interests should not be seen as attempts to disengage from the world but as markers of seeking to live faithfully within it.<sup>58</sup>

A second development emerging from and alongside Borgen's analysis is the growing consensus that John 6 should be seen as a textual unity rather than an amalgam of disparate sources. (a) Because the unity of the discourse itself shows continuity between the themes of manna, bread, eating, and their interpretations, the discourse itself deserves to be seen as a unity.<sup>59</sup> (b) Because Borgen sees verses 51–58 not as eucharistic but as primarily antidocetic, there is no need to infer a redactor's addition to the chapter.<sup>60</sup> This analysis thus lifts the discussion of John 6 beyond sacramental-versus-nonsacramental debates, pointing to the implications of a non-suffering Jesus, cohering also with the costly-discipleship implications of a suffering Jesus. If Jesus suffered and died (the very point of the eyewitness testimony in John 19:34–35), so must his followers be willing to do the same. In that sense, John's call to ingest the flesh and blood of Jesus functions in ways entirely parallel with Jesus's question to James and John in Mark 10:38–39 regarding the willingness to drink his cup and be baptized with his baptism. In both cases the call is to martyr-willingness, bolstered

57. Maarten J. J. Menken, *Old Testament Quotations in the Fourth Gospel: Studies in Textual Form*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 15 (Leuven: Peeters, 1996) 50–51; Anderson, *Christology*, 202–4.

58. Arguing this case further is Borgen's doctoral student, Kåre Fugsleth, *Johannine Sectarianism in Perspective: A Sociological, Historical, and Comparative Analysis of Temple and Social Relationships in the Gospel of John, Philo and Qumran*, SupNovT 119 (Leiden: Brill, 2005). See also Bruce J. Malina's monograph on the subject: *Palestinian Manna Tradition: The Manna Tradition in the Palestinian Targums and Its Relationship to the New Testament Writings*, AGSJU 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1968).

59. As Borgen had argued earlier: "The Unity of Discourse in John 6," *ZNW* 50:3–4 (1959) 277–78. So also, R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence, Wisdom, and the Son of Man: A Study of the Idea of Pre-existence in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 237; see also Pamela Kinlaw, *The Christ Is Jesus: Metamorphosis, Possession, and Johannine Christology*, Academia Biblica 18 (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 145.

60. Maarten J. J. Menken, "John 6,51c–58: Eucharist or Christology?," *Biblica* 74 (1993) 1–26; cf. also Dunn, "John VI—a Eucharistic Discourse?"



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by eucharistic imagery, rather than a cultic requirement as the measure of such.<sup>61</sup> (c) Therefore, in John 6 we have an expansion upon the ministry of Jesus in ways that show a third traditional memory of the feeding in the wilderness, a sea crossing, debates over meanings, and the confession of Peter—alongside the traditions underlying Mark 6 and 8.<sup>62</sup> In that sense, John's traditional unity merits consideration alongside Mark's narrative as an autonomous reflection on the ministry of Jesus in its own right. Thus, here we have not primarily an exegetical expansion upon a biblical text, but a homiletical reflection upon the ministry of Jesus, making use of biblical texts and their interpretations along the way. In J. Louis Martyn's analysis, the point of John 6:31 is not to overcome one exegetical interpretation with another; it represents the overcoming of exegesis with eschatology. It is not Moses who gave, but the Father who gives.<sup>63</sup>

This leads to a third development, which raises questions regarding contributions of the Johannine narrative to understanding more clearly the ministry of Jesus. While going beyond Borgen's inferences here, A. M. Hunter speculates whether the presentation of engagements between Jesus and Palestinian religious leaders might indeed represent the sort of debates that characterized the ministry of the prophet from Nazareth, implying the historical value of John's story of Jesus.<sup>64</sup> As Susan Hylen puts it, "Borgen's extensive analysis of the interpretative traditions around the manna might be used to argue that instead of rejecting these traditions, the author relies on the traditions about manna to say something about the identity and significance of Jesus."<sup>65</sup> Then again, Gail O'Day shows how the Johannine sea-crossing narrative echoes scriptural motifs in ways that could be seen as a narrative embodiment of scriptural motifs.<sup>66</sup> Nonetheless, if John 6 represents an independent memory of Jesus and his ministry, rooted in events and their receptions within the Galilean ministry of Jesus, this would

61. Anderson, *Christology*, 110–36, 207–20.

62. R. T. Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs: A Reconstruction of the Narrative Source Underlying the Fourth Gospel*, SNTSMS 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

63. Martyn, *History and Theology* (2003) 123.

64. A. M. Hunter, *According to John* (London: SCM, 1968) 97–98; Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014) 235.

65. Susan Hylen, *Allusion and Meaning in John 6*, BZNW 137 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005) 31.

66. Gail R. O'Day, "John 6:15–21: Jesus Walking on Water as Narrative Embodiment of Johannine Christology," in Culpepper, *Critical Readings of John 6*, 149–59.

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have considerable implications for understanding the Jesus of history as well as the Christ of faith. In Borgen's more recent work, he contributed to the John, Jesus, and History Project regarding Johannine glimpses into a fuller understanding of the ministry of Jesus, especially around the theme of agency. This also has implications for the Son of Man motif in John as well as the Mosaic prophet.<sup>67</sup>

A fourth development resulting from Borgen's work involves his development of the Mosaic agency motif at the center of John's christological thrust. Given that the Father sends the Son in John, that the Son is equal to the Father but also subservient to the Father, and that the Son also sends the Spirit, who commissions Jesus's followers in the world, these themes cohere within the agency motif of Merkabah mysticism. Within that system, the agent is in all ways like the one who sent him, and to respond to the agent is to respond to the sender. Thus, the Father-Son relationship in John reflects not a set of contradictory theologies; the Son is equal to the Father precisely because he does nothing on his own but only that which he has been commissioned to do—an agency motif stemming from Deut 18:15–22. These themes are also accompanied by the Son's judging the world on behalf of the Sender, his reporting back to the Sender, and his later return as a judge of the world. The paradoxical mission of the Son of Man in John thus coheres with Daniel's and Ezekiel's presentation of both a heavenly agent and a humble prophet, and therein lies the origin of several of John's theological tensions. Building upon Borgen's work, Wayne Meeks shows how such a schema is also present within Samaritan traditions, and Jan-A. Bühner shows the centrality of the *shaliach* motif throughout John's narrative.<sup>68</sup> In addition to the many ways in which the outline of Deut 18:15–22 is central to John's presentation of the Father-Son relationship, the Johannine *Logos*-hymn displays the re-crafting of this Jewish biblical motif within a Hellenistic cross-cultural setting.<sup>69</sup>

67. Peder Borgen, "Observations on God's Agent and Agency in John 5–9: Tradition, Exposition, and Glimpses into History," in Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, and Tom Thatcher (eds.), *John, Jesus, and History*, ECL (Atlanta: SBL, 2016) 3:423–38; published in an alternative form in Peder Borgen, *The Gospel of John: More Light from Philo, Paul and Archaeology*, NovTSup 154 (Leiden: Brill, 2014) 193–218.

68. Meeks, *The Prophet-King*; Jan-A. Bühner, *Die Gesandte und sein Weg im vierten Evangelium: Die kultur- und religionsgeschichtlichen Grundlagen der johanneischen Sendungschristologie sowie ihre traditionsgeschichtliche Entwicklung*, WUNT 2.2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1977); and Borgen, "God's Agent."

69. Paul N. Anderson, "On Guessing Points and Naming Stars: The Epistemological Origins of John's Christological Tensions," in Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser (eds.),

## The Present Volume

As a selection in the Johannine Monograph Series, the renewed availing of Peder Borgen's *Bread from Heaven* to readers in the twenty-first century will undoubtedly continue to inspire creative engagements with multiple features of John's story of Jesus in ways beyond imagination. Borgen's own preface engages several scholars along important lines of interest, and he also explains some of the development in his own thinking along the way. While John's tradition remains autonomous, it is not truncated from those of the Synoptics, and the Jesus traditions underlying Paul's writings might even provide us a clue as to how the Johannine tradition might have developed, as well. The Jewishness of John's narrative, however, continues to grow in its implications for understanding both the character and development of the Johannine situation. In contrast to a singular set of issues elucidated by Martyn's treatment of John 9, Borgen's treatment of John 6 exposes dialogues with a multiplicity of audiences, within the dialectical Johannine situation. In so doing, John's narrative not only casts light upon its subject, Jesus of Nazareth, but it also illumines our understanding of Johannine Christianity as the context in which that memory developed and emerged.