2
The Question of Sources

Rudolf Bultmann’s 1941 commentary The Gospel of John provided a theory of the three major sources and an amorphous fourth on which the evangelist drew before the whole gospel was edited and drastically rearranged by an “Ecclesiastical Redactor.” Eugen Ruckstuhl seemed to refute its major contentions effectively a decade later.1 He maintained that there were no written sources, since Johannine characteristics could be shown to prevail throughout the fourth gospel. The question lay dormant until 1958 when Wilhelm Wilkens, another Swiss, proposed a basic signs gospel, the work of the beloved disciple, who also later redacted it and added discourse material.2 In a final editing the existing text was rearranged and further added to, with a Passover framework imposed on the whole that had not been present initially (see 2:13; 6:4; 11:55, which are followed by narratives that do not seem to fit these introductions). Wilkens gave more attention than Bultmann to method by stressing the contextual evidence pointing to successive editings of an initial source.

Reconstructing the Signs-Source: Fortna

Meantime, Bultmann’s one contention that survived with least challenge was that John had employed a “signs source” (SQ as he called it, for Semeia-Quelle). Semeia and sometimes erga (“works”) were the terms in the FG for the miraculous deeds put forward in proof of Jesus’ messiahship. Bultmann did not delineate them in any one place, referring to them in extended footnotes only as they occurred. D.M. Smith3 submitted Bultmann’s theory to a clear expostition and then critiqued it, but it remained for R.T. Fortna to do what Bultmann had failed to do. He provided a Greek text of the hypothetical signs-source, going farther than the master by finding it to be not merely a collection of miracle-stories but a true gospel.4 It had no teaching of Jesus, he concluded, but it did culminate in a passion and resurrection narrative.

Eduard Schwartz of Tübingen early in this century appears to have been the first to apply the Greek term aporia (lit. “block,” “obstruction”) to the Johannine material. It describes “the many inconsistencies, disjunctures and hard connections, even contradictions—which the text shows, notably in the narrative portions.” Seeing in these editorial seams evidence of insertion of material into a source, Fortna went on the hypothesis that the present gospel was the (probably multiple) redaction of a basic text. Bultmann had provided him with a lead by identifying a tension between the actual accounts of Jesus’ miraculous deeds (2:1–12; 4:46–54; 5:1–9, 6:1–13; 9:1–7; 11:1–44; 21:1–6) and the summaries and editorial comments that accompanied them. But Fortna observed that Bultmann brought preconceived theological and stylistic judgments into the discussion. Fortna thought this improper and confined himself to internal criteria. The chief criterion he employed was the existence of aporias in the miracle stories (reckoning the walking on water, 6:15–25, as one of them, as Bultmann had not). These he thought could best be explained as indicators of Johannine additions to a pre-Johannine source. Also, using the stylistic criteria of Ruckstuhl and Schweizer, he came to an opposite conclusion from theirs, namely that the signs source was marked by peculiarities of language and style. This hypothetical source is more akin to synoptic style than Johannine. Since it contains both miracle stories and a passion narrative, Fortna concluded that he had identified “a pre-Johannine stratum which had already a distinctive literary character imposed upon it.”5 Its author and audience seem to have been bilingual (Greek and Aramaic).6 It was a missionary tract with a single end, to show (presumably to the potential Jewish convert) that Jesus is the messiah.7

Employing certain punctuation marks, Fortna concludes his study by printing out in Greek what was in the source. Parentheses indicate passages that are not certainly to be assigned to it, square
brackets enclose conjectural or uncertain readings, and double brackets are placed around passages whose place in the source is uncertain. The siglum | . . | stands for places where Jn has made insertions into the source. The result is roughly the following (lacking the above indications and not listing parts of verses rather than whole verses where they occur):

**Introduction**

**Exordium 1:6, 7**

*The Baptist's testimony* 1:19–21, 23, 26, 27, 33, 32, 34
*The conversion of the first disciples* 3:23–24; 1:35–50

**The Signs of Jesus**

1. Water changed into wine 2:1–3, 5–11
2. A nobleman's son healed 2:12a; 4:46b–47, 49–54
3. A miraculous draught of fish 21:2–8b, 10–12, 14
6. A man blind from birth healed 9:1–3a, 6–8
7. A thirty-eight-year illness healed 5:2–3, 5–9, 14

**The Death and Resurrection of Jesus**

*The cleansing of the temple and death plot* 2:14–16, 18–19; 11:47a, 53

**The anointing of Bethany 12:1–5, 7–8**

**The triumphal entry** 12:12–15

**The arrest** (18:1–5, 10–12); *Jesus in the high priest's house* (18:13, 24, 15–16a, 19–23, 16b–18, 25b–28); *The trial before Pilate* (18:28, 33, 37, 38c; 19:15, 18:39–40; 19:6, 12–14a, 1–2, 16);


**The resurrection** (20:1–3, 5, 7–11, 12, 14, 16–20)

**Peroration** 20:30–31

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If that seems to the casual reader little more than Bultmann's scissors-and-paste rearrangement of the gospel, the impression will be dispelled by a laborious examination of the Greek. That discloses a remarkable consistency of vocabulary and style in the putative source and yields a sequential narrative that is not to be found in the canonical fourth gospel, interrupted as it seems to be by many editorial insertions. The key to Fortna's reconstruction is consistency. He eliminates any interruptions and sudden turns, non-sequiturs, doublets, and passages with dense or overloaded wording.

**Fortna's Revisions: The "Predecessor" of the Fourth Gospel**

In a book produced almost two decades later, the Vassar College scholar revises his theory in light of the criticisms leveled at it and his own testing of it by the use of slightly altered criteria. This longer and more explicit treatment deserts the Greek in favor of transliteration. It divides the narrative source (SG for "signs gospel") into twenty sections and employs a twofold typographical aid: first, the hypothetical pre-Johannine source printed in boldface and then, in a reversal, the presumed redaction shown in boldface leaving the SG in ordinary type. The latter remains largely as it was in the earlier book. Taking the first chapter as an example, we find Fortna eliminating in his second book phrases and whole verses, leaving a source which opens with the "man... whose name was John" giving testimony to Jesus. He has no other role. He is God's agent through whom faith in Jesus is to arise. Jesus is not introduced by name in the SG. He is simply hailed by John as "the Lamb of God," and is identified as the Christ, Elijah, and the prophet by indirection. The climactic christological affirmation is that he is the Son of God. Two disciples of John, Andrew and another unnamed, follow Jesus. Andrew leads Simon to Jesus and Jesus gives him a new name, Cephas. Andrew or Peter, not Jesus, is the "he" who finds the townsman of the two. Philip, in v. 43b. Philip finds Nathanael and calls Jesus the one of whom Moses wrote in the law. (Fortna is unsure whether "and also the prophets" was in the source.) Nathanael hails Jesus as Rabbi, Son of God, and King of Israel.
What must be removed from ch. 1 of the gospel as we have it, after its redaction by the fourth evangelist, in order to arrive at the signs gospel? The following elements: any repetitious or overexplicit details; “the Jews;” Jesus as one unknown, even by John; geographic and time-sequence specificity; theological elaborations, e.g. Jesus as the one who “takes away the sin of the world” and the divinely revealed explanation to John of who he is on whom the dove-Spirit descends; Hebrew words translated into Greek; Nathanael’s guilelessness, which is unlike Jacob-Israel’s; Jesus’ mysterious knowledge, both questioned and explained; and the obviously Johannine “Amen, amen” and “Son of Man,” coupled with a second person plural, traditional saying addressed to Nathanael.

A careful breakdown by verses in each of the twenty segments follows both the “pre-Johannine source” (SG) and the “Johannine redaction” (4G). Concluding the segment is a more technical “Analysis” which justifies what has been declared redactional. Here, along with some tight argumentation based on grammar, style, and content, phrases proliferate such as “appears to be Johannine” or “little doubt that it stems in some form from the Passion Source.” Fortna had given himself at the outset a 7, on a scale of 10, for confidence in his own choices. He also modestly states that he should be happy if more than half of what he proposes is convincing to others.

His major conclusions are as follows: that a pre-Johannine document was employed by the fourth evangelist which presented seven or eight miracle stories as signs of Jesus’ messiahship to make clear who Jesus is and for no other purpose; that there was pre-Johannine passion material that accounted for why Jesus the messiah had to die by claiming that “these things happened to fulfill scripture”; that the fact that Jesus worked the signs of the messiah means that the new age has appeared, there being no mention of future expectation in SG; and that, although Jesus does go from Galilee to Judea in SG, there is no interest in region (as distinct from place names) as such, hence all negative reference to Ioudaioi (“Judeans” for Fortna) is added by the evangelist because of the harassment Christian Jews were experiencing from Jews more generally in his time and place.

Another Attempt To Recover the Gospel of Signs

Urban C. von Wahlde’s attempt to isolate the first version of Jn appeared a year after Fortna’s. It bears the regretful note that, as The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor appeared after von Wahlde’s book was in press, he could not discuss it in detail. But he does observe that Fortna sought only to analyze the redactional additions within the signs material, leaving the choices of The Gospel of Signs largely intact. Von Wahlde, of Chicago’s Loyola University, sets about identifying signs material by applying these criteria: vocabulary or linguistic differences; thought-pattern or ideological differences (thirteen in number); four theological features; five minor characteristics useful in identifying signs material. Applying these to chs. 1—20 of the FG (and having decided that the miracle of 21:1—11 did not stem from the same tradition as the signs material), he arrives at thirty-seven pericopes found in chs. 1—7, 9—12 and 18—20. The longest is of twenty-six verses (ch. 11); eight are of two or three verses only.

Von Wahlde’s method does not begin with an examination of the miracle and passion narratives but goes from the aporias disclosing literary seams to the variation in vocabulary (“language”) employed for the same realities. He then proceeds to elements of thought within the gospel such as hostility to Jesus (“ideology”), which occur in ways contradictory or inconsistent with each other. Differences in religious thought (“theology”) as between a first and second edition provide his third workable criterion. Taking his cue from Wellhausen, Spitta, and more modernly M.C. White, von Wahlde in probing the FG’s terms for religious authorities discovers that “Pharisees,” “chief priests” and “rulers” occur consistently within one set of pericopes and “Jews” as a hostile term in another. The latter can also mean simply people who are Jews or Jews of the southern province, Judea, but in thirty-seven of its seventy-one occurrences in the gospel it means those Jews set against Jesus.

Concentrating on the passages that feature this usage as contrasted with the other terms for Jewish authorities (“Pharisees,” “chief priests,” and “rulers,” used singly or coupled), von Wahlde then applies his other criteria to the Jews-as-hostile pericopes. In
the latter the word *erga* is always used for miracles, but in the three neutral descriptions of authorities, *sēmeia*. “Sign” always has the positive meaning of miracle except in 2:18 and 6:30 (where Jesus is challenged to perform a sign defensively as proof, both times in conjunction with “Jews,” 2:18 and 6:41). “Works” is a word for miracles in passages that employ “Jews”; but it also bears the dualistic meaning from apocalyptic writing of doing the will of God or the devil. Jesus describes his ministry as a whole as “work” (4:34; 17:4). Examples of the coupling of “signs” and neutral terms like “ruler of the Jews,” “Pharisees,” and “chief priests” occur in 3:1–2; 7:31–32; 9:16. Such passages become, for von Wahlde, the building-blocks of the first edition of the FG. Contrariwise, in 5:15 and 10:24–38 “Jews” is used in conjunction with the verb “work” and the noun “works.” This twofold correlation of signs/authorities and works/Jews is both consistent and exclusive throughout the gospel. Separate authorship of two strands of writing is concluded to be the key, not “works” on the lips of Jesus only as some had previously thought. The one exception to the works/Jews pattern is 6:26, even though “Jews” does not occur in the passage until vv. 41 and 52. “Jews” refers to the territory of Judea in 3:22 and means Judeans in 3:25 (its sole occurrence in the singular); 11:19, 31, 33, 36, 45, 54; 12:9, 11; 19:20. In these places there is mention of Judea or Jerusalem and no note of hostility attaches to it. More importantly, the occurrences in chs. 11, 12 and 19 are in conjunction with the terms Pharisees, chief priests and rulers.

**Adding Ideology and Theology to Vocabulary as Criteria for the Signs-Gospel**

Von Wahlde terms this distinct, twofold usage his primary linguistic criterion. A secondary one that “checks out” when applied to passages determined by it or identified by ideological and theological criteria as belonging to the signs source is that words that refer to Jewish religious concepts are first given in Hebrew, then in Greek (1:38; 41; 2:23; 20:16) while place names are generally given first in Greek, then in Hebrew (Aramaic): 5:2; 19:13, 17. An exception is 6:1, which is a juxtaposition rather than a translation. Of the above, only 2:23, 5:2 and 6:1 occur in passages determined by the first or linguistic criterion.

*The Earliest Version* goes on to uncover ten differences in thought or perspective between the signs material and the remainder of the gospel. These include stereotyped formulas of immediate or easy belief (“and his disciples/man/even of the rulers/the Judeans, believed in him”), emphasis on the number and greatness of the signs, emphasis on the variety of groups that come to believe in Jesus, and the hostility of the Pharisees as something that increases slowly and is marked by unsuccessful action (7:32) and uncertainty (12:19), then a final, decisive move (18:3). There is a division of opinion regarding Jesus in the signs material. In it, too, narrative predominates, punctuated by brief exchanges, but there are no extended discourses. Theologically, belief is based on the performance of signs in this material and it is presented as following easily upon the miracle, even though not all capitate in faith (see the holding back of some “authorities,” the probable “they” of 12:37, while other Sanhedrin members believe (v. 42a). This first or “Jewish-authorities” edition presents belief in Jesus within the categories of a traditional christology such as “from God” (3:2; 9:33), “a prophet” (4:19), “the prophet” (6:14), “messiah” (1:41; 4:25). In the early edition, too, the supernatural knowledge of Jesus functions to bring about belief, as in the cases of Nathanael (1:47–49) and the Samaritan woman (4:16–19, 39). Jesus possesses such knowledge in the second edition but it functions differently: to show his sovereign superiority to all things human (thus, 2:24–25; 6:15, 64; 18:4–9).

If all the usages in the above paragraph characterize the earliest version of the FG, which employs the terms “Pharisees,” “chief priests” and “rulers” for the Jewish authorities, the second edition marked by “Jews” in a hostile sense has these features: ethnic Jews fear “the Jews” (7:13; 9:22; 20:19); the “works” that Jesus performs, which he himself has to draw attention to, serve as testimony but have little (5:36) or no (10:32) effect; Jesus’ opponents, “the Jews,” are bitterly hostile to him from the start, there is no sense of building climax (2:18–22; 5:10–20), even seeking to stone (8:59; 10:31) or to kill him (5:18; 7:1; 11:8); “the Jews” are never divided over Jesus (see 9:18–23) nor are the people described as
being divided over him; dialogue and discourse material (2:18–22, 5:10–47; 6:30–59; 7:14–19; 33–36; 8:13–29; 48–59; 10:22–39) largely overtakes narrative; Jesus “works” become but one of four witnesses to him; a high christology that identifies Jesus with God (5:18; 8:58; 10:33) replaces the traditional messianic titles.

Von Wahlde concludes that, despite the limitations of his enterprise, there is much that can be known of the structure and theology of the signs material. Central to it are the number and power of Jesus’ signs, which increase in magnitude (going from the earliest healings to that of the man born blind and the raising of Lazarus). The people’s belief and the hostility of the authorities grow commensurately. Although christologically God is spoken of as being with Jesus, who is both a prophet and messiah, Jesus performs all the signs by his own authority. The clearest background for the Johannine signs is that of the description in Exodus and Numbers of the signs given to Moses, as the studies of Teeple (1957), Glasson (1963) and Meeks (1967) had already shown. But Moses-typology is not paramount in the signs source. Rather, Jesus is mainly depicted there as the expected one of Israel, its messiah (1:42; 4:25, 29), king (1:49), and Son of God (ibid.). As messiah, “no one will know where he comes from” (7:27), yet it cannot be conceived that Jesus has performed fewer signs than the messiah will at his coming (v. 31). Christ or prophet, the signs amply sustain his title to being both. The gospel’s christology, judging from what remains to us, focuses almost exclusively on the importance of the miraculous.

From Neutrality to Hostility:
A New Christology in the Second Edition of the SG

There is no polemic against John in the signs source. He is shown simply as one who testified to Jesus, being neither the Christ, Elijah nor the prophet. Unlike Jesus, he “did no sign” (10:41). The signs gospel is Jewish and traditional, written for Jews against a backdrop of their standard view of Moses. It relates details of Jesus’ life that we know from no other source, including the affinity of his career with the Baptist movement. It is a document that shows familiarity with numerous locales in Palestine, religious customs, and feasts (Sukkoth, 7:2 and Hanukkah, 10:22, besides Pesah). We cannot accurately construct from it the number of Jesus’ trips to Judea but it catalogues his extensive activity there, chiefly in Jerusalem. The signs gospel was proclamation rather than apologetic. It originated in perhaps 70–80 C.E. in “association with the southern part of Palestine.” The same community from which it came probably produced the second edition. Of its author nothing can be known from within the reconstructed text.

The second stage of the community’s history lets us know about a bitter struggle over exclusion of the Jesus-believing Jews from the synagogue. Von Wahlde assigns 9:18–23, which contains apsosynagōgos, a word of uncertain precision (v. 22), to the middle of the three editions and supposes that it has been added to 12:42 by redaction. This second edition has assigned a symbolism to Jesus’ signs different from the reason for their presence in the signs gospel (see 6:26–58, the synagogue instruction on bread at Capernaum; 9:35–41, a spiritual meaning given to blindness and sight; 11:25b–26, a similar interpretation of Lazarus’ resurrection and new life). The redacted version of the first edition speaks of belief as if it has a deeper foundation than simply seeing signs. There are other “witnesses” (a term used in this second edition), but one cannot respond to any of them with belief unless one possesses the Spirit. The Nicodemus episode (3:3–21 added in the second edition to 2:23, 3:1–2 of the signs gospel) makes this clearest of all. Jesus is here calling for a new form of existence. The same is true of the addition of 4:10–15, 20–24, 31–38, 40–42 in the story of the Samaritan woman. Of ch. 7, only 25–27, 31–32, 40–52 are from the signs gospel; the remainder is probably from the second edition but may come from the third, to which von Wahlde assigns the discussion of Jesus’ “whence” and “whither”: earthly origin/heavenly origin; the diaspora/his return to the Father.

In the first edition the disciples are presented as responding properly to each of the four witnesses of Jesus: to John (1:35–49); to the sign at Cana (2:1–11); to the scriptures (2:13–17, 22); to the word of Jesus (2:18–22). They then largely disappear from the narrative until the last supper. The theology of the second edition, which sees the possession of the Spirit as the basis for all believing response to Jesus, conceives the giving of the Spirit, nonetheless,
as taking place only after Jesus is glorified (7:37–39; 20:22). The christology of the second edition probably reaches its peak in 10:22–39. It is there that in response to the query whether he is the Messiah he speaks of God as “my Father” and claims to be “God’s Son,” saying “I and the Father are one” and “the Father is in me and I in him.” There, too, he is challenged with “making himself equal to God.”

The recovered “earliest version” of the book’s title can be read through in sequence in Chapter 3, going from one pericope to the next. Of the thirty-seven in all, eight are in the passion narrative. The one risen-life pericope is the appearance to Mary Magdalene. Setting the various terms for Jewish authorities in boldface (“Jews” only in the meaning “Judeans”) identifies the primary criterion of selection. Unlike some other source-sleuths, von Wahlde unhesitatingly assigns connective phrases of time and place to his source. He does not claim that the portions of the signs gospel that have survived to the canonical John are its complete form. Neither does he presume to say what editing it may have undergone, only the basic change it did not undergo as it proceeded to a second and a third edition (the Jn that we have). The attentive reader will naturally be on guard to find exceptions that fall outside his generalizations and will examine with care his reasons for assigning passion and risen-life narratives to the signs source. He constantly refers to his differences from Bultmann, Brown, Fortna, Boismard-Lamouille and others who track the FG’s sources or redactional stages so that judgments can be made on their respective arguments. If he is right, even in fair measure, then much has been resolved about puzzling sequences, abrupt changes in style and content, and above all the distressing hostility to “the Jews” in the FG. For, like Brown and Fortna, von Wahlde ascribes its bitter tone to an editing that came after the grave harassment and even ejection of the Jesus-believing Jews from ordinary Jewish life—somewhere in Palestine, he would say.

The Contributions of Smith, Martyn and Lindars

D. Moody Smith is, in a sense, the dean of U.S. Johannine specialists, as much through the dissertations he has directed and the teaching careers he has launched as through his articles and scholarly lectures. He published a collection of his writings produced between 1961 and 1981, for which he wrote an introductory essay, “Johannine Christianity.”\textsuperscript{19} After reviewing the results of various modes of analysis of the FG like the redaction-critical,\textsuperscript{20} he identifies the greater part of the discourse or sayings material as forming the basis for what is truly Johannine. By this he means the work of the evangelist who preceded the final redactor. For Smith \textit{I} Jn has the same “distinctively Johannine ring.” It is but a short step from the Paraclete passages of 14:25–26 and 16:12–15 “to the conjecture that the words of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, so obviously spoken from the standpoint of a spirit-inspired post-resurrection community (cf. John 7:39; 20:22), are to be regarded as the fulfillment of the promise of the Paraclete rather than the words of the historical Jesus.”\textsuperscript{21}

Smith notes his agreement in principle with the identification of an independent Johannine narrative tradition, if not Fortna’s gospel of signs, and points to mounting evidence for the existence of a Johannine discourse tradition as well.\textsuperscript{22} He remains in an older mold of Jn scholarship with his statement that the miracle tradition may embody a \textit{theios aner}\textsuperscript{23} christology from a pre-gospel collection that may be called an aretalogy. The same can be said of his judgment that “it . . . does not seem possible to explain the entire history of the Johannine tradition against such a background [Judaism and the outlook of Christian Jews].”\textsuperscript{24} Yet twenty years before he had reported “a loose, but real, consensus” on the fundamentally semitic and even Jewish character of the Johannine tradition and preaching.\textsuperscript{25} Smith is at ease distinguishing between a cycle of miracle stories existing independently from a passion narrative, the former probably originating among those who had been disciples of the Baptist and directed to this sect to get them to change allegiance, the latter to convince Jews generally that Jesus was the Messiah, as a signs-source alone would not have succeeded in doing.\textsuperscript{26}

Raymond E. Brown refers to a “strong current movement rejecting a proposed pre-Johannine Signs-source gospel”\textsuperscript{27} in reviewing a recent dissertation from the University of Basel.\textsuperscript{28} The author, W.J. Bittner, examines the term \textit{sēmeion} at length, prompted by its non-use in the synoptic tradition. He attributes Jn’s peculiar posi-
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teuse use of it, not to that gospel's drawing on a prophet-like-Moses theme, but on the strongly Davidic Isaiah 11. This Isaiian background of the usage of Jn, who employs signs positively to elicit faith in Jesus as Christ and Son of God, is Bittner's main thesis.

J. Louis Martyn wrote a very influential book in the period just before our starting date of 1970 but revised it in a second edition well into that decade. In it he concluded that Jn 9 (and 5 and 7 like it) was a two-level drama constructed by the evangelist in which the man born blind was a Jew of Jerusalem who was also made to represent those Jewish members of the separated church in an unidentified diaspora city. Its messianic faith in Jesus, as a result of his miracles, led to their ejection from the synagogue. Martyn understands this as a formal excommunication resulting from the "awesome [twelfth] Benediction" of the Shemone Esre (Eighteen) which declared minim—a word he translates "heretics"—to be accursed. In his reconstruction, the academy at Tavneh under Gamaliel II had inserted that curse sometime around 85 and it was being used to catch believers in Jesus as messiah. Since no previous Jewish writing had said that the messiah would be a wonder-worker, Jesus could have been more than a magician, a deceiver, or so the emerging rabbinate thought. He was accused of leading people astray (Jn 7:12, 47), a charge that Martyn takes to mean entice (yasath) them to believe in more than one God. A passage from the Mishnah of ca. 180 (Sanhedrin 7, 10–11) lumps together enticing to idolatry with the promise of wonders, leading astray (see Deut 13:2–3, 6), and practicing sorcery or magic, as deeds deserving death. The accusation on such charges was being made against believers in Jesus as the result of a rabbinic decree that went out to diaspora synagogues as early as the writing of Jn. A baraita (= "outside" the Mishnah) of the period 200–400, describing the hanging and stoning of Yeshu on the eve of the Passover on the above three charges, is also presented as evidence (Sanhedrin 43a). The Johannine community, knowing that the performance of signs was no part of messianic expectation, had apparently been casting Jesus in the mold of the prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15) who gave bread from the heavens. It did not save them, however, from harassment unto death for claiming they knew the messiah to be a crucified wonder-wonder, for the terms were wrong.

In a paper presented in 1975 Martyn continued to be convinced that the curse on a Jew who had a soft policy on God's oneness (a min) corresponded to that person's becoming or being declared apoyynagoygos (Jn 9:22; 12:42; 16:2). This "highly probable correspondence" becomes within the same paragraph a "Festpunkt" (fixed or basing point). Following from it, the argument is presented that underlying Jn 1:35–40 is a homily directed to Jews of the kind meant by Paul when he spoke of a "gospel of the circumcision" (Gal 2:7). Someone, probably the evangelist John, had edited it awkwardly to make Jesus take the initiative in calling Philip (v. 43) as he does with the apostles in the other synoptics. The early homilist, however, had portrayed men who came (vv. 39, 46, 47) to Jesus and found (vv. 41, 45) him to be the messiah. In the same way, the preacher hoped that many hearers would come and find Jesus.

The early period represented by this pericope before its editing was marked by much success. Jews were preaching Jesus to Jews in a synagogue framework and many came to believe in him (see 2:11; 4:53; 6:14). The group of believers "experienced no social dislocation and felt relatively little alienation from their heritage." The middle period followed upon excommunication from the synagogue and some martyrdoms, making the group into a separate community. The Logos hymn is probably to be assigned to this period. As Martyn paraphrases the situation, "The Messiah came to his own world, and his own people did not receive him." The late period witnessed further homilies but also the climactic writing of the full Johannine gospel in its first and second editions. In this matter Martyn concurs with his Union Theological Seminary colleague Brown in his five-stage analysis. The authorities had evidently laid down the dictum in the middle period, Jesus or Moses, and believers in Jesus had opted for him as their (late period, Greek-designated) "Christ." The "Jewish Christians" have thus come into existence; "Christian Jews" remain undeclared, in the synagogues. The "other sheep not of this fold" are the latter group, who are "of the world" (see 8:11ff., 12:42).

Barnabas Lindars authored a commentary on Jn in the New Century Bible, at the conclusion of which he delivered four lectures, published earlier, containing some of the ideas expressed
in it. These ideas on Johannine traditions he continued to hold in his Leuven lecture at the same conference as Martyn’s above. In agreement with Brown (on pp. XXXIV–LI), as Lindars puts it, he assumes that “the gospel is based on the evangelist’s own sermons, which he has united to form the complete book.” Despite the temporal aorists, the thematic breaks, and the recurring pattern of signs (each of them constituting an epiphany of the divine man)—all of which Lindars acknowledges—there is a prima facie case for supposing that Jn “began life as separate homilies, which the evangelist subsequently used as the basis for a continuous Gospel. The discourse, then, is not a report of an actual debate... It is rather a sermon addressed to the Christians in order to deepen and strengthen their faith in a situation where Jewish objections to Christianity [sic] are a matter of vital concern.”

Oscar Cullmann’s *The Johannine Circle* suggests the following process of composition; the author, a strong personality, called on common traditions and others special to him, not excluding personal reminiscences, producing the main lines of the work as we have it now. A circle of redactors or a single one revised or completed the whole work after his death, most likely in Syria or Transjordania. We shall be returning to this book below (pp. 45f.) to see what Cullmann thinks about Samaritans in the Jn community.

A “Priority” That Does Not Mean First To Be Composed

Before leaving the question of sources of the FG a report must be filed on that work of the last decade that denied most vehemently that John, son of Zebedee (who wrote Jn), drew on any sources. It is Bishop John A.T. Robinson’s *The Priority of John*, in effect a detailed discussion of the entire gospel. The book does not hold as its main thesis what the title might suggest, namely that Jn was composed in toto before the other three. Robinson’s considerably more nuanced position is that his title “does not necessarily mean the temporal priority of John” but the case for a “procedural” priority—a complete openness to such temporal priority, to be sure, “though I should be inclined to think that the writing that went into the Fourth Gospel may well have begun earlier and gone on later than in the case of the others.” That sentence is the tip-off to the amount of openness the bishop is willing to allow. He does not wish to deal with one formal interdependence among the four gospels, i.e. the literary. That, he rightly describes as a problem that no longer looms large in scholarly perspective. But the interrelatedness of the four gospels is something he thinks will not go away.

He opts for the position that Jn was “a primary source in whose light they too [the synoptics] can be viewed.” This is put forward as a hypothesis, a means of exploring what happens if one reverses the prevailing assumption that Jn is not a primary source. As to source criticism of the fourth gospel, Robinson has a poor opinion of it. He seems happy to quote an opinion of Kysar on the contents of the signs source/gospel as proposed by Teeple, Fortna (*TGOS*), Nicol, Schnackenburg and Jürgen Becker, that “source criticism is somewhat in shambles.” No matter that Kysar had limited his observation to method in source criticism. For Robinson the outcome is in no better condition than the method employed.

He engages in a book-length polemic against the idea that the FG “is so remote in time from the situation it describes that it could not credibly in any sense be a first Gospel.” The bishop sees no reason to depart in this, the last book of his life, from his earlier proposed chronology of the composition of Jn spelled out in *Redating the New Testament*. There he had argued for the following rough stages:

| 30–50 | Shaping of the Gospel material in dialogue with Palestinian Judaism |
| 50–55 | Preaching in the Ephesus area and the first edition of the Gospel |
| 60–65 | The Epistles, responding to the challenges of false teachers |
| 65+  | Second edition of the Gospel with Prologue and Epilogue |

**Historical Happenings, Not Documents, As Jn’s Source**

It seems quite unproven to Robinson that John depended on sources. The FG for him gives no indication of standing in an exter-
nal and second-hand relation to other elements of a tradition that its author took over, making use of it and working on it. At the heart of his argumentation is the question of historicity. He grants that this is independent of the matter of establishing sources, but it is “certainly not irrelevant to the question of whether John goes back to source rather than sources.” The interrelation of tradition and event, however complex it may be, is not so simple as to say that the question of that relation can only be raised after the literary task of separating redaction from tradition is complete. “The presumption is surely justified that an underlying event has at some point controlled the reports rather than simply the reports each other.”

Thus, the historicity of Nicodemus and of Martha and Mary of Bethany is much better accounted for by the fact that there were such persons to whom such things happened—divergent descriptions being a common event—than that (in the latter case) John and Luke were using each other or some underlying source. Robinson maintains in the same discussion that there are “basically three independent traditions of the trial and death of Jesus, the Markan, the Lukan and the Johannine, and that each goes back, directly or indirectly to source.” “Source” is what happened in history retained in different traditional tellings, as is the case with reports on events in life generally. History never quite puts us in touch with the facts, he makes clear, but with somebody’s (or somebody else’s) version of the facts (in a quotation from A.H.N. Green-Armytage of 1952). If this seems a cavalier dismissal of the immensely complex problem of gospel composition, Robinson challenges the reader to cope with his forest of arguments in favor of gospel events’ having happened as described. The Johannine version is presented as being at least as trustworthy historically as any other, and without demonstrable dependence on a synoptic account.

The gospel according to John is a primary source. That is Robinson’s first, last and foremost contention. It is “at any rate a first written statement of the gospel, of primal rather than secondary significance.” He thinks “in fact that all the gospels were coming into being over a period more or less simultaneously, and at different stages their traditions and their redaction could well show signs of mutual influence—as well as, of course, among the Synoptists, of common written sources.” This is a way of acknowledging the validity of the great body of gospel scholarship with which Robinson is familiar while holding fast to the priority of John. The latter means “begin[ning] with what John has to tell us on its own merits and ask[ing] how the others fit, historically and theologically, into that, are illumined by it, and in turn illumine it.” The best of all scholarly worlds is not repudiated by such a claim, even as the claimant holds fast to his basic conviction: no sources behind John except what happened, as John successively interpreted these happenings.

In an even-handed estimate of Robinson’s performance—something he did not always receive from his critics in life—D. Moody Smith points out correctly that he is more at pains to make the case for Jn’s independence and historicity than its priority. In the matter of that second concern, many of his historical-critical judgments are deemed “plausible or possible (e.g., [his] affirmation of John’s two-year ministry and passion chronology against the Synoptics). Few, if any, are fantastic.” Yet Smith underscores that Robinson is always the controversialist and advocate, never the neutral arbiter of the data.

One needs to be clear before tackling this large and somewhat undisciplined book if one wants to follow the author in his determination that everything in Jn can be shown to go back to source (meaning Jesus) rather than to intermediate traditional sources. Bishop Robinson had prepared a draft of eight chapters for the Bampton Lectures series, which C.F.D. Moule then delivered as Robinson was dying. A sterner hand by the editor, J.F. Coakley, would have made it a better book, but he may have thought he had no such mandate with regard to the final testament of this champion of the British tradition in biblical scholarship.

“Circle” or “School”? Cullmann and Culpepper

The real importance of Cullmann’s The Johannine Circle cited above probably lies in its contention that ch. 4 tells us much about the outreach of Hellenistic missionaries to Samaria. The exchange by Jacob’s well was “an event in the life of Jesus and at the same time [an indication of] its extension in the work performed by the exalted Christ in his church.” Luke in Acts 8 reports on a mission...
to the town of Samaria led by the Greek-speaking Jew Philip (6:5) which, despite the Simon incident, was marked by considerable success (see 8:8, 25). Cullmann thinks that the evangelization of Samaria had to transcend the thorny question of the correct site for worship, as its sanctuary on Mount Gerizim might still have been in use. By putting the prophecy of a future mission to Samaria on Jesus’ lips in a conversation with a Samaritan woman, Jn may be legitimizing it in circles where it is disputed (“Do not go into the cities of Samaria,” Mt 10:5). Jesus planted the seed. (“They [the people of Sychar] left the town and came to him,” 4:30.) The true harvest would be gathered only after his death. In Cullmann’s reconstruction, vv. 37b–38 say:

“One sows, another reaps.”

I sent you to reap
what you had not worked for.
Others [than Jesus, viz., the Hellenists of Ac 6—8] have done the labor,
and you [Peter and John, for the Jerusalem church, Ac 8:14] have come into their gain.

Cullmann says he was the first to call attention to the link between the Hellenists of Acts—the Stephen party—and Jn. His theory is that Jn is crediting Greek-speaking ethnic Jews of a heterodox bent (his term) as the true missionaries of Samaria, not the Jerusalem apostles, which is the tendency of Acts.

Doctoral dissertations can enshrine important research, usually on a topic that has not previously been isolated or examined with such care. Alan Culpepper working under Moody Smith at Duke University decided that the scholarly world had been using the term “the school of John” without precision ever since Renan first coined it a century and a quarter ago, and he wondered if the usage was valid. He examined nine circles of study from the ancient world to which the term “school” has been applied or, by the criteria that emerged, can be. Five represent pagan learning and four Jewish: the Pythagorean school, the Academy (Plato), the Lyceum (Aristotle), the Garden (Epicurus), the Stoa (Zeno), the school at Qumrân (the righteous teacher), the house of Hillel, Philo’s school (a deduction), and the school of Jesus. Most of the schools examined shared nine characteristics. Applied to the gospel and the epistles of John, but without taking Revelation into account or adopting a firm stand on authorship, Culpepper concluded it was right to speak of a Johannine “school” on the model of the others.

Its characteristics were the following. (1) It was a “fellowship” of “disciples” (“brothers,” “friends”), first of Jesus, then students taught about Jesus by the “beloved disciple.” (2) This BD led and guided the Johannine community, going back to its beginnings. (3) The founder’s traditions and teachings were reckoned the true interpretations of the words and deeds of Jesus and the meaning of the scriptures; as collected by the evangelist they could be called a “writing.” (4) Members of the community were disciples or students of the founder, the BD (see “we,” 21:24). (5) Teaching, learning, studying (the scriptures), and writing were common activities in the community, which (6) observed a communal meal, and had (7) rules or practices regulating admission and retention of membership. (8) The community kept some distance from society (“the world”) in a progressive withdrawal (1 Jn 2:19; and see Jn 15:18; 16:2; 17:9). (9) It also developed organizational means of ensuring its perpetuity, from the death of the BD onward. Culpepper’s most arguable conclusion is that the BD, who was not the evangelist, as he assumes 19:34b–35 establishes, has by analogy the same relation to Jesus that Jesus had to the Father (3:35; 15:9). More than this, he fulfilled the role in the community that the gospel’s Paraclete-sayings predict the Paraclete would. “Just as Jesus had been the first Paraclete for the original group of disciples, so the BD had been the first Paraclete for the Johannine community. . . . After the BD died, it was necessary to affirm that the BD was not . . . the only Paraclete, but that the Paraclete was Spirit (14:26) and that he would remain always (14:17).” The evangelist thus combined, apparently for the first time, the concepts of Paraclete and Spirit, reassuring the community that although their Paraclete, the BD, had died, the work of the Paraclete would continue.

The last word in this chapter should go to Martin Hengel, if only because his *The Johannine Question* gives the impression that it is the last word. What is the Johannine question? It is: Who wrote the gospel and the letters, where, and why? The answer? John the elder, who was the head of a school in Asia Minor between 60/70 and 100/110. He had gone there from Palestine to flee the Jewish War, perhaps came from a family of priestly aristocrats, was in contact with Jesus as his disciple as a young man, and lived to a great age. He could not have been John the son of Zebedee who was the second in the earliest community after Peter, but he did model himself after that “disciple whom Jesus loved” and later fused the image of that John with his own. “How far the specific ‘beloved disciple’ passages go back wholly to him and how far they are partially shaped by the redactional work of the editor(s) is hard to decide.” There was, in any case, an idealization of the son of Zebedee by John the elder, whose pupils impressed on the enigmatic figure of the BD their teacher.

The school at Ephesus founded by this impressive “disciple of the Lord” (so Papias) could have produced the Apocalypse after the Neronian persecution and reworked it early in the reign of Trajan. The gospel grew slowly. Because it was directed against the Petrine-synoptic tradition it was published toward the end of the elder’s life, with ch. 17 added later and the prologue last. We cannot tell its stages or the author’s literary sources, but the whole is a literary unit (Rueckstuhl and Schweizer are right against Bultmann, Richter and Fortna). The alterations and corrections were constant and his pupils left his inconsistencies in place, “perhaps . . . even . . . as a provocation!” In part this was because the ongoing teaching was oral and the gospel was but a testamentary by-product left late in life. Some of the elder’s former pupils created a crisis by finding the christology of the school untenable in light of the divine immutability and impassibility. Their secession elicited the three letters and such portions of the gospel as the prologue, chs. 6 and 10, and passages in the farewell discourses.

The scholarship reflected in Hengel’s eighty-five pages of notes is a treasure trove, whatever one may think of the conclusions he comes to. Especially important in his marshaling of the second century evidence on Johannine authorship and on the non-espousal of Jn by any gnostic group except the Valentinian Christians. The problematical “synod of Jamnia” and the even more doubtful expulsion of Christians from the synagogue via the Eighteen Benedictions is well dealt with in a discussion of Jewish persecution of Christians, especially in Asia Minor.