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John and Mark

The Bi-Optic Gospels

PAUL N. ANDERSON

The relationship between the Fourth Gospel (FG) and the Synoptics is often treated as “three against one,” evoking distorted perceptions of John and the Synoptics alike. Differences between the presentations and contents of these four books contribute to the flawed assumption that the Synoptics are “historical” while John is “spiritual.” However, if Matthew and Luke indeed used Mark in constructing their gospels, differences in perspective between the Synoptics and FG may be rooted primarily in differences between the Markan and Johannine traditions. There may even have been contacts between these two traditions, and perhaps some of their similarities *and differences* originated within this contact. Because the Johannine tradition developed in its own autonomous way, parallel to Mark, these two gospels should be considered the “Bi-Optic Gospels.” Evidence for such a thesis presents itself in considering the development and origin of the Johannine material and the relationship between FG and the Synoptics.

Flawed Assumptions

Several sorts of fallacious assumptions enjoy the status of uncritical acceptance among many New Testament scholars today. One example is the popular maxim that gospel traditions are either factual (=historical) or spiritual (= ahistorical), by which Mark is described as “historical” and FG as “not historical.”

But the pre-Markan traditional material was itself formulated to address the theological interests of the early church, and Mark's ordering and crafting of his material had its own "spiritual" concerns. Conversely, the Johannine witness appears to be concerned with preserving earlier material for later audiences, and FG poses more claims to eyewitness derivation than all three Synoptics combined (John 1:14; 19:35; 21:24). Historical and spiritual concerns were operative within *all four gospel's traditions*—at times in distinctive ways. Hence, attempts to explain Johannine-synoptic differences in terms of "spiritual" vs. "historical" gospels are based on a flawed foundation.

A second fallacy is the assumption that Johannine-synoptic similarities must have arisen because the Fourth Evangelist (FE) used one or more of the Synoptics as sources. One cannot assume that all contacts between early gospel traditions were derivative in nature rather than dialectical. There probably never was a time when all gospel traditions were entirely united in their presentations of Jesus' ministry; even the four NT gospels portray the disciples debating the meaning of Jesus' actions and teaching from the very beginning. Such reports suggest differences between earlier and later perceptions within individual gospel traditions, as well as lateral dialogues between gospel traditions. One or more of the synoptic traditions may have been influenced by the developing Johannine tradition, and there may have been an ongoing set of dialogues between several traditions at several periods of their development. Simple approaches to such complex issues are almost always wrong.

A third fallacy frequently encountered in Johannine-synoptic studies is the assumption that conclusions from the source-critical analysis of the Synoptics provide the best pattern for reconstructing the composition history of FG. While some clues from the synoptic situation may be helpful, others may have no relevance to the case of FG. For example, Matthew and Luke appear to have used a narrative source (Mark) and a sayings source (Q), and they also introduced other traditional material as well as their own distinctive theological and editorial perspectives. But does this prove that FE also made use of alien (non-Johannine) traditions, or that signs and discourses developed separately within the Johannine tradition? Such issues must be sorted out on the basis of evidence rather than by simply assuming that FE followed a synoptic pattern.

Recent Theories of John's Origins

Recent theories of FG's origins deserve analytical consideration. Here I will briefly discuss the relative merits of several proposals, focusing on John 6 as a test case. While other texts are relevant to some theories, John 6 provides the

most extensive backbone for launching into matters of FG's composition, development, and relation to the Synoptics (Anderson 1996, 33–69).

FE's Use of Alien Sources

The first theory to consider is the supposed use of alien sources by the Fourth Evangelist. Varying in range and character, source theories reflect an ambitious set of approaches to account for FG's distinctive material. The most impressive proposal along these lines is that of Rudolf Bultmann (1971), who develops an intricate theory inferring three underlying sources (a *sēmeia* source, a revelation-sayings source, and a passion source). Bultmann's claim that these sources can be distinguished from FE's later work is founded on three types of evidence: stylistic, contextual, and theological. His approach set an important precedent for Johannine source criticism: when studies by scholars such as Schweizer, Ruckstuhl, and Van Belle seem to demonstrate the stylistic unity of FG, one may still appeal to contextual and theological evidence to support source-critical theories. But when all of Bultmann's evidence for sources is gathered and plied out within John 6, the results are not only non-convincing, they are entirely nonindicative (Anderson 1996, 72–136). It appears that Bultmann has correctly inferred the style of the narrator and observed that there are more verbs in the narrative and more abstract nouns in the discourse sections. But these observations do not prove that FE used non-Johannine material with which he disagreed.

More recently, Robert Fortna has reproduced the hypothetical Greek text of what he calls the "Signs Gospel," a narrative source underlying FG's miracle accounts and passion story (Fortna 1970). Fortna's approach is preferable to Bultmann's in that it is less extended in its inferences, yet it still does not adequately account for alternate explanations of the data. For example, Fortna analyzes the use of *kai* and *oun* and other stylistic features supposedly characteristic of the Signs Gospel but does not consider the possibility that the linguistic patterns he observes may simply reflect features of FE's own narrative style. More important is the way Fortna casts into sharp relief the tension between the thaumaturgic character of FG's miracle stories and the existentializing comments of the evangelist. Such tension is indeed present, but this does not prove that FE was "correcting" the theological tendency of an alien source as opposed to simply commenting on his own tradition. While FE may have employed various traditions, none of the so-called evidence for a non-Johannine source is strong enough to support the highly speculative schemes of composition that have been constructed upon it. All the material in John (except 7:53–8:11) hangs together in its own Johannine sort of way, and this being the case, other ways forward must be explored.

Synoptic Dependence

A second theory on the origins of FG suggests that the Fourth Evangelist employed one or more of the Synoptics as sources, and the most convincing argument along these lines infers FE's spiritualized use of Mark. C. K. Barrett, for instance, develops the implications of connections between the broad outlines of, and particular Greek phrases within, Mark and John (Barrett 1978, 5–15). While FG differs greatly from Mark, Barrett nonetheless infers that FE has borrowed from Mark's overall structure and has spiritualized some of Mark's content. But a closer analysis reveals the following facts. First, the general similarities between the Markan and Johannine passion narratives do not necessarily imply derivative influence in *either* direction. Important events and details are missing or present between each of these gospels, and this implies separate traditions and individual developments. Some contact may have existed between Mark's and John's traditions, but the relationship does not appear to have been a derivative one, at least not in the way that Matthew and Luke were derivative from Mark.

This conclusion is confirmed when one compares the feeding story in John 6 with its parallels in Mark 6 and 8. Barrett proposes six linguistic similarities and three points of contact in the outlines of these chapters, but in fact one may infer twenty-four points of contact between John 6 and Mark 6 and twenty-one contacts between John 6 and Mark 8. On close scrutiny, however, the number of *identical* contacts among these forty-five potential similarities is zero (Anderson 1996, 97–104). This fact makes it impossible to conceive that FE used Mark in a derivative way, at least not in the ways Matthew and Luke did. In that sense, Gardener-Smith's (1938) judgment that FG was independent of Mark remains essentially correct.

FG as Historicized Drama

A converse proposal, which often accompanies source theories, suggests that FG is a historicized drama to which names and details have been added in order to make the story more lucid. According to Bultmann and others, this phenomenon is characteristic of similar ancient narratives. A major problem with this third view is that when the three narratives most similar to FG, the Synoptic Gospels, are considered, the opposite inference must be drawn. When one considers the sort of things Luke and Matthew have left out in their use of Mark, the list includes primarily nonsymbolic, illustrative detail and theological asides (Anderson 1997). These materials are sometimes replaced by generalizations or common-sense conjecture, and Matthew and Luke also at times add units of their own traditional material. Such moves, however, are very different from the adding of detail for sake of dramatic effect.

In general, "historicized drama" theories, which infer that some of FG's material was invented for rhetorical reasons, confuse function for origin. If FG's nonsymbolic, illustrative narrative details had an origin similar to those in its closest parallel writings, one must conclude that John is closer to Mark than to Matthew and Luke. In other words, the literary character of FG's material appears closer to the material underlying Mark than the co-opted uses of Mark by Matthew and Luke. A critical analysis of the evidence suggests that John and Mark both reflect proximity to the oral stages of their respective traditions, and this likelihood accounts for many of FG's features and many of the Johannine/Markan parallels as well.

The Developmental Approach

The approach that addresses most plausibly the composition history and presentation of the Fourth Gospel involves multiple stages of FG's development. I propose a *two-edition theory of John's composition*, wherein the first edition was probably finalized around 80 C.E., before Matthew and Luke were written. This first edition included Jesus' intense debates with the Jewish religious leaders and sought to persuade readers to believe that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah sent from God as the Prophet-like-Moses (Deut. 18:15–22), who speaks not on his own behalf, but only as he has been instructed by God. FG's Father-Son relationship must be seen as a factor of the prophetic agency schema. In the supplementary material to this first edition of FG, however, new interests emerged. The first is an emphasis on Jesus' suffering and death, his incarnation and willingness to go to the cross. Thus, the Word became flesh (John 1:14), water and blood flowed out of Jesus' side (19:34–35), persecutions and martyrdoms are predicted (16:1–4; 21:18–22), and Jesus' followers are called to ingest his "flesh and blood" (6:51–58) in their willingness to participate in Jesus' passion if they wish to share in his resurrection (Anderson 1996, 194–220; 1997, 41–50).

A second set of themes emerging from FG's later material relates to *Christocracy*, the means by which the risen Lord continues to lead the church. Christ leads through the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit and Spirit of Truth who guides, comforts, convicts, and instructs believers faithfully. One can also infer the extension of the apostolic commission to a plurality of believers (John 20:21–23) over and against the more hierarchical and exclusive model suggested in Matthew 16:17–19. FE's juxtaposition of Peter with the Beloved Disciple presents itself as a corrective to the rising institutionalism in the late first-century church. Does this imply that the final edition of FG is Christocratically corrective in egalitarian, pneumatic, and familial ways? Quite possibly (Anderson 1996, 221–251; 1997, 50–57). The targets of FE's critique, however, were more probably such local irritants as Diotrephes (3 John 9–10)

rather than Matthean Christianity proper. After the death of the Beloved Disciple (John 21:23–24), the editor appears to have compiled and finalized the current version of FG around 100 C.E., sending it out among the churches as the testimony of the Beloved Disciple, who by now exemplified authentic discipleship for later generations.

In summary, the evidence does not support reconstructions that suggest that FE used Mark or other unknown documents as sources. Much of FG's material appears to represent an independent tradition reflecting on many of the events in Jesus' ministry described in the Synoptics from a pervasively different perspective. Rather than being a historicized drama, John appears to be more of a "dramatized history." The first edition of FG was designed to convince a largely Jewish audience that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. The second-edition material reflects a move from evangelistic concerns to "abiding" with Jesus and the maintenance of group solidarity. At some point, Luke appears to have had access to the Johannine oral tradition (providing the best explanation for why Luke sides with FG against Mark at least three dozen times), and Johannine and Matthean sectors of the late first-century church often addressed the same sets of Jewish-Christian issues. They also probably engaged each other's traditions on matters of ecclesiology, and this resulted in the finalization and circulation of FG by the editor.

But what about Mark? In what sense were the Johannine and Markan traditions engaged or independent? This important question is the topic of the next section.

John's Relationship to Mark: Interfluent, Augmentive, and Corrective

When the points of contact between FG and Mark are analyzed, three major patterns emerge. The first pattern involves the similarity of detail typified by the sorts of linguistic contacts inferred by Barrett and others. Such similarities indeed suggest contact, but rather than implying the use of written sources they imply contacts during the *oral* stages of the Markan and Johannine traditions. These details resemble the sorts of material employed by storytellers and preachers, and they appear to reflect traces of early oral traditions. Both Mark and John offer translations of Aramaic terms into Greek and the explanations of Jewish customs for Gentile audiences. Such features are missing from Matthew and Luke, and the best inference is to consider these as bridges between earlier (Palestinian) oral traditions and later, more cosmopolitan written ones. Parallels also exist among other features of the narratives, such as references to the time of day, distances walked, topographical details, and mentions of ironic turns of

events. These similarities lend credence to Papias's claim that at least some of Mark was drawn from Peter's preaching. FG contains even more of this sort of material than Mark does, and it is likely that such features are traces of orality in the Johannine written narrative. If FE or an earlier Johannine preacher preached alongside someone like Peter, this may account for many of the verbal and linguistic similarities between John and Mark.

If Johannine/Markan contacts can be traced, however, to oral stages of their respective traditions, it is impossible to infer which direction the influence may have gone. Indeed, "influence" may be the wrong term; the relationship may better be described as "interfluent" rather than influential. If both traditions appear primitive at times, and if the contacts were between preachers telling their own versions of Jesus stories, the Markan tradition may have picked up on early Johannine renderings of accounts rather than vice versa. Contacts between FG and Mark can clearly be seen at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, in the role of John the Baptist, in the feeding and sea-crossing miracles, in several teachings of Jesus, and in events surrounding the Passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. If pre-Markan and early Johannine preachers picked up and reinforced details from one another, this hypothesis also may account for some of the differences in perspective between the two traditions. Indeed, gospel traditions were not simply disembodied sets of ideas floating from one religious setting to another. Rather, they represent living, feeling, thinking human beings, who perceived and reflected on events distinctively and creatively.

A second impression emerges when the first edition of FG is compared with Mark. It appears that John's material was crafted as an augmentive complement to Mark. In other words, while FG does not depend on Mark for material, it appears that FE engages Mark in a supplemental sort of way. If FE were aware of written Mark (probably finalized around 70 C.E.), several aspects of FG's first-edition material become interesting to consider. The fact that much of Mark's outline is similar to John's suggests that Mark may have provided something of a pattern for the first edition of FG. Jesus' healing and teaching ministries come across in their own distinctive ways in FG, but when the five signs included in the first edition of FG (the water into wine, the healings of the official's son, the paralytic, the blind man, and the raising of Lazarus) are considered in relation to Mark, it becomes apparent that *these are all absent from Mark*. Likewise, the explicit emphasis that the first two miracles are the first two signs done in Cana of Galilee (John 2:11; 4:54) may be FE's attempt to fill out the earlier part of Jesus' ministry. The contents of John 1–4 may reflect an opinion that the launching of Jesus' ministry was a bit more public, extensive, and festive than the Markan healing in the household of Simon Peter's mother-in-law (see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 24). FG's extended postresurrection material may have served to rectify the abrupt ending of Mark. Even the original ending of John

("Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which *are not written in this book*, but these are written. . . [20:30–31; italics added]) may be understood as an assumption that the reader is familiar with Mark, while at the same time explaining Mark's relative absence from FG's augmentation of it.

A third feature emerging from comparisons and contrasts between FG and Mark involves material in FG that appears dissonant with, and corrective to, Mark. Neither Matthew nor Luke was satisfied with Mark as it stood, let alone the contributor of Mark's "long ending." But Matthew and Luke simply built on Mark and added their own material and material from Q to produce "new and improved" versions of the earlier gospel. If FE, however, built *around* Mark and added distinctively Johannine material, this might account for a good deal of FG's independence from Mark without entirely rejecting FE's familiarity with Mark. FG's independence from Mark may be considered non-derivative and autonomous, but it also appears FE was engaged dialogically with Mark's tradition. Familiarity and dissonance together, however, imply a corrective to Mark.

In many ways, the Johannine presentation of Jesus' ministry is more realistic than Mark's rendering. In Mark, Jesus ministers for less than one year, goes to Jerusalem only once, and is then killed. FG, on the other hand, mentions three Passovers and portrays Jesus more realistically going to and from Jerusalem and Galilee. Mark suggests an abrupt transition between the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus, whereas FG presents a more interwoven connection. FE's emphasis that Jesus did not baptize, though his disciples did (John 4:2), also seems to be a corrective clarification in the interest of realism,

Table 16.1

Augments to Mark in the First Edition of FG

- Parallel beginnings and endings: both Mark and FG begin with John the Baptist and conclude with the resurrection appearances of Jesus.
 - Emphases upon the works and teachings of Jesus, including reactions from Jewish leaders, the world, and the disciples.
 - Filling out the early miracles section, including the first two signs performed in Cana of Galilee, as well as a fuller set of appearance narratives.
 - Filling out the Judean ministry of Jesus, including visits to Jerusalem and conflicts with Judean authorities.
 - Adding five miracles not covered by Mark.
 - Providing a Johannine rendering of Jesus' teachings heightening his sense of mission as the prophetic agency of God and the embodiment of the ideal Israel.
 - Adding scripture-fulfillment passages not included in Mark.
 - Contributing a spiritual reflection upon Jesus' ministry as a complement to Mark's more pedantic rendering.
-

and the absence of institutionalizing Eucharistic instructions at the Johannine Last Supper seems more authentic than the more formalized synoptic accounts, which had come to legitimate the evolving Christian sacramental practice. And, rather than presenting Jesus calling and designating twelve male apostles, the Johannine witness includes an inaugural christological confession by Nathaniel (not one of the Twelve) and a climactic one by Martha (a woman). Rather than considering FE's deemphasis of the Twelve and the juxtaposition of Peter and the Beloved Disciple a factor of FG's nonapostolicity, the converse may be implied. Some of FG's differences with Mark (and thus Matthew and Luke) may reflect an alternate opinion regarding at least some aspects of Jesus' ministry.

One intriguing difference between Mark and John is FE's placement of the Temple Incident at the beginning of Jesus' ministry rather than at the end. The standard explanation states that FE has shifted the event from its original location in the story for theological reasons, but this assumption has several problems. First, such theological motives must be assumed; they are not stated explicitly by the evangelist. Second, the Temple Incident appears to be one of Jesus' early demonstrations that the Galilean crowd had witnessed when they too were in Jerusalem (John 4:45). It also seems odd that the Jerusalem authorities should be ready to kill Jesus after so commendable a deed as the healing of the paralytic at John 5. Why would they have been so upset, unless Jesus had already caused a threatening disturbance such as the Temple Incident? As a third consideration, since Mark places all of his Jerusalem-related material at the end of Jesus' ministry, the Temple Incident may appear at the end of Mark less as a factor of historicity and more as a factor of common-sense conjecture. The fact that the Temple Incident offers a plausible reason for Jesus' arrest is precisely the reason that Matthew and Luke have accepted the Markan rendering as historical. However, if the criterion of dissimilarity is here applied, the very unlikelihood that the Jewish leaders would wish to kill Jesus because he raised Lazarus from the tomb (John 11:45–52; 12:9–11) argues in favor of the Johannine rendering. It is extremely unlikely that the Lazarus sign would have been concocted to function as the fictive straw that broke the camel's back between Jesus and the Jerusalem authorities. One wonders whether FG's dissonance with Mark in this particular instance may have been the issue that evoked the opinion of John the Elder that Mark wrote down the testimony of Peter accurately, but in the wrong order (see Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* 39). Perhaps the Johannine leadership held the same opinion.

While the above considerations are themselves somewhat conjectural, the inference that FE has written in dialogue with several aspects of Mark's theological content is quite compelling. For example, FG's descriptions of the Kingdom of God emphasize the transcendence and spiritual character of

God's active reign. The Kingdom can only be apprehended by being "born from above" (John 3:1–8), and Jesus' disciples do not fight because his reign is one of truth (18:36–38). A second corrective challenges the evaluation of the feeding miracle in Mark, where it is reported that the crowd "ate and were satisfied." At John 6:26, Jesus declares, "You seek me not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were satisfied." Again, it need not be inferred that the Fourth Evangelist intended to correct a particular synoptic text; rather, the rhetorical target was more likely to have been the prevalent view of Jesus' miraculous ministry within the larger Christian movement.

A third theological matter that is apparently corrected by the Johannine Jesus is Mark's presentation of the promise that the Son of Man would come again before those who were standing in his audience died (Mark 9:1). FE accounts for the apparent delay of Jesus' return by clarifying what Jesus did and did not say. In John 21, after the prediction of Peter's martyrdom and Peter's inquiry about the fate of the Beloved Disciple, the narrator intervenes to make two clarifications in verse 23. A rumor had spread that the Beloved Disciple would not die, but this unfortunate event has apparently transpired. Thus, the intention of Jesus' remarks about BD must be clarified: Jesus did not say to Peter (or to anyone else who might be considered the root of synoptic tradition) that the Beloved Disciple (or anyone else "standing here" at the Markan Mount of Transfiguration) would not die; rather, Jesus said to Peter, "What is it to you if he [BD] lives until I come again?" This Johannine correction to Mark explains the delay of Jesus' return not as a factor of the need to wait for the Lord's timing, but as a clarification of what Jesus did and did not say. False rumors had been spread, and perhaps even Peter got it wrong—let alone gospel narratives constructed upon a Petrine memory.

From these sample observations regarding FG's similarities and differences with Mark (a survey that could be greatly extended), it is arguable that theories about the relationship between these two books cannot be adequately constructed on only a narrow definition. Given the complexity of the evidence, any theory that attempts to summarize this relationship in one word ("dependent," "independent," "derivative," "theologizing," "novelistic," etc.) is certain to be wrong. John's relationship to Mark appears to have begun with contacts during the oral stages of both traditions, and the first edition of FG appears to have been crafted around Mark in an augmentive and supplemental way. On the other hand, dialogical and corrective interests can also be inferred, both in the early Johannine material, as well as in the material added to the first edition later on. While FG has been crafted with theological interests in mind, this does not mean that its material has no root in the historical ministry of Jesus or an independent Jesus tradition.

Table 16.2

Corrections to Mark in FG

- Locating the Temple Incident at the beginning of Jesus' ministry.
 - Reserving associations with Moses and Elijah for Jesus rather than John the Baptist and their appearance at the Mount of Transfiguration.
 - Special emphases upon the spiritual and transcendent character of God's reign.
 - Challenging thaumaturgic valuations of Jesus' signs versus Mark's wonder attestations.
 - Declaring openly the identity of the Son versus Mark's Messianic Secret.
 - Challenging Mark's developed sacramental theology with a more primitive emphasis on suffering and service.
 - Diminishing of the calling of "the Twelve" and broadening the concept of "apostolicity" to include women and others.
 - A "clarification" of Jesus' original words and intentions regarding the second coming.
-

John and Mark: The Bi-Optic Gospels

The word "synoptic" implies not only that the first three gospels look alike, but that they perceive the ministry of Jesus through a similar lens. To posit a "bi-optic" relationship between the Markan and Johannine traditions is not only to acknowledge the different ways these gospels appear to the reader, but also to account for the epistemological origin of their similarities and differences on the basis of the fact that they appear to present differing yet parallel interpretations of the ministry of Jesus. Because Matthew and Luke constructed their gospel's narratives around the outline of Mark, and because Mark's project was as much a collecting and organizing of traditional material as a reconstructed itinerary of Jesus' ministry, attempts to marginalize FG's presentation of Jesus on the basis of a "three against one" contrast deserve reconsideration. Indeed, FG is a spiritual and theological presentation of Jesus, but this does not mean that the Johannine reflection was ever truncated from an independent Jesus tradition, nor does it imply a derivative relationship to Mark or alien sources. Rather, Mark and John reflect two parallel perspectives on Jesus' ministry that may have been dialogically engaged during the oral and written stages of their respective developments. From early preachers hearing the ways other preachers narrated stories about Jesus to the point when the first edition of FG was crafted around Mark in an augmentive sort of way, their relationship appears to have been a dialectic one. Such a

dialectic extended to FE's reluctance to duplicate most of Mark's material, and it included a willingness to set the record straight in terms of the presentation of some events and the emphasizing of particular theological perspectives. John and Mark, then, reflect parallel-and-yet-distinctive traditions that were engaged with each other along the way. They are the Bi-Optic Gospels, and whereas Luke and Matthew built *on* Mark, the Fourth Evangelist built *around* it.

These assertions will be opposed by those scholars who question the authenticity of the Johannine tradition, and there are many reasons for doing so. Two of the most significant reasons will be considered here. First, FE's apparent attempt to minimize the authority of the Twelve and offer a more modest presentation of Peter appears to counter the idea that FG reflects an "apostolic" tradition. But the assumption that FE's critical view of ecclesial hierarchy excludes the Johannine witness from the apostolic core of Christianity is misguided. Did *all* early Christian leaders agree with the move toward a centralized, monarchical form of leadership, or did some see such developments as departures from the more egalitarian and charismatic way of Jesus? It may be that some leaders within apostolic Christianity felt that the appeal to Peter in support of the emerging hierarchical structure misrepresented Jesus' original intention for the church. Hence, this factor alone cannot imply that the Fourth Evangelist could not have been one of the Twelve, or at least a close associate of one of them. It is also possible that the Johannine tradition may represent the memory of more than one individual, and there were certainly more firsthand sources of Jesus tradition than would have come from the twelve apostles alone. Without claiming to know whom the Beloved Disciple may have been, or who in particular may have been the personal source of the Johannine witness—or the Markan witness, for that matter—the least to be inferred is that we have two individuated perspectives at the root of the Gospels of Mark and John.

This bi-optic relationship between Mark and FG is evident in the presentation of several aspects of Jesus' ministry, especially the feeding narratives and their associated materials. It is possible that Jesus may have performed more than one feeding, but other than differences in the size of the crowd, the numbers of baskets used to pick up the leftovers, and surrounding material (sea-crossings, debates over meanings, and Peter's confession) one may infer seventeen commonalities—in the same sequence—between the accounts reported in Mark 6 and 8 (Anderson 1997, 8–11, 28–32). It may therefore be that here we have three traditional renderings of the same set of events: Mark 6, Mark 8, and John 6. If this is the case, it is remarkable that FG gives the fullest treatment of the story and includes aspects from both Markan accounts. Like Mark 6, FG includes the feeding of the five thousand and the sea-crossing, and like Mark 8, FG includes a feeding, a discussion of the mean-

ing of the feeding, and Peter's confession. FE's rendering is not only longer than both Markan narratives combined (John 6:1–71 versus Mark 6:32–52 and 8:1–38), but it is also fuller in its narrative presentation.

The point here is to illustrate the likelihood that here we have at least two independent, and yet engaged, traditions represented between John and Mark. On the feeding miracles, the Markan narratives both point out that the crowd "ate and were satisfied" (6:42; 8:37), and this same result is mentioned in the three feeding narratives in Matthew and Luke (Matt. 14:20; 15:37; Luke 9:17). In John, however, Jesus rebukes the crowd for seeking him because they had not "seen the sign" but instead had only eaten the loaves and were satisfied (6:26). The Johannine perspective may be seen as a challenge to other Christian evaluations of Jesus' miracles that failed to emphasize their revelatory significance. Likewise, the Markan and Johannine traditions offer contrasting reflections on the relative dearth of miracles (Anderson 1995, 4–12; 1996, 142–148). The Markan Jesus emphasizes that miracles follow faith and refers to a lack of faith to explain why miracles did not occur. This may reflect pre-Markan preaching to the effect that "it's not God's fault . . . it is your [the church's] lack of faith . . ." that causes miracles not to occur. The Johannine preaching, however, appears to have emphasized the revelatory significance of the miracles as an independent theological reflection upon their meaning: "It's not that one dies or is born blind . . . it is for the glorification of God, and that you might believe that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life and the Light of the world." Likewise, according to Mark, even Jesus could do no miracles because of the Nazarenes' unbelief (Mark 6:5–6), while the Johannine Jesus declares, "Blessed are *those who have not seen*, and yet believe" (John 20:29; emphasis added).

As well as differing valuations of Jesus' miracles—reflecting later developments in the Markan and Johannine traditions—there appear to have been different sets of first impressions regarding at least the sea-crossing (Anderson 1995, 13–16; 1996, 148–151, 179–183). The source of the Markan rendering appears to have perceived the event as an epiphany (with Jesus' self-identification clarifying that it was he, not a ghost), while in FG the event has been interpreted as a theophany. No "ghost" is mentioned in John; Jesus simply declares, "I am! Fear not!" similar to the words of Yahweh in the LXX version of the burning bush incident (John 6:20; cf. Exod. 3:14). Other similar-yet-different reports are common to the Johannine and Markan versions of the Temple Incident, the Last Supper, the trials of Jesus, and the resurrection appearances, to name a few. These differing interpretations may have been early as well as late, making it valuable to see them as representative of distinctive larger sets of perspectives regarding the ministry of Jesus.

A second objection to a bi-optic approach to Mark and FG will be raised by

those scholars who argue that the Gospel of John was divorced from eyewitness tradition. Until recently it was thought that the earliest clear attempt to connect the Fourth Gospel to John the Apostle was that of Irenaeus (ca. 180 C.E.). An impressive connection exists, however, in Acts 4:19–20, which moves this association a full century earlier (see Appendix 8 in Anderson 1996, 274–277). Here we have an unmistakable association of the disciple John with a Johannine cliché (“we cannot help speaking about *what we have seen and heard*”), a statement that finds its closest grammatical parallel in 1 John 1:3 (see also John 3:32, where the one from above testifies to what he has “seen and heard”). Given the fact that Luke borrows extensively from the Johannine tradition in his departures from Mark, this first-century connection of a Johannine phrase with an apostolic association approximates a fact. While much of the Markan account is still historically preferable to FG, it cannot be said that John’s witness is late-and-only-late.