

## CHAPTER 4

## JOHN AND OTHER GOSPELS

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## INTRODUCTION

DISCIPLES of Jesus proclaimed his significance in many ways, through poetic encomia (Phil. 2:7–12), visions of impending judgment (Mark 13; Revelation), recollections of his teaching (*Gospel of Thomas*), and declarations about the significance of his life, death, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1–5). All these genres delivered a ‘gospel’ (*euangelion*) or ‘good news’ for his followers. The most influential proclamations were narratives of Jesus’ life and death. The first such popular biography, the Gospel according to Mark, was composed in the years prior to the destruction of the Temple during the Jewish revolt against Rome (66–73 CE). Its spare narrative depicted a mysterious figure identified as the Son of Man, evoking Dan. 7:13 and its hopes for Israel’s liberation. Mark’s Jesus taught in parables and aphorisms, challenging conventional piety, and inviting followers to welcome the imminent ‘Reign of God’. The story concluded with the discovery of Jesus’ empty tomb, which his women disciples greeted with stunned silence.

After the Temple’s destruction (70 CE), others adapted Mark’s narrative to new situations. Matthew and Luke added legendary accounts of Jesus’ birth (Matt. 1–2; Luke 1–2) and youth (Luke 2:41–52), and reports about post-resurrection appearances (Matt. 28:8–20; Luke 24:13–53). Both Gospels also expanded Jesus’ teachings, Matthew through five major discourses, Luke with constant instruction as Jesus progressed from Galilee to Jerusalem.

The most common view about the Gospel development is that Matthew and Luke independently combined Mark with a collection of Jesus’ sayings (‘Q’). Some scholars dispense with Q and argue that Luke knew Matthew as well as Mark.<sup>1</sup> However they developed, the three Synoptic Gospels present a story of Jesus sharing the same general framework.

<sup>1</sup> For recent discussion see Watson 2013: 117–216.

The Synoptic Gospels were not the only early narratives about Jesus. Fragments of others survive in the Church Fathers, including ‘Jewish Christian’ Gospels, ‘*according to the Hebrews*’, ‘*the Nazarenes*’, and ‘*the Ebionites*’.<sup>2</sup> Modern discoveries have added fragments of lost narratives, such as the *Papyrus Egerton 2*. It is possible that the Gospel used by Marcion in the second century was not his own creation but another early narrative.<sup>3</sup> Other texts bearing the title of ‘Gospel’ are quite unlike the canonical narratives, indicating that ‘Gospel’ originally designated not a literary genre but the content of ‘good news’. Thus, the *Gospel of Thomas* is a collection of sayings of Jesus; the *Gospel of Truth* is a meditation composed by a second-century Valentinian teacher; the *Gospel of Philip* is a complex work, perhaps a florilegium, with special interest in Christian rituals; the *Gospel of Mary* enshrines debates about women’s roles; and, most recently, the *Gospel of Judas*, reporting on Jesus’ final days, combines speculative theology with anti-institutional polemic.

Second century Christians debated which Gospels to recognize as authoritative. Irenaeus of Lyons, ca. 180 CE, articulated the emerging orthodox position (*Adversus Haereses*). Only four Gospels should have special status, the three Synoptics and the Gospel according to John.<sup>4</sup>

Irenaeus’s linking of John with the Synoptics is understandable but fraught with problems. The Fourth Gospel exhibits a general framework paralleling that of the Synoptic Gospels. After its quasi-poetic Prologue, it begins, like Mark, by describing the relationship of Jesus and John the Baptist. It tells of Jesus’ ministry and teaching before a final pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. There he dines with his disciples, one of whom betrays him. The authorities arrest him while another disciple denies him. At the urging of the Jerusalem elite, the Roman governor orders him tortured and crucified. Rising from the dead on the third day, Jesus appears to and commissions his disciples for mission. The basic outline is familiar.

Within their common framework John and the Synoptic Gospels differ considerably. In John, the activity of Jesus, taking place in Galilee, Samaria, and Judaea, extends over three Passovers in contrast to the Synoptics’ single year. Jesus’ action in the Temple occurs at the beginning of his public activity, not his final week. Jesus performs healings and wondrous deeds but no exorcisms and does not send his disciples on a mission while he is alive. The Last Supper involves no symbolic sharing of bread and wine but an act of humble service and a long discourse. The Gospel reports nothing about Jesus’ birth or youth.

Jesus’ teaching displays a complex web of similarity and difference in comparison with the Synoptics. Jesus gives a single command, to love as he did (John 13:34), reinforced by example (13:3–17) and embellished with a familiar proverb (15:13). Jesus offers no detailed ethical advice, as do the Sermons on the Mount (Matthew) or Plain (Luke). There

<sup>2</sup> For the texts see Elliott 1993.

<sup>3</sup> For the text see Roth 2015; for a theory about its relationship to other Gospels, see Klinghardt 2015, criticized by Lieu 2015.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 24, Judith M. Lieu, ‘The Johannine Literature and the Canon’,

is no discussion, as in Matt. 5:17–19 and 23:3, about observance of Torah. The Synoptics recount parables, both simple similitudes and complex narratives; in John Jesus describes himself with images, Light, Way, Truth, Life, and occasionally more complex vignettes, the shepherd (10:1–18) and the vine (15:1–8). Language of the Kingdom or Reign of God, prominent in the Synoptics, plays a marginal role (3:3, 5; 18:36), yielding to a focus on eternal life realized through belief in Jesus. The Gospel concentrates on Jesus as the Father's unique emissary, whose willing death for his friends manifests the salvific imperative of love.

## THEORIES OF RELATIONSHIP TO THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Gospel readers have often labored to explain the relationship between John and the Synoptics. Church fathers assumed that the evangelist knew and supplemented the Synoptics, producing a more 'spiritual Gospel'.<sup>5</sup> Nineteenth-century scholars often followed their lead. Hans Windisch (1926), however, maintained that rather than supplementing, the evangelist tried to replace the Synoptics.<sup>6</sup> Twentieth-century scholars grew increasingly sceptical of a relationship, arguing that the evangelist used oral traditions or written sources but not the Gospels that became canonical (Garnder-Smith 1938). Source-critical exploration led to the hypothesis of a 'signs source', detected in the two numbered 'signs' (John 2:11, 4:54). This theory, part of Rudolf Bultmann's landmark commentary (Bultmann 1941), was later elaborated more systematically (Fortna 1970, 1989; Nicol 1972), and developed (Siegert 2004; Siegert and Bergler 2010), but also subjected to vigorous criticism (Neiryck 1991b; van Belle 1994, for a response: Fortna 2007). Another theory posits a source for John's passion narrative which drew on the Synoptics (Schleritt 2007).<sup>7</sup>

The hypothesis of a 'Signs Source' focuses on Jesus' deeds. Other hypotheses explored the independent character of Jesus' teaching (Dodd 1963: 335–65, lists 13 sayings). Bultmann posited a 'Discourse Source', which developed traditional sayings in dialogue with Gnostic teaching.<sup>8</sup> Although that theory has not won wide support, scholars continue to argue for John's use of independent oral or written traditions (Theobald 2002; Porter 2015).

The Gospel's compositional history complicates the assessment of its relationship with the Synoptics. Most critics recognize that the Gospel's production was not a simple matter.<sup>9</sup> There are clearly interpolations, including the Pericope of the Adulteress

<sup>5</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Hypotyposes*, cited in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* VI.14.7.

<sup>6</sup> For earlier scholarship, see Smith 1992.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 3, Michael Labahn, 'Literary Sources of the Gospel and Letters of John'.

<sup>8</sup> In favour: Koester, 1990: 244–71; critical: Theobald 2002: 537–53.

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 5, Martinus C. de Boer, 'The Story of the Johannine Community and its Literature'.

(7:53–8:11), found in different places in the manuscript tradition, and the account of the angel stirring the waters at the pool of Bethesda (5:4).<sup>10</sup>

More importantly, textual details suggest growth and development over time. Chapter 21 appears to be an epilogue, added after the first conclusion (John 20:30–31). The lengthy farewell discourse (John 13:31–17:26), although chiasmically arranged, involves expansive repetitions on subjects such as the Paraclete (14:15–17; 25–26; 16:12–15). Jesus' exhortation to move along (14:31) leads readily to chapter 18. These facts suggest that chapters 15–17 constitute a second phase of the discourse, even if it deploys the dramatic convention of the protagonist's 'delayed exit' (Parsenios 2005). Recognizing stages in the Gospel's growth does not necessarily imply a change in authorship. The general uniformity of the Gospel's style and its intricate cross-referencing suggests that a uniform literary vision governed most of the text's development.

Exploring theories of development, some scholars place Johannine interaction with the Synoptics at a late stage. Marie-Émile Boismard and A. Lamouille (1993, criticized in Neiryck 1979) posited a primitive document, composed in Palestine around 50 CE by a Christian with Samaritan connections. John the presbyter, mentioned by the second-century collector of Gospel traditions, Papias (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* III.29.4–17), edited this Gospel, probably in Ephesus, around 60–65. John produced a second edition around 90, taking account of the Synoptic Gospels and Pauline letters. A final redactor added further touches early in the second century. More recently, Urban von Wahlde (2010) proposed three stages of composition, with knowledge of the Synoptics appearing late. In such reconstructions the earliest edition functions much like the 'Signs Source'. Some scholars have suggested a more complex relationship, with some stages of the developing Fourth Gospel influencing the Synoptics (Anderson 2002; 2007; 2013), especially Luke (Shellard 1995; Matson 2001; Müller 2012). These suggestions rightly highlight connections between John and the Synoptics, but their arguments for substantial Johannine influence have not proven persuasive.<sup>11</sup>

While twentieth-century scholars proposed various possible relationships between John and the Synoptics, some continued to insist that the most likely direction of relationship is from the Synoptics to John (Barrett 1978: 42–54). The case, most forcefully made by scholars at the University of Leuven (Denaux 1992; Frey 2003; Labahn and Lang 2004), appears in recent commentaries (Thyen 2005). The position has been bolstered by observations that the Fourth Gospel apparently assumes that its readers know the Synoptic accounts (Bauckham 1998: 147–71; critiqued by North 2003). Such passages include the reference to Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter (John 1:40), when neither has been named; the note of John the Baptist's imprisonment (3:24), which is nowhere recounted in the Gospel; the anointing of Jesus' feet by Mary of Bethany, mentioned at 11:2, but not described until 12:1–8.

<sup>10</sup> See also John 4:2, correcting 3:22. See Chapter 2, H. A. G. Houghton, 'The Text of the Gospel and Letters of John'.

<sup>11</sup> See also Chapter 3, Labahn, 'Literary Sources of the Gospel and Letters of John'.

## AN ACCOUNT OF GOSPEL RELATIONSHIPS

The creative theologian and literary artist (or perhaps members of his school) who crafted this intricate work used various sources. These included the Synoptic Gospels, as well as other narratives and collections of sayings. He did not use those sources as the Synoptic authors used theirs. Rather, creatively ‘remembering’ (Breytenbach 1992), he freely selected and reworked stories and sayings to create a new kind of narrative, shaped by an impulse not simply to record the past accurately (contrast Luke 1:3). Instead, like some Hellenistic historians, the evangelist attempted to engage his audience in a ‘dramatic’ way (Attridge 2015). His story of Jesus presents a series of transformative encounters challenging readers to contemplate the paradoxical revelation offered by a crucified Son of God. In the process, he also wrestles with conceptual problems, such as whether divine sovereignty precludes human freedom or how God might be known (Attridge 2014).

### Synoptic Narrative Parallels

The following tables indicate passages in the Fourth Gospel (A) with significant Synoptic parallels, and (B) some elements familiar from the Synoptics.

A	John	Matthew	Mark	Luke
The Baptist	1:19–34	3:1–17	1:2–11	3:1–22
First Disciples	1:35–37	4:18–22	1:16–20	5:1–1
Naming Simon	1:40–42	16:17–18	3:16	6:14
John imprisoned	3:24	4:12	1:14a	
Ministry in Galilee	4:43–46	4:13–17	1:14b–15	4:14–15
Healing official’s son <sup>12</sup>	4:46–54	8:5–13		7:1–10
Feeding 5000 <sup>13</sup>	6:1–13	14:13–21	6:32–44	9:10–17
Calming a storm	6:16–21	14:22–32	6:45–51	
At Genessaret	6:22–25	14:34–36	6:53–56	
Peter’s Confession	6:66–69	16:13–20	8:27–30	9:18–21
A premature attempt	7:30			22:53
Anointing Jesus <sup>14</sup>	12:3–8	26:6–13	14:3–9	7:36–50
Entry to Jerusalem	12:12–16	21:1–9	11:1–10	19:28–38
Last supper	13:1–11	26:17–29	14:12–25	22:7–20
Footwashing <sup>15</sup>				22:26–27

<sup>12</sup> Dauer 1984; Landis 1992; Thatcher 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Favouring dependence on Mark: Vouga 1992; Konings 1992; Dunderberg 1994: 126–56; Hunt 2011; Lang 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Sabbe 1992b; Dunderberg 1992.

<sup>15</sup> Sabbe 1982.

Betrayal	13:21–20	26:21–25	14:18–21	22:21–23
Prediction of denial <sup>16</sup>	13:36–38	26:30–35	14:26–31	22:31–34
Arrest <sup>17</sup>	18:1–11	26:36–56	14:32–52	22:39–53
Peter's Denial <sup>18</sup>	18:15–27	26:57–75	14:53–72	22:54–71
Trial before Pilate <sup>19</sup>	18:29–38	27:22–14	15:2–5	23:2–5
Barabbas	18:39–40	27:15–23	15:6–14	23:17–23
Crucifixion <sup>20</sup>	19:16–30	27:24–50	15:15–39	23:24–48
Burial	19:38–42	27:57–60	15:42–46	23:50–54
Empty Tomb <sup>21</sup>	20:1–10	28:1–8	16:1–8	24:1–12
Resurrection	20:11–29	28:8–10		24:26–31
Appearances				
A Final Appearance	21:1–14			7:1–10
<b>B</b>				
Temple incident	2:14–22	21:12–13	11:15–17	19:45–46
Healing a paralytic <sup>22</sup>	5:2–16	9:1–9	2:1–12	5:17–26
Healing a blind man	9:1–7		8:23–26	
Raising Lazarus	11:1–44	9:18–26	5:35–43	7:11–17
Prayer of anguish	12:27–32	26:38	14:34	
Voice from heaven	12:28–30	17:5	9:7	9:35

Other passages, such as the Wedding at Cana (2:1–10), the encounters with Nicodemus (3:1–13) and the Samaritan woman (4:4–26), have no obvious Synoptic parallels. Such episodes do not prove John's independence but indicate that he had other sources as well.

## Comparative Observations

It is striking that the passages that display the most significant correspondences with the Synoptics also generally follow the Synoptic order. The parallels often involve details that suggest a literary relationship. A few examples will suffice:

The story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand shares with Mark alone the figure of 200 denarii as the estimated cost of feeding the crowd (John 6:7; Mark 6:37), and with the other Gospels the number of loaves and fish (John 6:9; Matt. 14:17; Mark 6:38; Luke 9:13). The Johannine setting, with Jesus ascending a mountain (John 6:3), is shared

<sup>16</sup> Jennings 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Sabbe 1977; Lang 1999.

<sup>18</sup> Donahue 1973: 58–63.

<sup>19</sup> Sabbe 1992; Pichler 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Sabbe 1994; Thyen 1992.

<sup>21</sup> Lindars 1960 and Craig 1992 posit common tradition.

<sup>22</sup> Neiryck 1991a.

only with Matt. 15:29, quite likely a Matthean redaction evoking the setting of the Great Sermon (Matt. 4:23–5:1) (Allison 2017).

The brief notice that the Jews did not lay a hand on Jesus because his hour had not yet come (John 7:30) signals the developing plot against Jesus. The wording resembles Luke 22:53 when Jesus chides the Jerusalem elite that they did not lay hands on him when he was teaching in the Temple, but did so once their hour had come.

The scene of Mary's anointing with fragrant oil (John 12:3) echoes the description of the anointing by an anonymous woman in Mark 14:3, but also recalls the action of the sinful woman in Luke, who anoints Jesus' feet and wipes them with her hair (Luke 3 7:38). The Lukan version, a reworking of the Markan or Matthean account, is set in the public ministry of Jesus, not in the events leading to his death. John's version, which alone identifies the woman as Mary, keeps the connection with the passion, but includes the Lukan form of the action.

John's account of the Last Supper is certainly distinctive, but the unique action at its centre, the Footwashing, bears a striking resemblance to the saying of Jesus at Luke 22:26–27. There Jesus admonished his disputatious disciples that leaders must become servants and suggested that the servant is greater than the one who reclines at table. The same sentiment in slightly different words appears at John 13:16, after Jesus does precisely what the Lukan saying recommended. The Johannine Last Supper dramatizes the Lukan saying.

The story of Peter's denial in the high priests' courtyard (John 18:15–27) is structured as in Mark and Matthew, with two scenes focused on Peter (vv 13–19, 25–27) framing Jesus' interrogation. In each of the Petrine scenes he is 'warming himself' in both John (18:18, 25) and Mark (14:54, 67). The Johannine adaptation introduces another disciple, known to the high priest, who gains admittance for Peter (John 18:15). The confrontation between Peter and the maidservant (18:17), now relocated to the first scene, is echoed by the same question from another servant in the final scene (18:26). The Johannine reconfiguration provides Peter the opportunity to deny Jesus twice.

The Johannine resurrection appearances have numerous parallels with the Synoptics along with many subtle differences. Like Luke, the Fourth Gospel reports that male disciples visited the tomb after the women's report. A close verbal parallel appears in the description of the action of the Beloved Disciple, a Johannine addition, upon his arrival at the tomb (John 20:5) he 'bends down and sees the linen cloths'. This is exactly the action ascribed to *Peter* in Luke 24:12, although 'bending down' is lacking in some manuscript witnesses. In the Lukan account, Peter, like the women in Mark 16:8, goes away 'amazed at what had happened'. In the Johannine version, Peter exhibits no reaction, but the Beloved Disciple 'believes' (John 20:8). The evangelist seems to know the Lukan account, and uses it for his own purposes, which do not include exalting Peter.

## Dissection and Reconstruction

Shared details, including redactional elements, thus strongly suggest Johannine knowledge of the Synoptic Gospels. Two segments, at the beginning and end of the Fourth Gospel, display careful literary craftsmanship. In both cases, the evangelist has extracted



elements from an existing account and fashioned them into new stories.<sup>23</sup> A more detailed examination of these passages will illustrate the process.

The Gospel begins with a series of carefully framed scenes, marked by references to 'days'. The first (19–23) introduces John, not named 'the Baptist'. Two passages follow, in which John mentions one greater than himself (24–28), to whom he dramatically points 'on the next day' (29–34). Each scene is built on portions of a saying, paralleled in all the Synoptics, about the coming one's baptism.

Many elements in these vignettes appear in the Synoptics in the same sequence:

	John	Matthew	Mark	Luke
The Baptist	19–23	3:1–6	1:2–6	3:1–6
'One Stronger'	24–28	3:11–12	1:7–8	3:15–18 (Acts 13:25)
The Spirit	29–34	3:13–17	1:9–11	3:21–22
Call of Disciples	35–37	4:18–22	1:16–20	5:1–11
Naming Peter	40–42	16:17–18	3:16	6:14

In addition to the overall structural similarity there are numerous similar details:

Isa 40:3	23	3:3	1:2–3	3:4–6
Sandal	27	3:11	1:7	3:16
Water/spirit	26, 33	3:11	1:8	3:16
Spirit descending	33	3:16	1:10	3:22

Noticeable differences balance the similarities. John's citation of Isaiah is by far the shortest, lacking the additional verse from Malachi found in Mark 1:2. In Matthew the Baptist says he is not worthy to *carry* the sandals of the coming one; in Mark, Luke, and John he is unworthy to *untie* them. In John there is no account of Jesus being baptized, thus avoiding the need for an apologetic explanation (Matt. 3:13–15). The Spirit's descent is a vision that *Jesus* sees in Mark and Matthew and a public event in Luke. In John it is a vision seen by *John* alone. The call of the first disciples, though reported close to the account of the baptism in Mark, takes place later, after John's imprisonment (Mark 1:14, also Matt. 4:14, not so Luke).

Repetitions characterize the Johannine account (Van Belle, Labahn, and Maritz 2009). The evangelist has framed the interaction between John and the Jews with a pair of questions, one asking who John is (John 1:19–21), suggesting as possibilities Elijah or a prophet. The repeated question in v 25, asking why John baptizes, adds 'Messiah'. John initially rejects all such titles, including those given him in Matt. 11:14. The denial introduces the citation of Isa. 40:3 (John 1:23). The Synoptics' badge of honour, a prophecy fulfilled, now puts John in his place; he is *only* a voice crying out.

<sup>23</sup> See Brown 1961 on the dispersal of Synoptic materials in John.



The repeated question in John 1:25 introduces a new topic and another repetition. John answers with the first half of a traditional saying about a ‘stronger’ one to come, who will baptize with spirit (Mark 1:7–8) and, in Matthew and Luke, fire (Matt. 3:11, Luke 3:16). The truncated saying is thus the climax of Day 1. The second half of the traditional saying (‘He will baptize with Holy Spirit’) concludes Day 2 (John 1:33).

The divided and reused saying makes the point that the Spirit delivered by Jesus through baptism is connected with the Spirit that initially descended on him. The recombination also connects with another important theme. The saying about ‘baptism by spirit’ is an integral part of Day 2, which begins with John’s identification of the ‘lamb of God’ (John 1:29) and ends with his naming Jesus ‘Son of God’ (1:34). The Gospel will explore how Jesus accomplishes his task of ‘taking away the sins of the world’ as the Paschal lamb (19:36), which is not an animal sacrificed for sin. The removal of sin will be intimately connected to ‘baptism of spirit’ made possible by the Lamb’s death.

The passage reveals the evangelist at work. He had at his disposal a narrative of the start of Jesus’ ministry much like that of Mark, if not Mark itself. He freely adapted that source to make literary and theological points, particularly by excerpting from one section material on which to build another.

Like the opening chapter, the Gospel’s account of the resurrection is carefully structured in four distinct scenes, two set in the garden where Jesus was buried, two in a room in Jerusalem on Easter night and one week later. The first and third scenes describe multiple disciples facing evidence of the resurrection. In each case there follows a dramatic encounter between Jesus and a single disciple. The first scene describes Peter and the Beloved Disciple visiting the tomb (John 20:1–10). Jesus then appears to a disconsolate Mary Magdalene, transforming grief into mission (20:11–18). In the third scene Jesus commissions disciples, with Thomas absent (20:19–23). Finally, Jesus appears, resolves Thomas’s doubts, and makes his famous proclamation about seeing and believing (20:24–29).

The first and third scenes both have significant Synoptic parallels (Lindars 1960; Neiryck 1969, 1984), and the verbal correspondence in John 20:5 with Luke 24:12 has been noted. The dissection and reconstruction technique is evident in the appearance to Mary. The scene probably depends on a reported appearance to the several women who discovered the tomb (Matt. 28:8–10). Instead of several women, whose presence may still be felt in Mary’s plural expression (John 20:2), the evangelist focuses on one. Mary becomes the centre of an emotional encounter with her teacher. The scene echoes Jesus’ words about sheep recognizing their shepherd’s voice (John 10:4, 16), and the encounter evokes well known recognition scenes (Larsen 2008). The evangelist has built a brief notice from his source it into a dramatic new episode.

The third scene (John 20:19–23) closely parallels the Lukan account of Jesus’ appearance to his disciples on Easter night (Luke 24:36–43). The fourth scene, describing the encounter with Thomas (John 20:24–29), displays the familiar compositional strategy. An element from the source, Jesus’ invitation to ‘see his hands and feet’ (Luke 24:39), becomes the focal point of *two* moments of recognition. Jesus first invites his disciples (John 20:20), then a week later Thomas (20:27–28), to view and touch his hands and his

side. The new reference to the side recalls the unique Johannine account of piercing of Jesus' side at the crucifixion (John 19:34). The first command provides the occasion for commissioning the disciples (20:21–23); the second provides a teaching moment about faith (20:29).

The Gospel's opening and concluding chapters clearly display the evangelist's compositional technique. In both segments the evangelist takes elements at home in a traditional story, repeats or divides them, and builds a new vignette around them. Not slavish dependence but creative reuse characterizes the evangelist's work.

## Sayings of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel

Woven throughout the Fourth Gospel are sayings of Jesus, many of which have parallels in the Synoptic Gospels and in the *Gospel of Thomas*, a collection of 114 sayings of Jesus preserved in Coptic and in three Greek papyrus fragments from Oxyrhynchus.<sup>24</sup> The Gospel has intrigued scholars since its discovery as part of the Nag Hammadi find in 1945 and its publication in 1959. It contains sayings paralleled in all the canonical Gospels as well as some previously unknown. Its sources included the Synoptics, although probably through an indirect process of oral transmission. Its Johannine parallels may indicate knowledge of the Fourth Gospel (Zelyck 2013: 85–103), but may simply result from independent elaboration of common motifs (Brown 1962; Dunderberg 2006).

The following chart offers a brief overview:

	John	Matthew	Mark	Luke	Thomas
You are Cephas/Peter	1:42	16:18	3:16		
Destroy this Temple	2:19	26:61	14:58	Acts 5:14	71
Groom's joy	3:29–30	9:15	2:19	5:34	104
Font within	4:14; 7:38				13, 108
Harvest nigh	4:35–38	9:37–38		10:2	
Prophet dishonoured	4:44	13:57	6:4	4:24	31
Reject Son/Father	5:23	10:40		10:16	
Food that lasts	6:27	6:19–20	12:33		76.3
Seek and Find	7:33–4	7:1–11		11:19–23	50
Come Drink	7:37				108
From Bethlehem	7:42	2:5–6			
Light of World	8:12	5:14			
Not taste death	8:51–2	16:8	9:1	9:27	
Know Son/Father	11:27			10:22	
Light within	11:9–10				61

<sup>24</sup> For the texts, Layton 1989. Koester 1990: 75–128 and Watson 2013: 217–85 explore relationships to other Gospels.

Love life, lose it	12:25	16:25	8:35	9:24
		10:39		17:33
Glorify Son	12:28a	6:9b		11:2c
Sender and I	12:44	13:20		10:40
Disciple/Teacher <sup>25</sup>	13:16	10:24–5		6:40
One will betray	13:21	26:21	14:17	
Before the cock	13:38	26:34	14:30	22:34
Ask and receive	14:12–14	21:22	11:24	
Do greater things	14:32	17:20		
Grief to joy	16:20			5:35; 6:21
Forgiving sin	20:22–23	16:19; 18:18		
If he remains	21:23		9:1	
<i>Looser Parallels</i>				
Good wine first	2:10	9:17	2:22	5:37–38
Born again	3:5	18:3	10:15	18:17
<i>Other Parallels</i>				
Son of Joseph	1:45; 6:20	13:55	6:3	4:22
Give us a Sign	6:30	12:38	8:11	11:16, 39

Differences are as plentiful as the similarities, as a few examples will illustrate. The name given to the disciple Simon (John 1:42) is explicitly Cephias, which is ‘translated Peter’. In the Synoptics there is no reference to Cephias. The remark about destroying and rebuilding the Temple (John 2:19), an accusation against Jesus in the Synoptics and Acts 5:14, here appears on his lips. It uses an idiomatic Semitic expression of an imperative as a conditional, not found in the Synoptic parallels. John offers his own Christocentric interpretation: the ‘temple’ is Jesus’ body. The language of seeking and finding (Matt. 7:7–11; Luke 11:19–23) has a series of Johannine parallels (7:33–34; 8:21; 13:33). But here Jesus does not admonish, he states a fact: those who seek him do *not* find him (Attridge 2000).

In Matt. 5:14 Jesus declares his disciples to be the ‘light of the world’. In John 8:12 Jesus is that light. In developing the theme, the evangelist suggests that by walking by daylight (John 11:9; 12:35–36) one can have light within (11:10). The saying echoes the proverb about the sound eye (Matt. 6:22; Luke 11:34–36), which enables the interior of the self to be filled with light. Reflection on interior light appealed to the *Gospel of Thomas* (24); in John the brief allusion to interior ‘light’ is submerged in the strong Christological focus.

Some sayings are loosely related to their Synoptic counterparts. The steward’s remark about serving good wine first (John 2:10) recalls Jesus’ sayings about new wine, but the Synoptic sayings are about storing, not drinking, wine. The claim that one must be

<sup>25</sup> Van Belle and Godecharle 2013.

'born again' (3:5) recalls sayings about becoming little children, but the more complex Johannine symbolism involves levels of irony absent from the admonitions to childlike simplicity.

The Johannine Son of Man sayings present a particularly intriguing phenomenon. Running through the first half of the Gospel, much like their Synoptic counterparts, they fall into the classes of saying familiar from the Synoptics. One refers to Jesus' present activity (John 9:35); some to his passion (3:13–14; 12:32–34), and one to his heavenly revelation, recalling predictions of his eschatological return (1:51). Yet the references are complex. Images from the Old Testament, Jacob's ladder (1:51) and the bronze serpent (3:14), reinterpret two early sayings (Attridge 2006). Many of the remaining sayings blend the notion of an eschatological event with the crucifixion, when Jesus is 'lifted up', revealed for who he is (8:28), 'glorified' (12:23; 13:31), and returned to the Father (6:62). One (3:13) refers not to a future return of the Son of Man but to the descent that has already happened. As a very human Son of Man, he now exercises judgment (5:27) and nourishes his people (6:27, 53). The Gospel thus radically reinterprets familiar Son of Man sayings in the light of its distinctive understanding of Jesus.<sup>26</sup>

Two sayings display a tensive relationship to the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus' statement that a prophet is without honour (John 4:44) appears in the Synoptics and in *Thomas*. The Johannine version is closer to the wording of Matt. 13:57 and Mark 6:4 than to the Lukan-Thomas version, which refers to the prophet being 'accepted'. The reference to Jesus' 'hometown' is problematic. The saying seems to suggest a motive for going to Galilee, but v 45 indicates that Jesus was warmly received there. He had also just visited Samaria, where he was acclaimed Savior of the World (4:42). Judaea (4:54) may be an option, but that stands in tension with the understanding that Jesus is 'from Nazareth' (1:45), whatever Nathanael thinks of that venue (1:46). The saying has been understood as an awkward editorial addition (Von Wahlde 2010: 2:207–9), but with all its ambiguity it serves a thematic purpose. The issue of Jesus' origins is a central concern in chapter 7. The crowds believe that the Messiah's origins will be unknown (7:26), while some hold that he must come from Bethlehem (7:42), echoing Mic. 5:1, or Matt. 2:5–6. The evangelist may ironically affirm the latter position (Heil 2008), and therefore the Matthean/Lukan account of Jesus' origins. Or he may defend the Markan version, which knows only of Jesus' Galilean origin. Or, most likely, he insists that neither position provides relevant information. The Jerusalem crowds are ironically correct on the earthly level. All one needs to know is that Jesus is from God (7:28–29).

The Fourth Gospel's sayings thus draw on a broad tradition of Jesus' teaching, apparent both in the form of individual verses and in materials unattested in the Synoptics, such as the image of the apprentice/son in 5:19–20, the proverb that truth liberates (8:31b), or the contrast between sons and slaves (8:35), a trope paralleled in Gal. 4:7 and Heb. 3:1–6.

<sup>26</sup> Among others see Lindars 1983; Burkett 1991; Moloney 2005; Ellens 2010.

## John and Another Gospel

While some of Jesus' sayings and many of his actions in the Fourth Gospel resemble and may draw on the Synoptics in some fashion, either directly or indirectly, it is clear that the Fourth Evangelist also had access to other sources. At least one of the fragmentary Gospels discovered in modernity has been proposed as a source. *Papyrus Egerton 2* consists of two leaves of papyrus and two minor fragments first published in 1935 (Bell and Skeat 1935) and supplemented with another fragment, *P. Köln 255*, in 1987 (Gronewald 1987; Nicklas 2009). The fragments, dating from the mid second to early third century (Nicklas 2009: 21; Porter 2013), contain on frag. 1 (1) a controversy between Jesus and Jewish leaders, with parallels to John 5:39, 45; 9:29, and 5:46; (2) an attempt to stone Jesus, paralleled at John 7:30, 44; 8:20; and 10:39, followed by (3) a healing of a leper, reminiscent of Mark 1:40–44, with an admonition not to sin resembling John 5:14 or 8:11. Frag. 2 contains (4) a miracle on the banks of the Jordan, and (5) a debate about paying taxes, like Mark 12:13–15, with verses similar to John 3:2 and 10:25.

The relationship of this fragmentary text to the Fourth Gospel has long been contested. Many have argued that this unknown Gospel is dependent on the canonical Gospels (Dodd 1936; Neiryck 1985) or at least the Fourth Gospel (Nicklas 2009: 96–8; Zelyck 2013: 25–47; Nicklas 2014); others that it reflects independent tradition (Jeremias 1991); others argue that its story was a source of the Fourth Gospel (Koester 1990: 205–16; Watson 2013: 286–340). The close verbal parallels with John 5 indicate a literary relationship of some sort, but dependence could work in either direction. The note that his opponents do not know where Jesus is from (*P. Eger. Fr. 1 verso*, ll.16–17 // John 9:29) reflects not simply a floating tradition, but a theme that structures a major portion of the Fourth Gospel. This strongly suggests that the papyrus depends on the Gospel, although its author uses his source with kind of freedom characteristic of the Fourth Gospel.

## CONCLUSION

The Fourth Gospel emerged amid the competition among first-century Christians to find ever more effective ways of proclaiming their good news. It creatively drew on other efforts, including the Synoptics, but did so with its own distinctive style and theological emphasis. In turn it exercised increasing influence on early Christian literature across a wide theological spectrum (Hill 2004; Rasimus 2010; Zelyck 2013).

## SUGGESTED READING

An orientation to the topic is offered by Smith (1992), who argues for John's independence, as do Borgen (2014) and Porter (2015). Anderson (2002, 2007, 2013) suggests that developing Johannine literature interacted with the other canonical Gospels. Koester (1989) and Watson (2013) treat within the general context of Gospel development. Rasimus (2010) and Zelyck

(2013) situate John within second-century literature. Dunderberg (2006) carefully considers the case for the dependence of John on the Synoptics.

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