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Discernment-Oriented Leadership in the Johannine Situation—Abiding in the Truth versus Lesser Alternatives (Chapter in Rethinking the Ethics of John: Implicit Ethics in the Johannine Writings)

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Leadership within the Johannine situation has been approached from various angles, ranging from structures of leadership, to the location of Johannine Christianity with relation to other groups, to the identity/nonidentity of Johannine leaders. Common to these and other inquiries regarding leadership within the Johannine situation, however, is a focus on the character and operation of leadership that is proposed, both of which relate centrally to abiding in the truth. Further, the call to abide in the truth pits this value over lesser alternatives in ways apparent over the longitudinal span of the Johannine situation. It comes to a head in the later stages of the Johannine situation, but it does not begin there.

As an *aletheic* ethic—one rooted, growing, and flowering in truth—the Johannine appeal differs from disjunctive approaches to ethics. These force a choice between principle and outcome—*a priori* reasoning versus *a posteriori* projections; the transcendent versus the manifest; being versus doing; protology versus eschatology. The conjunctive Johannine approach to ethics, however, connects truth with the source, the process, and the goal of faith and practice—contributing to understandings of authentic leadership across the confines of time and space. Here we catch a glimpse of the dialectical thinking of the evangelist, heralding the divine-human dialogue of revelation within an emerging dialectical situation, employing dialogical means of engaging his audiences in the message of the narrative in order to evoke an existential response of faith to the truth and its implications.[1] The character and operation of such an approach can be seen in the evolving history of the Johannine situation—thrown into sharp relief by the Epistles and against the backdrop of emerging models of church leadership. Apparent within such an analysis is not only the theological conviction of the Johannine tradition, but also its profound ethical concern.

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[1] For an appreciation of the dialectical character of the Johannine evangelist's thinking, see C. Kingsley Barrett, "The Dialectical Theology of St. John," in his *New Testament Essays* (London: SPCK, 1972), 49-69; see also Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel* (3rd ed.; Eugene, Oreg.: Cascade Books, 2010), 137-166. Note Judith Lieu's important observation that the thinking of the writer of the Johannine Epistles operates less dialectically than the Fourth Evangelist, in her *Second and Third Epistles of John* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), 205-216. On the other hand, the operation of the Johannine Epistles writer is more dialectical when it comes to ethics. For an analysis of Johannine polyvalence and multiple forms and levels of dialogical operation, see Paul N. Anderson, "From One Dialogue to Another—Johannine Polyvalence from Origins to Receptions," in *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism; The Past, Present, and Future of the Fourth Gospel as Literature* (SBLRBS 55; eds. Steven D. Moore and Tom Thatcher; Atlanta, Ga., and Leiden: SBL, 2008), 93–119.

1. Truth Appeals within the Johannine Situation

As argued elsewhere, the Johannine situation did not begin where the text was finalized. While the tradition was finalized in a Hellenistic setting (most plausibly Asia Minor), it shows signs of Palestinian origins and development. Over three phases spanning at least seven decades, two crises are evident within each of these phases in ways that are largely sequential but somewhat overlapping.[2] In each of these periods appeals to the truth can be seen to function as part of the rhetorical and ethical appeal of the Johannine narrative, and the latter four crises are especially apparent in the Johannine epistles.[3]

1.1 Phase I: A Palestinian Phase (30-70 CE)

Within the Palestinian Phase of the Johannine tradition's development, truth appeals can be seen with reference to both of the primary dialogical issues at hand—engagements with the Judean leaders of Jerusalem who spurned the northern prophet, followed by attempts to redirect the loyalties of Baptist-adherents to Jesus as the Messiah/Christ.

1.1.1. With relation to the *Jerusalemites and Judean leaders*, parallels to Qumranic dualism have been taken over by the Socratic dualism of Plato's *Allegory of the Cave.* Those who reject the light do so because they love darkness rather than light, lest their deeds be exposed as rooting in human initiative rather than the divine (Jn. 3:18-20). On the other hand, "those who *do what is true* (ποιῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν) come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God" (3:21). While salvation is of the Jews, authentic worship is found neither in Jerusalem nor on Mt. Gerizim; rather, it must be "in spirit and in truth" (ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ) (4:23-24). Even the Samaritan woman testifies that Jesus' words are true (4:18), and she hails him as both a prophet and the Messiah (4:19, 29). Accused by the Jerusalem leaders of

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[2] In addition to Anderson, *Christology* (n. 1), 110-136 and 194-251, see Paul N. Anderson, "The *Sitz im Leben* of the Johannine Bread of Life Discourse and its Evolving Context," in *Critical Readings of John 6* (ed. R. Alan Culpepper; BIS 22; Leiden and Atlanta, Ga.: Brill, 1997 and 2006), 1-59 (in this essay, at least four crises in the Johannine situation can be inferred behind the writing of John 6 on a two-level approach, confirmed by the Johannine Epistles, instead of a singular crisis behind John 9); "Bakhtin's Dialogism and the Corrective Rhetoric of the Johannine Misunderstanding Dialogue: Exposing Seven Crises in the Johannine Situation," in *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies* (ed. Roland Boer, SemeiaSt 63; Atlanta, Ga.: SBL, 2007), 133–159; "Antichristic Errors—Flawed Interpretations Regarding the Johannine Antichrists," and "Antichristic Crises: Proselytization Back into Jewish Religious Certainty—The Threat of Schismatic Abandonment," in Vol. 1 of *Text and Community: Essays in Commemoration of Bruce M. Metzger* (ed. J. Harold Ellens; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 196–216 and 217-240; and "'*You* Have the Words of Eternal Life!' Is Peter Presented as *Returning* the Keys of the Kingdom to Jesus in John 6:68?" *Neotestamentica* 41:1 (2007): 6–41.

[3] Therefore, the Johannine Gospel and Epistles cannot be separated but must be considered together in analyzing the Johannine situation. Note, for instance, the ethical issues within the Johannine addressed by Jan G. van der Watt, *Family of the King: Dynamics of Metaphor in the Gospel according to John* (BIS 47, Leiden: Brill, 2000); these issues are also apparent as underlying the Johannine Epistles as well as the Gospel in his *An Introduction to the Johannine Gospel and Letters* (London: T & T Clark, 2008).

being the presumptuous prophet of Deut. 18:20, Jesus claims both that the Father is true (Jn. 7:28; 8:26) and that the one who seeks his glory is true (7:18) and speaks the truth about the one who sent him (8:40, 45-46). Of course, these debates with Jerusalem leaders would have played a later apologetic role in dialogue with Jewish leaders of Asia Minor, but the north-south dialogue is not eclipsed by such realistic inferences.

1.1.2. A second set of dialogues within this phase, targeting *the followers of John the Baptist,* also features appeals to the truth. At the end of the Baptist's words in John 3, the evangelist asserts that God is true (3:33), and later Jesus asserts that John testified to the truth and that his testimony is true (5:32-33). At the first conclusion of Jesus' public ministry, he returns to the Transjordan site of John's baptismal ministry, and many attested that everything John said about Jesus was true (10:41). On that account, many believed (10:42). As John came witnessing to the light, he was not the light; rather, as the Prologue attests, *Jesus* was the true light coming into the world (1:6-9). Again, notice that authenticity is the appeal made with reference to his being truly sent by God (who is true), and that the Baptist's testimony about Jesus is professed to be true. While this appeal would have played well in Asia Minor, targeting followers of Apollos in Ephesus and elsewhere (those who knew the baptism of John, but did not know there was a Holy Spirit; Ac. 18:24-19:7), a Palestinian phase in its history of development cannot be denied.[4] Especially with the proximity of Qumran and other connections to its dualistic rhetoric, an attempt to redirect baptistic loyalties to Jesus in the first phase of the Johannine situation is palpable indeed.

Within both dialogues of the early phase of the Johannine situation, truth is central to the interpretation of Jesus' ministry. He came speaking the truth about God and conveying God's truth to the world, but his message was rejected by religious leaders who preferred darkness over light. John the Baptist came speaking the truth about Jesus—that he is truly sent from God.

1.2 Phase II: Asia Minor I (70-85 CE)

While a move to one of the mission churches cannot be pinpointed in terms of an exact chronology, a likely inference would connect a move to Asia Minor with Rome's final destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in 70 CE. Not only inhabitants of Jerusalem, but also of Galilee and surrounding regions, were translocated because of the Roman occupation; thus, a

[4] For the north-south Galilean background of the presentation of "the Judeans" in John, see Sean Freyne, "Jesus and the Galilean '*Am Ha'arets*: Fact, Johannine Irony, or Both?" in *John, Jesus, and History, Vol. 2: Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel* (ECL 2; eds. Paul N. Anderson *et al*; Atlanta, Ga., and Leiden: SBL, 2009), 139-154. In addition, Raymond E. Brown notes that Johannine Christianity was likely in contact with followers of John the Baptist during the early and middle phases of its history, including plausible contact with Baptist adherents in Palestine and possibly even Asia Minor; *The Community of the Beloved Disciple; The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York, N.Y., Ramsey, Minn., and Toronto: Paulist Press, 1978), 27-31, 69-71.

move to Ephesus or its environs around this time is a likely inference.[5] Dialogical engagements during this period would have included leaders and members of the local synagogue and elements related to the local Roman presence.

1.2.1. Again, dialogues with Judean leaders in Palestine extend to *dialogues with Jewish leaders in a Diaspora setting*, but with a sharper focus on Moses and the law rather than on Jerusalem and the temple. Picking up on the debates between Jesus and the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (chs. 5, 7-10), the earlier controversies about Moses and the law would have been especially relevant when facing charges of ditheism during the Jamnia period.[6] Asserting Jesus' authentic agency from God as the prophet foretold by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-22, Jesus declares to believing Jews, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (Jn. 8:31-32).[7] Of course, this liberation is misunderstood, and the miscomprehension of religious leaders continues into John 9, where the sin of the world is that people claim to see. Therefore, in Johannine perspective, while the "law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (1:17). As God is truth, Jesus reveals the truth as God's prophetic agency. This is why Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life—the only means by which humans come to the Father (14:6-7). It is not a matter of one religion over another; it is a function of revelation versus religion. As the only hope for humanity is the divine initiative, calling forth a response of faith, the greatest challenge of the world is religion—that which is of human origin, which must be released before receiving the

[5] Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* (ed. Francis J. Moloney; New York: Doubleday, 2003) reaffirms his earlier view that Ephesus is the best site for locating the later phases of the Johannine community—where the writings were finally composed. Indeed, there is no site more plausible than Ephesus and its environs for situating the later phases of Johannine Christianity.

[6] The original thesis of J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (3rd ed. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003) in 1968 has been qualified but not overturned in my judgment. I thus concur with D. Moody Smith, "What Have I Learned about the Gospel of John," in "*What Is John?": Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel* (SBLSS 3, ed. Fernando F. Segovia; Atlanta, Ga.: SBL, 1996), 217-235, that tensions with the synagogue in the Johannine situation were real. While several scholars, including Steven T. Katz, "Issues in the Separation of Judaism and Christianity after 70 C.E.: A Reconsideration," *JBL* 103 (1984): 43–76, and Reuven Kimelman, "*Birkat Ha-Minim* and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity," in Vol. 2 of *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* (ed. Ed P. Sanders *et al;* 3 vols.; Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1981), 226–244, have rightly critiqued an impression of a total break between Christianity and Judaism in the late first century, this does not mean there were no tensions. Further, close proximity with the Synagogue is most likely to have exacerbated conflicts, as the most intense of disputes (especially over such issues as monotheism versus ditheism) are especially intense within close-knit groups. Territoriality exists only among members of like species. For an extended critique of Martyn, advancing her own approach to Jewish-Christian relations in the Johannine situation, see A. Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John* (London and New York, N.Y.: Continuum, 2002) and her other writings on the subject.

[7] For no fewer than twenty-four points of contact between Deut 18:15-22 and the Father-Son relationship in the Gospel of John, see Paul N. Anderson, "The Having-Sent-Me Father—Aspects of Agency, Encounter, and Irony in the Johannine Father-Son Relationship," *Semeia* 85 (ed. Adele Reinhartz; Atlanta, Ga.: SBL, 1999): 33–57.

Revealer. After all, the true bread from heaven is not what Moses gave, but what the Father now gives (6:32).[8]

1.2.2. The *Roman-Johannine dialogue* likely became especially acute during the reign of Domitian (81-96 CE), as even his subjects were required to laud him as "lord and God." This being the case, the confession of Thomas would have borne striking anti-imperial associations (20:28).[9] Likewise, the trial of Jesus before Pilate actually serves a juridical function in condemning the condemner, as Pilate himself confesses to have no clue as to the truth. Jesus, on the other hand, declares that his kingdom is one of truth and that all who are of the truth listen to his voice (18:37-38).

Therefore, in the second phase of the Johannine situation, Jesus is the truth because he conveys the Father's word to the world faithfully, and the truth is always liberating. Of course, revelation is always an affront to religion, as the divine initiative cannot but displace the human. Likewise a challenge to political power and empire is the reign of truth, of which Jesus is king. It was during this phase that the first edition of the Johannine Gospel was composed as an augmentation and modest correction of Mark.[10]

1.3 Phase III: Asia Minor I (85-100)

As evident in the Johannine Epistles, the Johannine situation has now taken shape in the form of a community, which also has experienced at least one major schism (1 Jn. 2:18-25), is combating false teachers among traveling ministers (1 Jn. 4:1-3), and has experienced the rejection of its own members among neighboring churches (3 Jn. 1:9-10). Therefore, the third phase of the Johannine situation reflects a transition from one community to several within its developing Asia Minor setting. Whereas the apologetic thrust of the first edition of the Gospel (ca. 80-85 CE) is to convince audiences to believe in the truth about Jesus as the Jewish Messiah/Christ, the material in the final edition of the Gospel (ca. 100 CE) equates believing with abiding with Jesus and his community rather than denying or departing from either. Whereas the truth appeals of the Gospel narrative relate to the authenticity of Jesus' mission, the truth appeals of the Epistles relate to practical matters and ethical concerns—including both faith and praxis. These can be seen in the dialogues with docetizing Gentile believers and institutionalizing movements within the church.

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[8] See Anderson, *Christology* (n. 1), 194-220; for a fuller treatment of John's inclusivity and exclusivity, see Paul N. Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction to John* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2011), 34-36, 183-187.

[9] The Roman backdrop of the Johannine writings is argued compellingly by Richard J. Cassidy, *John's Gospel in New Pespective: Christology and the Realities of Roman Power* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992). See also Warren Carter, *John and Empire: Initial Explorations* (London and New York, N.Y.: T & T Clark, 2008); Tom Thatcher, *Greater than Caesar: Christology and Empire in the Fourth Gospel* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2009), and Anderson, *Sitz im Leben* (n. 2).

[10] Anderson, *Riddles* (n. 7), 125-155.

As Gentile believers were faced with a heightened expectation of emperor worship leading up to and during the reign of Domitian, they faced a variety of temptations. They might have been tempted to deny their allegiance to Christ and his community (perhaps while admitting participation in it, similar to those "innocent" of bearing the Christian name mentioned by Pliny to Trajan, *Letters* X 96), disassociating themselves from the movement. They might even have declared "Caesar is Lord" or offered incense on a votive altar as a marker of Roman compliance. Especially, if Roman soldiers may have encouraged subjects to make a public confession, even if less than sincere (note such an appeal by the soldier in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*), feeling that they had been let off the hook in terms of authenticity. Jewish Christians severed from the synagogue, whether by choice or otherwise, would likely have been more willing to suffer for their faith, but Gentile believers would need to be convinced that followers of Jesus could not also at the same time pledge allegiance to Caesar and empire. Even showing up for festivals honoring the emperor's birthday or celebrating local civic celebrations may have been regarded with differences of opinion among Christians of the Greco-Roman world. Thus, the appeal to "love not the world" (1 Jn. 2:15-17) would likely have had a variety of associations, as would the last word in the leading Johannine circular, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 Jn. 5:21).

Interestingly, the crises addressed in the third phase of the Johannine situation are precisely the ones presented in the later material added to the final edition of the Fourth Gospel by the compiler after the death of the Beloved Disciple: the Prologue (1:1-18), chapters 6, 15-17, and 21, and the Beloved Disciple and eyewitness passages. Here, Bultmann's inference that the author of the Epistles was likely the final editor of the Gospel is highly plausible. Indeed apparent are connections between the content of this later material, the stylistic operation of the compiler, and the apparent issues being faced by the audiences of the Johannine Epistles.[11]

Whereas the first antichristic threat lamented those who had split off from the Johannine community, refusing to believe that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah/Christ and likely returning to the religious security of Jewish monotheism (1 Jn. 2:18-25), the second antichristic threat involved not a lapsed secession but impending invasions of false teachers (1 Jn. 4:1-3; 2 Jn. 1:7). This threat is just as bad as the previous one, and although traveling ministers might sound appealing in their assimilative teachings, putting them on the spot and asking whether or not Jesus came in the flesh posed the discerning question. These were not Gnostics; that threat came later—flowering in the middle second century. Docetic Christology might not even have been their leading thesis; it more likely played a supportive role, bolstering their assimilative teachings: if Jesus did not suffer, neither need his followers do the same. If the direct appeal to stay away from idols can be taken at face value (1 Jn. 5:21), this is a likely reference to at least one issue alluded to in the rest of the letter. As a means of addressing assimilative and docetizing

[11] For more detailed analyses of the two different antichristic threats behind the Johannine Epistles, including the Roman crisis overlapping both, see Anderson, *Sitz im Leben* (n. 2), "Antichristic Errors" (n. 2), and "Antichristic Crises: (n. 2).

threats, the primacy-claiming Diotrephes (3 Jn. 1:9-10) can also be seen to be addressing some aspects of these issues, although in a very different manner.

1.3.1. Therefore, the fifth crisis addressed in the Johannine situation targeted the *docetizing tendencies of Gentile believers*, challenging also the theological basis for their assimilative teachings.[12] Indeed, the incarnational thrust of the later-edition gospel material challenges directly such issues and their ethical corollaries. Pivotal in the Johannine Prologue is the declaration, "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth" (1:14). Just as Jesus' "bread" is his flesh given for the life of the world—on the cross—his disciples must also be willing to shoulder the cross in their journeys if required by the truth. Unless one eats and drinks the flesh and blood of the crucified Lord, one dare not expect to enjoy a share with him in the resurrection; his flesh is true food, and his blood is true drink (6:53-55).[13] Climactically, water and blood flow forth from the side of the suffering Jesus, and the editor claims, "He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth" (19:34-35). Here truth claims have shifted from asserting that Jesus was one with the Father, the Messiah/Christ, and the true witness to God to insisting that Jesus indeed came in the flesh and suffered a physical death on the cross. Of course, this has striking ethical implications for discipleship.

1.3.2. The sixth crisis engages *structuralizing Christian leadership developments* in the late first century church, resulting from institutionalizing attempts to address the other three in the second and third phases of the Johannine situation.[14] Following or anticipating the path of Ignatius, who

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[12] For the antidocetic and incarnational thrust of the Fourth Gospel, see Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Fourth Gospel* (NovTSup 10; Leiden: Brill, 1965); Udo Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John; An Investigation of the Place of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine School* (trans. Linda M. Maloney, Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1992); Marianne Meye Thompson, *The Incarnate Word: Perspectives on Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, Mass.: Fortress Press, 1993). In the light of the docetizing teachings of the second Johannine antichristic threat (1 Jn. 4:1-3; 2 Jn. 1:7), such a presentation is certainly understandable. See Anderson, "Antichristic Crises" (n. 2).

[13] For a sustained analysis of John 6 and its ethical implications, see Anderson, *Christology* (n. 1), especially 194-220. Interestingly, while such is not a *Tendenz*-criterion for identifying the later material in the Fourth Gospel, if (with Lindars, followed by Ashton) the supplementary material in John can be minimally identified as the Prologue (1:1-18), chs. 6, 15-17, and 21, and Beloved-Disciple and eyewitness passages, virtually all of the incarnational content in John is found in the later material. That later material also includes most of the ecclesial associations, reflecting the addressing of the dividing issues reflected in the Epistles. Therefore, while the thrust of the first edition of John was apologetic—exhorting audiences to believe in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah/Christ, the thrust of the final edition of John was pastoral—exhorting audiences to abide in Jesus and his community, even if such faithfulness involved embracing the way of the cross in the face of hardship in the world.

[14] According to Adolf von Harnack, Diotrephes seems to have been the first monarchial bishop we know of, embodying the counsel of Ignatius of Antioch to appoint a single bishop in every church as a means of staving off centripetal forces within the churches of Asia Minor: "Über den dritten Johannesbrief" (*Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 15.3, Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897), 3-27. With such a situation as the likely backdrop for the Johannine writings, the juxtaposition of Peter and the Beloved Disciple in the Fourth Gospel has

addressed Judaizing, Roman, and docetizing issues in his calling for the appointing of one bishop in the churches of Asia Minor, Diotrephes who "loves to be first" asserts his hierarchical approach to leadership at the expense of Johannine believers, likely bolstered by a structural rendering of Matthew 16:17-19.[15] He not only speaks about them maliciously, but he denies them hospitality within his community and excommunicates any of his own congregation who are willing to take them in (3 Jn. 1:9-10). Within the Johannine Gospel, this sort of institutionalizing movement is addressed ideologically. Peter is presented as affirming Jesus' sole authority (6:68-69), ostensibly returning the keys of the kingdom to Jesus, clearing the ground for a truth-centered approach to leadership furthered by divine means rather than human ones. Referring to the Holy Spirit as the *Paraklētos* and "the Spirit of truth," the evangelist makes several claims. First, while the world cannot receive him because it "neither sees him nor knows him," Jesus' followers know him because he abides with them and will be in them (14:17). Second, when the Advocate comes—sent by the Father and the Son—he will testify on Jesus' behalf, just as his followers are to testify in the world (15:26-27). Third, when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide believers into all truth—making manifest to them a sense of direction from the risen Christ as a means of glorifying him and furthering the will of the Father (16:13-15). Therefore, believers are instructed to abide in Jesus as living branches connected to the true vine; this is the only way to be fruitful, for apart from Christ believers can do nothing (15:1-5).

1.3.3. A seventh dialogue spans the other six, as it shows signs of *Synoptic-Johannine engagement* from the earliest stages of gospel traditions to the latest ones.[16] Truth appeals with

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been seen as a countering of rising hierarchical developments in the early Christian era by such scholars as: E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus* (trans. Gerhard Krodel, Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1968); Graydon F. Snyder, "John 13:16 and the Anti-Petrinism of the Johannine Tradition," *BR* 16 (1971): 5-15; Arthur H. Maynard, "The Role of Peter in the Fourth Gospel," *NTS* 30 (1984): 531-48; Terence V. Smith, *Petrine Controversies in Early Christianity; Attitudes towards Peter in Christian Writings of the First Two Centuries* (WUNT 2:15; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985); Kevin Quast, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple; Figures for a Community in Crisis* (JSNTS 32; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989). Conversely, Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1983) sees the issue as one of hospitality only, not a factor of abrupt consequences of hierarchical operations.

[15] For a fuller treatment of Johannine-Matthean dialectic, see Anderson, *Christology* (n. 1), 221-250, *Sitz im Leben* (n. 2), and "'*You* Have the Words of Eternal Life!'" (n. 2). In these treatments between seven and nine parallels with Matthew 16:17-19 are identified in the Fourth Gospel—all of them different. Might these differences imply a corrective thrust—in the name of an alternative apostolic memory? If so, the motivation of the Elder in his finalizing of the witness of the Beloved Disciple, who leaned against the breast of the Lord, might have been aimed squarely at Diotrephes and his kin, as well as the larger Christian movement, of course.

[16] A larger theory of John's distinctive relations to each of the other Synoptic traditions is laid out in the following writings, Anderson, *Sitz im Leben* (n. 2), 28-32; "John and Mark—the Bi-Optic Gospels" in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition* (ed. Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher, Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 175-188; "Interfluential, Formative, and Dialectical—A Theory of John's Relation to the Synoptics," in *Für und Wider die Priorität des Johannesevangeliums* (Theologische Texte und Studien 9, ed. Peter Hofrichter; Hildesheim, Zürich, and New York, N.Y.: Olms, 2002), 19–58; *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus: Modern Foundations Reconsidered* (LNTS 321; London: T & T Clark, 2006), 101-126; "Aspects of Interfluentiality between

reference to Synoptic themes, however, do not present themselves within the standard augmentation of Mark in John's first edition, or the dialectical correction regarding the valuation of the feeding (Jn. 6:26), or the timing of the *Parousia* (21:20-23). Rather, the Johannine truth appeals with reference to Synoptic parallels are evident in the extension of the love commands of Jesus (Mk. 12:29-31) beyond the love of God and neighbor to the love of community members, as well. How can a person claim to love God, whom one has not seen, and not love one's brother, whom one has seen (1 Jn. 4:20)? Therefore, the "new commandment" brought by Jesus in the first edition of the Gospel (Jn. 13:34-35) has become the "old commandment" heard from the beginning by the writing of the Epistles (1 Jn. 2:7). In that sense, the Johannine tradition intensifies the love commandments of Jesus in the Synoptics and applies this central teaching of Jesus where it counts most—*within* the community of faith.[17]A final appeal for the truth is made with reference to the testimony of the Beloved Disciple. On behalf of the community, the final compiler declares that "this is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true" (21:24).

John and the Synoptics: John 18–19 as a Case Study," in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense LIV, 2005, ed. Gilbert van Belle; Leuven: Peters, 2007), 711–728; "Das 'John, Jesus, and History' Projekt: Neue Beobachtungen zu Jesus und eine Bi-optische Hypothese," *Zeitschrift für Neues Testament* 23 (2009): 12–26 (longer online versions in English: http://www.znt-online.de/anderson.pdf; http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/john1357917.shtml); "Acts 4:19-20—An Overlooked First-Century Clue to Johannine Authorship and Luke's Dependence upon the Johannine Tradition," *Bible and Interpretation*, September 2010 (online: http://www.bibleinterp.com/opeds/acts357920.shtml).

[17] A point deserves to be made, here, regarding the claim that the Gospel of John is devoid of ethics; see W. Meeks, "The Ethics of the Fourth Evangelist," in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith* (eds. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 317-327. Given the fact that the Johannine writings appear to represent a set of ethics that most Christians would consider sub-standard, Meeks sought to alleviate several problems. Not only is the narrative form wrong for ethics, but the narrative is filled with riddles—tensions that call for a discerning interpretation. Otherwise, the negative presentation of the *Ioudaioi* in John might contribute to anti-Semitism, and the minority perspective from which the Johannine writings were produced could contribute readily to abuse if adopted by a dominating group rather than a minority. In addition, the exemplary injunctions of the Synoptic Jesus to love one's enemies and one's neighbors shows a higher level of moral development than those of the Johannine Jesus, who calls his followers to love first their own community members. Faced with the choice between a morally inferior and self-centered ethic and an alternative view, Meeks and others have sought to ameliorate the problem by extracting the Johannine Gospel from the category of ethics, rather than risking its being used or regarded problematically. The problem with this operation is threefold: first, because the Johannine writings operate dialectically, they must be interpreted in the light of their *dialogical autonomy* (Anderson, *Riddles* (n. 7), 125-155). Second, as the Fourth Gospel is written by a Jew, to Jews, about a Jewish Messiah, narrating the Judean's rejection of the Galilean prophet like Moses—John is *not* antisemitic (Anderson, *Riddles* (n. 7), 38-39, 190-193) and cannot rightly be regarded or rejected as such. Third, loving one's own is an extension of loving others, even an intensification of the motif, not a diminishment of it, if understood contextually (Anderson, *Riddles* (n. 7), 16-17, 204-205); even the highest of moral ideals are bankrupt unless applied at home. Fourth, the Johannine Gospel and Epistles are filled with ethical content, and despite religious tensions, the question is not whether to interpret it, but how (Anderson, *Riddles*, (n. 7), 36-37, 75-77). So, like other types of riddles, the Johannine writings evince ethical riddles—to be outlined, addressed, and interpreted effectively—not to be denied or sidestepped.

Again, truthful testimony is what the compiler also affirms about the eyewitness's testimony at the cross (19:35), and a similar claim is made about Demetrius by the Elder. Not only does the truth witness to him, but the Elder and his community asserts that "we also testify for him, and you know that our testimony is true" (3 Jn. 1:12). Therefore, the overall appeal to the truth of the Johannine witness becomes the final note on which to base the authoritative circulation of the Fourth Gospel. Whereas the first edition sought to appeal for belief in Jesus as the Messiah/Christ sent from the Father, and as the Epistles sought to address a variety of community issues paraenetically, the final edition of the Johannine Gospel affirms the truth of the Beloved Disciple's witness and sets the stage for *how* the risen Lord continues to guide and lead the church. The risen Christ thus brings about both order and direction for his followers by means of the Spirit of truth, who will be with his followers and in them (Jn. 14:17; 15:26; 16:13), and by this means are ethical teachings to be tested (1 Jn 4:6). In so doing, the Johannine leadership elevates an ethical appeal to discerning and obeying the truth as an effective approach to ethical decision making, faith, and praxis.

2. Johannine-Situation Ethics—Putting Love into Action

Given that the corporate experience of Johannine Christianity in the second and third phases of its existence had become fraught with tensions, splits, controversies, and threats—as depicted vividly in the Epistles—note how references to "the truth" are also developed therein. Here, *truth* is closely associated with *love*, and both become rhetorical means of motivating uplifting ethical action within the community of faith as a centripetal means of offsetting centrifugal forces. Thus, truth claims are indeed related to ethical issues, perhaps even more so than strictly theological ones. As in real life, theology is often driven by its ethical implications, and so it was in nearly all the New Testament writings. As Joseph Fletcher described the inescapability of considering what love requires in a particular situation when making ethical decisions,[18] Johannine-situation ethics must be considered a bit further if the thrust of Johannine ethics is to be properly understood.

Within Johannine scholarship over the last half century or more, several inferences have been made regarding who the Johannine adversaries were, and this has led to a broad diversity of opinion as to what the ethical issues being must have been. Rudolf Bultmann and others have seen the adversaries as proto-Gnostics advocating perfectionism; Ernst Käsemann and others have envisioned Johannine Christianity on the margins of Christian orthodoxy but still connected to the mainstream of the movement; Raymond Brown has seen the adversaries as schismatics, whose incorrigible pneumatism was at odds with apostolic authorities. None of these scenarios, however, is entirely satisfactory, as the assumptions on which they are based are often only partially workable. This being the case, several assumptions about threats facing the Johannine

[18] Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1966).

situation are seen in somewhat different light, modestly challenging assumptions often made about the Johannine situation. These include the following.

2.1. First, claiming not to sin was not a factor of incipient Gnosticism; it more likely reflected disagreements over what might and might not be considered "sin" within this mixed Jewish and Gentile community. While later Gnostics were Docetists, not all Docetists were Gnostics—a common error in judgment among many biblical interpreters. As full-fledged Gnosticism did not present itself as an acute problem until the middle second century CE and beyond, the second set of Antichrists were probably not Gnostics; rather, they may simply have been Gentile Christian teachers whose threat lay in their advocating various aspects of cultural assimilation—in disagreement with Jewish Christians. As Gentile believers, if they embraced something like a Pauline doctrine of salvation by grace versus Jewish works of the Law, might issues of "sin and being without sin" have been generated by honest disagreements over what is and is not "sin" within a metropolitan setting rather than Gnostic perfectionism, proper? Certainly the more definitive discussions about death-producing sins versus venial sins in 1 John 5 suggest such ethical debates were intense within the Johannine situation. Therefore, the issue challenged by the Elder in 1 John 1:6-8 was likely an ethical one—exhorting believers to walk not in darkness or sin but in light and truth:

> If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Also, claiming to be "without sin" could simply have been an echoing of the Elder's own teaching in John 3:9: "Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God's seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God." Here also it would be wrong to see the elder as advocating Gnostic perfectionism; he was exhorting against sinning rather than claiming that some had reached static perfection. The issue was thus more likely a factor of discerning what was sinful behavior and what was not within this mixed Jewish and Gentile emerging-Christian context.

2.2. Second, it is wrong to see Johannine Christianity as being isolated or out of the Christian mainstream. It was not exclusively sectarian and cut off from the world, and neither was it on the margins of the Christian movement—beyond the pale. If anything, it stood in the middle of cross-cultural and interreligious traffic, seeking to negotiate a middle path between Jewish and Gentile Christianity. It was also engaged with other Christian communities along the Gentile-mission thoroughfare. Therefore, its membership would likely have been familiar with a public reading of Mark, and also some of Paul's letters; and, the fact that Diotrephes seems to have been claiming Petrine authority to prop up his autocratic style of leadership suggests that the Matthean tradition has also extended some reach within the region. Because its communities were seeking to negotiate Jewish and Gentile Christianity together, they would have been *less* sectarian than local Jewish communities, and such is precisely the acute source of ethical and moral contention operative within the later Johannine situation. As "walking in the truth"

connected centrally with showing hospitality to "co-workers with the truth" (3 Jn. 1:5-8), believers are exhorted to follow the hospitable example of Demetrius, which testifies "to the truth itself" (3 Jn. 1:12).

2.3. Third, the impending antichristic threat within the Johannine situation was not secession; that was one problem among others, and the primary split had already transpired.[19] Rather, Christian traveling ministers fostering problematic teachings were also labeled "Antichrists," and invasive threats were every bit as problematic as schismatic ones. Note the ethical teaching of those touting a docetic Christology (1 Jn. 4:4-6):

> Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and whoever is not from God does not listen to us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Likewise (2 Jn. 1:8-11),

> Be on your guard, so that you do not lose what we have worked for, but may receive a full reward. Everyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ, but goes beyond it, does not have God; whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. Do not receive into the house or welcome anyone who comes to you and does not bring this teaching; for to welcome is to participate in the evil deeds of such a person.

Since the seminal work of Raymond Brown, scholars have mistakenly seen all Johannine adversaries as schismatics. These false teachers probably thought they were orthodox, and they most likely did not call themselves "Antichrists;" this was a label used against them rhetorically—the strongest language possible within this Christ-centered community. Further, they might not even have led with a docetizing view of Jesus; that is presented by the Elder as a means of holding their teaching accountable to a theological standard. Rather, running ahead, beyond the teaching of Christ and assimilating with the world, leading to "evil deeds," is that the Elder is concerned about. Again, the issue here is not schism; it is problematic ethical teaching—likely including a constellation of assimilative issues, legitimated by a non-suffering Jesus. If refusing to participate in civic celebrations or imperial festivities bore adverse consequences, it is precisely the ethical consequences of the way of the cross, and costly discipleship, that the Gentile-Christian teachers were loath to accept. This was the existential attraction of Docetic Christology.

2.4. Fourth, the main weakness with Johannine pneumatic ecclesiology was not that some claimed to be led by the Holy Spirit and refused to be disciplined by legitimate authorities (contra Raymond Brown); the main problem was the lack of specificity within a general appeal

[19] Following Brown's analysis, many interpreters of the Johannine Epistles have come to view the Johannine community as highly sectarian, but this overreads the reality, as does, for instance, Robert M. Gundry, *Jesus the Word according to John the Sectarian* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002). In that we see a movement from Christian Judaism toward Jewish Christianity, integrating also with Gentile Christianity, the ethos of the Johannine situation in its second and third phases was far less sectarian than contemporary Diaspora Judaism; it reflects cosmopolitan Christianity in a highly cross-cultural setting, which it why it faced so many ethical challenges.

to love one another. Indeed, those claiming inspiration can pose a problem for church authorities, but the issue here appears to have been more a matter of moral integrity than pneumatism. As the Elder says in 1 Jn. 2:4-6,

> Whoever says, 'I have come to know him,' but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist; but whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in him: whoever says, 'I abide in him,' ought to walk just as he walked.

It could also be that the general appeal to "love one another" failed to convey the specificity needed to address particular ethical issues as a factor of conflict avoidance. A central weakness of the Elder's unspecified appeal to loving consideration and community order is that such an approach fails to hold others accountable. As a result, particular issues went unaddressed, and confrontations resulted in less than compelling outcomes.

2.5. Fifth, while Raymond Brown argues that the Johannine challenge to the authority of "the twelve" and the juxtaposition of Peter and the Beloved Disciple in the Fourth Gospel suggest that the originative source of the Johannine tradition was likely *not* a member of the apostolic band, the ideological basis for such a move is not compelling. Indeed, Johannine authorship issues are a knotty lot, but given the likelihood that a charismatic Jesus brought an egalitarian message of direct and spiritual access to God, the familial and pneumatically mediated ecclesiology of the Johannine witness seems closer to that model of leadership than does the presentation of instrumental keys to the kingdom to a Petrine few. Might it be that the Johannine tradition objects to the yoking of apostolic authority to proto-Ignatian hierarchical structuralism, by Diotrephes and his kin, precisely because it was connected to apostolic tradition—perhaps even its inner circles—thus challenging the misappropriation of its own authority in inhospitable directions? Whether "the chosen lady and her children" in the second Epistle referred to a female leader of a congregation or represents a challenging of patriarchal presentations of the church, the Elder refers to her community members as those "whom I love in the truth, and not only I but also all who know the truth, because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever" (2 Jn. 1:1-2). By the time the Elder circulates the testimony of the beloved and departed Beloved Disciple around the turn of the first century, the claim that "his testimony is true" bears with it striking ecclesial and ideological overtones.

2.6. Sixth, the ethical issues being addressed within the Johannine situation were not simply factors of religious tension between Jewish and Gentile Christians, although bringing Gentile believers into the Jewish-Christian fold always had its ethical adjustments. Rather, one feature relatively undeveloped in the research is the fact that imperial powers often sought to force subjects into situations involving ethical and moral compromise as a means of subjugating their dominated populations. While pressures to demonstrate emperor laud in Asia Minor (especially in Ephesus, as it competed with Pergamum for *Neokoros* status[20]) indeed increased under

[20] See Steven J. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia & the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 116; Leiden: Brill, 1993).

Domitian, occupying imperial forces used a variety of means to try to break the back of religious resistance—specifically targeting the ethical and religious codes of Jewish, Samaritan, and other groups that resisted the "gifts and protection" of empire. While the situation in Jerusalem more than two centuries earlier cannot have been identical to that faced by Christians and Jews in Asia Minor in the late second century CE, the leveraging of ethical crises as reported in 2 Maccabees[21] may be instructive for appreciating the multitudinous set of issues possibly faced by Asia Minor Christians, who no longer enjoyed the dispensation allowed those who remained in the synagogue. Note the multiplicity of ethical issues reflected in 2 Maccabees 6:1-9, as the forces Antiochus IV occupied the temple in Jerusalem.

Not long after this, the king sent an Athenian senator to compel the Jews to forsake the laws of their ancestors and no longer to live by the laws of God; also to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and to call it the temple of Olympian Zeus, and to call the one in Gerizim the temple of Zeus-the-Friend-of-Strangers, as did the people who lived in that place. Harsh and utterly grievous was the onslaught of evil. For the temple was filled with debauchery and reveling by the Gentiles, who dallied with prostitutes and had intercourse with women within the sacred precincts, and besides brought in things for sacrifice that were unfit. The altar was covered with abominable offerings that were forbidden by the laws. People could neither keep the Sabbath, nor observe the festivals of their ancestors, nor so much as confess themselves to be Jews. On the monthly celebration of the king's birthday, the Jews were taken, under bitter constraint, to partake of the sacrifices; and when a festival of Dionysus was celebrated, they were compelled to wear wreathes of ivy and to walk in the procession in honor of Dionysus. At the suggestion of the people of Ptolemais a decree was issued to the neighboring Greek cities that they should adopt the same policy toward the Jews and make them partake of the sacrifices, and should kill those who did not choose to change over to Greek customs. One could see, therefore, the misery that had come upon them.

Note the constellation of ethical issues leveraged against this defiant religious people: a) the temples in Jerusalem and Gerizim were dedicated to Zeus as a challenge to Semitic monotheism (Domitian set up a temple to himself in Ephesus in 89 CE, asserting his deserving of divine honors); b) the temple was filled with prostitutes as a challenge to ethical purity (across the street and not far from Domitian's temple in Ephesus houses of cultic prostitution abounded); c) sacrificial offerings included non-kosher offerings (note the engravings featuring diminished subjects bringing animal offerings to Domitian's temple); d) monthly and annual birthdays of the dominating emperor were yoked with other pagan holidays to be celebrated publicly with garlands and festivities (note the monuments in Ephesus showing subjects draped with wreaths

[21] While situation described in 2 Maccabees is arguably far removed from Ephesus and western Asia Minor by both time and space, it is noted that Antiochus IV appeals to Greeks all over the region to pressurize the Jews into submission to its new governors by means of seeking to displace Jewish loyalties with Hellenistic practices and values. This was doubtless not the first nor the last time such measures were taken to subdue the ethical monotheism of the Jewish people, and the primary Roman leader claiming divine honors after Augustus was Domitian—the general who just over a decade had conquered Jerusalem. The increasing expectation of Emperor worship under Domitian involved a constellation of ethical problems for Jews and Christians throughout the Mediterranean world.

and garlands, celebrating prosperity and the emperor cult, along with other prosperity/fertility cults and images); e) such anti-Jewish practices were spread among other Hellenizing settings as a means of combating Semitic monotheism with its attendant ethical practices (therefore, the leveraging of the Roman imperial cult under Augustus, followed by Domitian, Trajan, and others, had a clear historical precedent within the region—rife with transferable potential). Especially if the receiving of Roman favors as the temple-keeping *Neokoros* center of the region was at stake, it is not only Roman soldiers and representatives that would have encouraged Jesus adherents to participate in "worldly" festivals; it would also have involved local residents and civic leaders in Ephesus—perhaps with even greater insistence.

This is the background wherein the Elder's appeal to *love not the world* (1 Jn. 2:15-17) would have connected with an emphasis upon the suffering of Jesus and its ethical implications for Christian discipleship. Echoed in the antidocetic detail added in John 19:34-35, the Elder asserts a threefold witness in 1 John 5:5-8:

> Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth. There are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree.

At the entrance of Domitian's temple is an engraving of the goddess Nike, emphasizing the conquered status of the region. Here the Elder asserts that God and the believer have conquered the world (1 Jn. 2:13; 4:4; 5:4-5), and the conquering theme is even more pronounced in Revelation. Just as the eyewitness has seen blood and water coming forth from the side of Jesus in John 19:34-35, here the Elder's testimony to Jesus' water-and-blood suffering has extensive implications for believers in Asia Minor. Community members are thus exhorted to help one another and to bolster each others' faithfulness to right living within this Greco-Roman setting, despite the pressures experienced from several sides. Might imperial cult participation and its attendant features be the direct object of the "mortal sin" distinguished from venial ones? Again, the last word of the Johannine circular may indeed be the interpretive key to its overall ethical thrust, putting bluntly what some may be tempted to practice, still claiming to be "without sin" in doing so:

> If you see your brother or sister committing what is not a mortal sin, you will ask, and God will give life to such a one—to those whose sin is not mortal. There is sin that is mortal; I do not say that you should pray about that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that is not mortal. We know that those who are born of God do not sin, but the one who was born of God protects them, and the evil one does not touch them. We know that we are God's children, and that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, *keep yourselves from idols* (emphasis added, 1 Jn. 5:16-21).

In the light of these situational issues, the general call to love one another and not to hate one's community siblings bore a variety of direct ethical implications. Believers are not to abandon the community, returning to the religious certainty of Judaism exhorted by family and friends; rather, abiding in the Son is the only way to retain the favor of the Father. Worldly assimilation

is also challenged—both generally and directly—as well as its associated connections with the imperial cult. Denying Jesus and his community, either in action or word, is to forfeit the gift of life, as participating in the Lord's gift of resurrection hinges upon being willing to ingest the bread he offers—offered figuratively on a platter hewn into the shape of a cross (Jn. 6:51-58). And, in contrast to power-wielding approaches to church discipline, the Johannine leadership continues to call for adhering to the leadership of the risen Lord, made accessible by the guiding and empowering work of the Holy Spirit.

In this sense, the pneumatic work of the risen Christ continues in the trajectory of the charismatic Prophet of Nazareth, whose prayer in John 17 programmatically calls for the unity of the church in the division-producing context of the hostile world. That being the case, Johannine ethics is not about theology; rather, Johannine theology is about ethics. Jesus prays that his followers might know the Father and thereby have life, that they would be set apart in the truth and that they would be one, so that the world will know that he is indeed authentically sent by God (Jn. 17: 3, 19-21). Situationally, therefore, the general appeals to truth and love have an inexhaustible constellation of associations and meanings. The ethical appeal to love one another has as many expressions as there are needs and challenges in the larger Johannine situation.

3. Discernment-Oriented Leadership and Emerging Christian Models

Raymond Brown notes two considerable strengths with the Johannine Gospel's model of Spirit-based leadership, which are especially apparent when viewed alongside other models of Christian leadership.[22] First, Brown notes the centrality of Christ and connectedness to him as the Lord of the church. Far from a projection of western individualism, abiding in Christ and Christ in the believer becomes a transformative relationship leading to ongoing direction and empowerment in the world. Second, the radical egalitarianism of the Holy Spirit's availability to all believers is extended to all sectors and ages of the Christian movement, connecting the first-hand experience of the apostles with members of later generations and settings. While it can be argued that these Spirit-based features of leadership possess a strong link to the historic ministry of Jesus, they also deserve to be considered among emerging models of leadership to which they pose a complementary (and at times corrective) alternative.

Disparaging the organizational approach of the Johannine Epistles, however, Brown argues that its ecclesial approaches suffered from the following inadequacies: first, the *dogmatism* of one-sided theology; second, *isolation* resultant from having split off from the mother synagogue; third, *sectarianism* and extreme hostility to outsiders, and fourth, "*unruly pneumatism*," as Johannine Christians supposedly were divisive and incorrigible because of their charismatic inclinations.[23] It seems, however, that especially on this final point Brown is reading his own

[22] Raymond E. Brown, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind* (New York, N.Y.: Paulist Press, 1984), 84-101.

[23] Brown, *The Churches* (n. 21), 102-123. See also my larger sympathetic critique of Brown's paradigms in Paul N. Anderson, "The Community that Raymond Brown Left Behind—Reflections on the Johannine Dialectical

tradition's institutional stance against "enthusiasts" into the Johannine situation rather than working with the most compelling evidence in the text itself. Rather than seeing divisions in the Johannine situation simplistically, as factors of "the-Spirit-led-me; I'm-right-and-you're-wrong" conjectures, a more plausible historical inference envisions a larger assortments of ethical disagreements between Jewish and Gentile believers within the larger Johannine situation. Spirit-led-ness *may* have been appealed to—although evidence for such direct appeals is itself largely absent—but it was not the source of the divided ethical judgments. Interreligious and cross-cultural factors were likely far more momentous as the source of these tensions, as Jews and Gentiles came to worship the same Lord in community, together.

These tensions, of course, were not particular to Johannine Christianity alone, as all sectors of the nascent Christian movement faced interreligious and cross-cultural challenges at every step of the way. For instance, Maurice Casey outlines a variety of markers of Judaism (as well as their boundaries) that were likely disputed in various sectors in the early Christian movement.[24] Given the imperial presence in the Mediterranean world at the time, pagan practices and beliefs, Jewish understandings of what God requires of the faithful, and emerging Christian models of organization, it is likely these sorts of issues that were at stake within the metropolitan setting reflected by the Johannine Epistles. Within the development of emerging models of Christian governance, however, the ethical operation behind the Johannine Gospel and Epistles becomes apparent.

3.1. The Caliphate of James—Dynastic Leadership and its Legacy.

As the book of Acts presents James the brother of Jesus as the head of the Jerusalem Jesus movement, we see the development of a Jewish dynastic model of leadership, wherein James continues to lead the fledgling Jesus movement from a Jerusalem-centered base. His concern is to continue the outreach to conservative Jewish populations in Jerusalem, while at the same time seeking to maintain unity in the church between the Pauline mission to the Gentiles and the Jewish ethos of the Jesus movement. Paul appears to have deferred to James' leadership, referring to him as an apostle and a pillar alongside Cephas and John (Gal. 1:18-19; 2:9), although when Cephas refused to eat with Gentile believers in Antioch after "men came from James," Paul reports having confronted Cephas to his face (Gal. 2:11-12). This confrontation may even have led to the need to hold a council in Jerusalem, wherein the Pauline mission was reconciled with the concern to preserve Mosaic adherence within the Jesus movement (Ac. 15). As James presided over this session, he a) gathered a collective council, b) insured that different sides of the issues were put forth, c) facilitated the distinguishing of major issues from minor ones, d) declared a sense of the meeting, and e) sent a letter to the churches declaring the consensus that had been established. As a patriarchal leader, discernment of the truth regarding

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Situation," in *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles* (The McAfee Symposium on the Johannine Epistles; ed. Paul N. Anderson and R. Alan Culpepper; Grand Rapids, Mich., scheduled for 2012).

[24] Maurice Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992).

how to manage the missions to the Jews and the Gentiles is presented as a model for later decision-making processes.[25]

3.2. *The Organization of Presbyteries among the Churches—Collective Discernment and Leadership.*

As Paul and Barnabas traveled on their mission among the Gentiles, they appointed elders in the churches (Ac. 14:23), who would carry forth the discernment and leadership work of the newly founded communities of faith. As such, this model is also founded on a Jewish approach to leadership designed to build on the wisdom and spiritual sensitivities of mature believers who would later come to serve as sources of counsel, preaching, and teaching within the later Pauline traditions (1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5-6). Likewise, bishops and deacons provide oversight for the flock and serve its needs, delegating particular tasks to designated leaders within the communities of faith (Ac. 6:1-6; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13). Here Paul and his companions are willing to forfeit some charisma in exchange for leaders who will lead exemplary lives as models for emerging generations.[26] The selection of leaders seems to move more toward male leadership in the Pastoral Epistles, although the Pauline tradition also emphasizes the multiplicity of leadership gifts, including apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teacher (Eph. 4:11). Apparently the Johannine Elder identifies himself as serving within these models of leadership, although emerging designations of leadership roles were not necessarily exclusive (2 Jn. 1:1; 3 Jn. 1:1). For instance, all bishops would likely have been called elders, but not all elders would have been bishops.

3.3. Episcopal Developments after the Memory of Peter—a Structured Approach to Apostolic Leadership.

Following the death of Peter and the other apostles, an episcopal system of church leadership emerged in his memory, combining the caliphate pattern of James and the presbyterian model of

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[25] Considerable disagreement exists on whether Acts 15 is a reporting of an actual event or whether it reflects a crafted presentation of how corporate decision making ought to take place in the future, not that both are impossible, of course. Luke T. Johnson, *Scripture & Discernment: Decision Making in the Church* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1996), points out some of the key problems with interpretation, and yet we still see a model reflecting a corporate approach to discernment and unity happening within a conciliar setting. Note also the contributions of Eduard Schweitzer, *Church Order in the New Testament* (SBT 32; London: SCM Press, 1961); Paul J. Achtemeier, *The Quest for Unity in the New Testament Church* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1987); and John Painter, *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1997).

[26] Brown, *The Churches* (n. 21), is especially helpful on this matter, as he explains the movement from the Pauline risk-taking approach to community organization into the next phase of its development as represented by the Pastoral Epistles. Here modeling Christian behavior, ethical standards, and religious values come to take precedence over outreach and evangelism. See Walter Schmithals, *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church* (trans. John E. Steely; Nashville, Tenn., and New York, N.Y.: Abingdon Press, 1969) and Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (trans. John A. Baker; London: A & C Black, 1969) for leading descriptions of emerging forms of governance in the early church, including analyses of their effectiveness.

Paul. Within the Matthean additions to Mark, the erection of a structural model of authority (Matt. 16:17-19) and a system of accountability (Matt. 18:15-20) is observable. Matthew is the only Gospel to use the word "church" (ἐκκλησίᾳ, 16:18; 18:15, 17, 21). Ignatius of Antioch (d. 115 CE) advised the appointing of a singular bishop in every church in Asia Minor as a means of dealing with Judaizing and docetizing threats, and it is likely that Diotrephes the primacy-lover of 3 John 1:9-10 (ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων) was one of these leaders. Charged with protecting his flock from dangers in the area, Diotrephes is presented as denying hospitality to Johannine traveling ministers and even putting out of his own church any who take them in. The Johannine Elder writes to the "church" whence Diotrephes has derived his authority, likely complaining that Diotrephes has not respected his authority, and he declares his intention to pay Diotrephes a visit so that these matters can be settled face to face. Interestingly, Diotrephes is simply denying the Johannine traveling ministers the same hospitality that the Elder has previously called his own leaders to withhold from docetizing ministers; it hurts when one's own disciplinary measures are suffered rather than meted out. Thus, it could be argued that Diotrephes was simply returning the sort of treatment the author of 2 John has prescribed, but this does not seem to be the case. In my view, Diotrephes was not threatened by Johannine Docetism (contra Käsemann); arguably, it was Johannine egalitarianism he opposed, and well he should have, as it threatened the hierarchical coin by which he sought to keep his community safe and under control.[27]

3.4. *Discernment-Oriented Leadership—a Spirit-Based and Egalitarian Approach to Christian Direction and Unity.*

It is within the context of these other approaches to church governance and leadership that the Fourth Evangelist puts forward a familial and egalitarian approach to leadership—one rooted in a Spirit-based approach to corporate discernment.[28] Centered around the personal authority of the Beloved Disciple, the appeal calls for discerning the truth together, under the guidance and leadership of the resurrected Lord. Within the Johannine tradition, the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son, and the promise is that the *Paraklētos* will be with believers for ever (Jn.

[27] Brown's model actually would be quite sympathetic to this approach, as he notes the egalitarianism of the Johannine situation with its familial model of organization over and against more institutional ones. Therefore, in the Elder's compiling and circulating the final edition of the Johannine Gospel after the death of the Beloved Disciple (Jn. 21:24), the juxtaposition of Peter and the Beloved Disciple serves as a means of addressing Diotrephes and his kin, who may have been implementing a Petrine model of institutional leadership without sufficient Matthean graciousness. With Quast, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple* (n. 13), it could be that the final Johannine editor is even co-opting the authority of Peter in John 13 and 21 as a means of reforming structural leadership instead of challenging it altogether. Whatever the case the role of 3 John in the final compilation of "the Spiritual Gospel" should not be underestimated in terms of organizational and leadership dynamics in the early church.

[28] For book-length treatments of the Johannine pneumatology see John Breck, *Spirit of Truth; The Origins of Johannine Pneumatology* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991); Gary M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987); Tricia Gates Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John: Johannine Pneumatology in Social-Scientific Perspective* (JSNTSup 253; London and New York, N.Y.: T & T Clark, 2003).

14:16); will teach them all things and remind them of Jesus' teachings (14:26) testifying on his behalf (15:26); and will convict them of truth regarding sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:8). The Spirit of Truth will be with believers and in them (14:17), will be sent by the Son and the Father (15:26), and will disclose that which is from Jesus to believers providing guidance for the future (16:13-15). The world does not know the Spirit of Christ, but believers do, and the departure of Jesus is required for the spiritual manifestation of his abiding presence to continue.
The Johannine leadership thus shifts the question from structures and models of leadership to the spiritual reality of Christ's direct leadership within the church. As a means of clearing the ground for this spiritually mediated approach to Christocracy, the narrator presents Peter as affirming Jesus' sole authority to lead the Church (thus "returning the keys to Jesus") in John 6:68, while at the same time being reaffirmed as a loving shepherd of the sheep (21:15-17). The presentation of the Beloved Disciple, however, with his intimate proximity to Jesus, becomes the exemplary model of discipleship, as abiding with Jesus is the only hope for authentic Christian leadership. After the death of the Beloved Disciple (21:20-23) the Elder gathers together the final material and, adding it to an earlier edition, sends it on as the testimony of the Beloved Disciple, whose testimony is true (21:24).

In addition to the Johannine evangelist, the Elder also operates with an *alethēic* approach to ethics and corporate management. To deny one's sin or to refuse to carry out the love-commands of Jesus is to fail to be indwelt by the truth (1 Jn. 1:8; 2:4). To leave the community of faith, denying belief in Jesus as the Christ is to yield to a lie rather than to abide in the truth (1 Jn. 2:21). To love one another in truth and in action is to testify to living in, and out of, the truth (1 Jn. 3:18-19), and to heed the counsel of the Elder and the rest of the Johannine leadership is to distinguish the spirit of truth from the spirit of error (1 Jn. 4:6). And, just as the water and the blood testify to the way of the cross (Jn. 19:34), so does the Spirit, because the Spirit *is* truth (1 Jn. 5:6). The Elder loves other believers and leaders "in the truth," as do all who "know the truth" (2 Jn. 1:1; 3 Jn. 1:1). Just as Gaius has been faithful to the truth, so the hospitable example of Demetrius is attested by others and the truth (3 Jn. 1:3, 12). The Elder writes to his audiences in truth and love (2 Jn. 1:3) and invites them to walk in the truth (2 Jn. 1:4; 3 Jn. 1:3-4) that they might become co-workers with the truth (3 Jn. 1:8) in their self-supporting ministry. Just as these *alethēic* values are contrasted directly to the false teachings of the antichristic Docetists, so they also pose an antithetical contrast to the authority-wielding Diotrephes and his denying hospitality to the friends of truth.

In these ways, the author of the Johannine Epistles employs appeals to truth, as well as exhortations to love one another, as means of countering a variety of acute threats within the late first-century Christian movement. One can thus appreciate why the Elder was motivated to add the material he did to the earlier Johannine narrative, and why he sent it off as the witness of the Beloved Disciple, whose testimony is true. Not only does the supplementary material added to the Johannine Gospel present incarnational christological material as a corrective to docetizing tendencies in the later Johannine situation, it also includes familial and egalitarian ecclesial material to show how the risen Lord, ideally and really, continues to lead the church.

While the Johannine approach to Christian leadership hearkens back to a more primitive and less developed phase of familial and informal organization, it offers a Spirit-based approach to discerning the truth that is transferable within each of the other emerging models. Within a patriarchal caliphate, presbyterian council, or monepiscopal conclave, the leaders of communities are charged with gathering members around a common issue or concern and getting people on board as collective problem solvers seeking the guidance of the Spirit. Seeking the truth about an issue together becomes a liberating exercise, as more light always clarifies better options among others (Jn. 8:32; 1 Jn. 2:21). Walking in the truth then adds integrity to the measure, as one's conduct should comport with one's convictions. Applying the standard of love to an issue also provides a measure by which to discern the best way forward, and attitudinally, love and truth become standards of character and operation for the community of faith. While the Johannine approach to Spirit-based leadership can be applied within any of the emerging models, however, it is not limited to a particular model. In fact, it transcends them all. Like authentic worship and God's love made manifest in the world, effective Christian leadership must ever be in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:21-24). It is after such seekers of truth that God also seeks—leading them across the boundaries of time and space into transformative encounters with the divine.

4. The Character and Operation of Discernment-Oriented Leadership

Discernment-oriented leadership functions as a quest for truth and a manifestation of love, and in Johannine perspective, these are rooted in God's saving-revealing work effected by Christ Jesus. It would be a mistake, however, to focus on the structures supporting such a venture; likewise flawed is focusing on challenges to structure. The character of the venture is a truth-seeking operation wherein the divine will is attended, discerned, and obeyed, and the Johannine tradition holds up the conviction that such realities are not only theoretically possible; they are eschatologically accessible. Further, they are central elements of the gospel, as the *Logos* is come not only to redeem the world, but to enlighten and direct it. Therefore, a central factor in discerning the truth effectively is openness, receptivity, and responsiveness to the divine will. Without such, endeavors to abide in the truth are a sham.

Nonetheless, aspects of operation can also be observed within the Johannine approach to ethics and leadership, and taking note of some of these features is serviceable. As the Johannine Epistles likely were composed between the first and final editions of the Johannine Gospel, these features are observable within three basic traditional levels.[29]

[29] For fuller treatment of the Johannine Epistles, see the following commentaries: Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (Anchor Bible Commentary 30; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982); Rudolf Bultmann, *The Johannine Epistles* (Hermeneia; trans. R. Philip O' Hara *et al*; Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1973); Gary M. Burge, *The Letters of John: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life* (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996); R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1998); Charles H. Dodd, *The Johannine Epistles* (Moffat NT Commentary 19; London / New York, N.Y.:

4.1. Discernment Operations within the First Edition of the Johannine Gospel (30-85 CE)

As the primary concern of the first edition of the Johannine Gospel is to lead the hearer/reader to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the evangelist has crafted the narrative in order to evoke a response of faith to that effect. The narrative is a complement to Mark; as Matthew and Luke built *upon* Mark, the first Johannine edition builds *around* Mark. These discernment operations are observable as follows:

--Apologetic concerns—testifying to the truth of Jesus' being the Jewish Messiah/Christ (20:31)

--Accounting for why some did not believe in Jesus, despite seeing and hearing his ministry (1:11; 3:18-21; 5:38-47; 6:36; 8:45-46; 9:41; 10:25-26)

--Asserting that Jesus represents the Father authentically, as the prophet like Moses predicted in Deuteronomy 18:15-22 (Jn. 1:45; 5:46; 7:40)

--The five distinctive signs of Jesus match the five books of Moses as an attestation to his being sent from God (2:1-11; 5:46-54; 5:1-9; 9:1-7; 11:1-45)

--Presenting witnesses to the Light (esp. the Baptist) confirming Jesus' authentic messiahship (1:6-8, 15, 19-36; 3:22-30; 10:41)

--The fulfilled word (Scripture, Jesus' proleptic sayings, the fulfilled word of Caiaphas) confirming Jesus' agency (1:23, 45; 2:22; 3:14; 7:38; 11:46-52; 12:14-16, 32-41; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 18:9, 32; 19:24-37)

--Jesus brings about worship in Spirit and in truth—transcending the limitations of space and form (4:21-24)

--The Spirit of Truth will be with and in the followers of Jesus (14:17)

--Women, as well as men, are presented as active in ministry, evangelism, and leadership (2:5; 4:7-42; 11:27; 12:1-8; 20:1-18)

--The reign of Jesus is one of truth, and everyone who is of the truth hears his voice (18:36-37)

4.2. Discernment Operations within the Johannine Epistles (85-95 CE)

Harper and Row, 1946); Kenneth Grayston, *The Johannine Epistles* (New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1984); J. Leslie Houlden, *A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles* (Black's NT Commentaries, rev. 2nd ed; London: A & C Black, 1994); Thomas F. Johnson, *1, 2, and 3 John* (New International Biblical Commentary 17; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrikson, 1993; Robert Kysar, *I, II, III John* (Augsburg Commentary on the NT; Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1986); Judith M. Lieu, *The Second and Third Epistles of John: History and Background* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986); I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978); David K. Rensberger, *1 John, 2 John, 3 John* (Abingdon NT Commentaries; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1997); Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Johannine Epistles: Introduction and Commentary* (trans. Reginald & Ilse Fuller; New York, N.Y.: Crossroad/ Herder and Herder, 1992); D. Moody Smith, *First, Second, and Third John* (Interpretation Commentary Series; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991); Georg Strecker, *The Johannine Letters: A Commentary on 1, 2, and 3 John* (Hermeneia Commentary Series; trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996) Marianne Meye Thompson, *1-3 John* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992); Urban C. von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John, Vol. 3: The Three Johannine Letters* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010).

Within the Johannine Epistles, the Elder can be seen to be dealing far more directly with a number of acute ethical issues, and his approach is far less dialectical than that of the evangelist. Indeed, the both-and approach of the narrator has been replaced by the either-or admonitions of the epistler. If one does not believe X or Y one is the Antichrist; if one does not confess sin one makes God a liar; unloving community members are numbered among the party of Cain—brother killers. The Elder's approaches to ethics are largely different from those of the evangelist:

--People are called to an authentic confession of sin—if one claims to be without sin one makes God a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 Jn. 1:6-8; 2:1; 5:16).

--Community members are exhorted not to sin, as those who are authentically born of God and abiding in him do not sin (1 Jn. 2:1; 3:6-9; 5:18).

--Believers are exhorted to love not the world and its attractions, but to overcome the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17; 5:4-5).

--Community members are exhorted to not abandon the community as the schismatics did—any who do not believe Jesus is the Christ is the Antichrist (1 Jn. 2:18-25).

--Community members are exhorted to not welcome false teachers or their assimilative teachings—any who do not believe Jesus came in the flesh is the Antichrist (1 Jn. 4:1-3; 2 Jn. 1:7).

--The Elder appeals to the integrity of one's personal commitments as a call to love one another—if one does not love one's brother whom one has seen, one cannot claim to love --God whom one has not seen (1 Jn. 4:7-21).

Stay away from idols—such practices and their associated ethics are mortal sins, not just venial ones (1 Jn. 5:16-21).

--Despite the inhospitality shown by Diotrephes the primacy lover, Johannine believers should not deny hospitality to others (3 Jn. 1:4-10).

4.3. Discernment Operations within the Final Edition of the Johannine Gospel (85-100)

In the later Johannine material (Jn. 1:1-18; chs. 6, 15-17, 21; and the Beloved Disciple / eyewitness passages), several distinctive ethical features are apparent. In the light of the centrifugal experiences reflected in the Johannine Epistles, believing is associated with abiding in Christ and his community, believers' willingness to suffer is bolstered by the incarnational material featured, and promises that the Holy Spirit will empower and guide the community add sustenance to the narrative. Therefore, the supplementary material in the Fourth Gospel displays the following approaches to discerning the truth:

--The audience is drawn into the narrative experientially by means of the Prologue, inviting hearers/readers into the divine family as believing children of God (Jn. 1:1-18).

--Emphases on the flesh-becoming Word, ingesting the flesh and blood of Jesus, the water and blood pouring forth from the side of Jesus, and the martyrdom of Peter and the Beloved Disciple become a call to faithfulness in the presence of suffering, and the

hostility of the world, within the Johannine situation (1:14; 6:51-58; 15:18-19; 16:8-11, 20-33; 19:34-35; 21:18-24).

--Jesus invites his believers to abide in him and he in them—in unity, and the Beloved Disciple exemplifies the epitome of intimate relationship with the Lord (Jn. 6:56; 13:23; 15:1-17; 17:1-26; 19:26-27; 21:18-24).

--Peter is presented as affirming Jesus' sole leadership in the church as well as being reinstated to pastoral service (6:67-70; 21:15-17).

--The Spirit's guiding believers into all truth, about ethical decisions and otherwise, is promised in several ways (15:26; 16:7-13).

--The valuation of miracles, the presentation of love-oriented leadership, the delay of the *Parousia* engage other traditions dialectically (6:26; 15:9-17; 21:15-17, 23).

--The authority of the eyewitnesses testimony and the truth of the Beloved Disciple's testimony are attested by the compiler and the community as the Fourth Gospel is circulated among the churches as a manifesto of Spirit-based and familial Christocracy—the effective means by which the risen Lord leads the church (19:35; 21:24).

In reflecting on these three literary levels of the Johannine writings, discernment of the truth poses the way forward for later audiences and community members. Regarding the first edition of John, the hearer/reader is invited to believe that Jesus is authentically sent from the Father. The primary content of the Revealer's message is that God reveals—the truth—and that humanity is invited into a relationship of receptivity and responsiveness to the divine initiative. As the Jewish Messiah/Christ, predicted by Moses, Jesus fulfills the prophecy that God would continue to speak to humanity, and the world is invited to embrace that message in faith. Behind the Johannine Epistles lay extensive disagreements among Jewish and Gentile Christians as to what was permissible and what was not within the cross-cultural setting of one of the mission churches in Asia Minor. Having been distanced from the Synagogue, holding on to Jewish customs and morays became more difficult to maintain, and discerning the way of truth rather than error was a major concern of the Johannine leadership. By the time the final material was added to the Johannine Gospel, the community had already suffered at least one major schism, and controversial teachings were circulating among traveling Gentile-Christian ministers.

Here, the reminder that the Holy Spirit would remind Jesus' followers of the truth—as needed in later situations—became a mainstay hope as the Elder and the Beloved Disciple sought to convince people to abide in the truth they had been taught, as well as remaining in community with one another. After the death of the Beloved Disciple, his teachings on discerning the authentic will of Christ for Christian communities were circulated as a model for corporate discernment among the churches, furthering a vision and strategy for the larger Christian movement to maintain unity and fellowship with one another. That vision still has considerable

purchase among later generations, in that a vision for discernment-oriented leadership indeed poses a viable way forward for Christian unity in love and truth.[30]

5. Conclusion

While the Johannine Gospel and Epistles are highly theological, they are also pervasively ethical in their concerns. Not only in John 6:27 is the audience exhorted to partake of the life-producing food rather than its death-producing alternatives, but such is the *Leitmotif* of the entire Johannine tradition. Noted within seven crises over seven decades, apparent in both the Gospel and Epistles, the Johannine-situation ethic is rendered in terms of life-producing truth and world-redeeming love—inviting responses of faith as manifested by faithfulness—in the world, though not of the world. In dialogue with other models of Christian leadership, the Johannine approach is a discernment-oriented one—majoring in seeking the truth until one is found by it. The character and operation of this discernment-oriented leadership can be seen distinctively in the first and final editions of the Johannine Gospel, as well as the more pointed engagements of the Johannine Epistles. Thus, the ethos of the Johannine tradition invites its audiences to respond to God's saving-revealing work, and to abide in it, as a loving appeal to liberating truth versus its lesser alternatives.

[30] See Paul N. Anderson, "Petrine Ministry and Christocracy: A Response to *Ut unum sint*," *One in Christ* 40.1 (2005), 3-39. This essay was commissioned by the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches, in response to Walter Kasper's invitation for responses to Pope John Paul II's 1995 encyclical, asking if a way might be possible for recovering Christian unity. I was privileged to give copies personally to Cardinal Walter Kasper and Pope Benedict XVI in 2006 at the Conference of Secretaries of World Christian Communions in Rome (posted online: http://www.georgefox.edu/discernment/petrine.pdf).