

THE JOHANNINE COMMUNITY, THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS, AND THE  
TRADITIONS BEHIND JOHN'S RESURRECTION NARRATIVE

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Ben Lowe, Department of History, and has been approved by all members of the supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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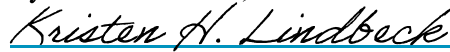
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## ABSTRACT

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What sources informed the resurrection narrative of Jesus in the Gospel of John?

Some scholars argue that the author of John used the Synoptic Gospels along with oral traditions as sources, but others maintain that John used only independent traditions to write his resurrection story. This paper argues that John did not use the Synoptics for this narrative because the reconstructed history of the Johannine community provides an adequate basis for postulating independent traditions which succeed at explaining both the similarities and differences between John and the Synoptics. While it does not claim to prove that the author was unaware of the Synoptics, it maintains that the evidence for the use of those Gospels in addition to tradition is too weak, whereas independent traditions alone can account for the material.

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# INTRODUCTION: JOHN'S RESURRECTION STORY AND THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

## **Introducing the Research Question**

A classic issue in New Testament studies is the Johannine-Synoptic problem. The problem poses the following question: did the Gospel of John use the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, or Luke as sources? In 1990, Dwight Moody Smith aptly summarized the state of the question: "The relationship of John to the Synoptic Gospels is yet to be solved."<sup>1</sup> Those words apply just as well to the current situation. Hundreds of scholars in Germany, England, France, the United States, and elsewhere have participated in this ongoing search for John's original sources, differing widely in their methods and conclusions. While the mountains of secondary literature can seem daunting, it also presents a compelling puzzle to those interested in the origins of the Gospel stories.<sup>2</sup>

The whole Johannine-Synoptic problem is too large to answer in this current project, so this paper proposes to answer the question for one small slice of the Johannine pie: the resurrection narrative in chapters 20-21. This narrative contains John's account of Jesus' resurrection and his appearances to the disciples. These stories have both

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<sup>1</sup>Peder Borgen, "John and the Synoptics," in *The Interrelations of the Gospels*, ed. David L. Dungan (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 408.

<sup>2</sup>For a thorough survey of the proposed solutions throughout the 1900s, see Dwight Moody Smith, *John among the Gospels: The Relationship in Twentieth-Century Research* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992).

similarities and differences when compared to the Synoptic accounts of the resurrection. The project will try to determine where John acquired these stories of the risen Jesus. Did he use the Synoptic Gospels along with oral tradition? Or did he draw exclusively from oral tradition? What part did traditions within the Johannine community play in supplying the author with stories? To answer these questions, this thesis will draw on diverse methods and combine them with a study of the community behind John's Gospel to determine whether the author used non-Synoptic traditions alone or a mixture of the Synoptics and independent stories.

### **Overview of the Primary Sources**

The four accounts that this project will analyze are the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Only these four will be used because scholars agree that they are the earliest accounts of the empty tomb and resurrection stories. Whereas Paul's letters are earlier than the Gospels and contain references to Jesus' burial, resurrection, and appearances to his followers, those references are not detailed enough to have served as sources for John or the Synoptics.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, although some of the non-canonical Gospels may have early material in them, such as the *Gospel of Peter*, most experts assign dates of composition to them that are later than the canonical Gospels, so they will not be used as possible sources from which John could have drawn stories about the risen Jesus.<sup>4</sup> Also, the scope of inquiry here is restricted to John's potential use of the

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<sup>3</sup>Paul's list of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances appears in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Foster, *The Gospel of Peter: Introduction, Critical Edition and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 169-70; for the minority position of an early date, see John Dominic Crossan, *The Cross that Spoke: The Origins of the Passion Narrative* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008).

Synoptics rather than Synoptic use of John because scholars almost always date the Synoptics between the late 60s and 80s C.E. and date John in the 90s C.E.<sup>5</sup> Thus, John has three potential written sources that survive, namely, the Synoptic Gospels; any other written sources that the author used would have to be reconstructed from the evidence that survives in the current form of the Gospel.<sup>6</sup>

John and the Synoptics share some elements, such as their purpose to explain the life and significance of Jesus; thus, it is unsurprising that each one includes a resurrection story at the end, beginning with the discovery of the empty tomb and multiple appearances to disciples in different contexts, as well as narrated or implied ascensions to heaven. Those common elements alone urge scholars to compare the texts and attempt to discover their interrelationships. The table below shows all the stories in the resurrection narratives in each of the four canonical Gospels.

Table 1: Scenes in the Gospel Resurrection Narratives

Scene	Matthew 28	Mark 16	Luke 24	John 20-21
Scene 1	Women Approach Tomb, Angel Rolls Away Stone, and Jesus Appears	Women Approach Tomb, See a Young Man, Flee, and Tell No One	Women Approach Tomb, See Angels, Tell Disciples, and Peter Runs to	Mary Magdalene Approaches Tomb, Tells Peter and Beloved

<sup>5</sup>For the most common critical dates of composition of the four Gospels, see *The Gospels*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 27-28, 85, 137, and 187 for Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John respectively; for arguments for an earlier date, see D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 49.

<sup>6</sup>For attempts to reconstruct John's written sources, see Rudolf K. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Oxford: Blackwell: 1971); see also Robert T. Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988).

	to Women		Tomb	Disciple, and They Inspect Tomb
Scene 2	Guards Report Resurrection to Chief Priests	Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene	Jesus Appears to Two on Road to Emmaus	Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene near Tomb
Scene 3	Jesus Appears to Disciples in Galilee and Ascends	Jesus Appears to Two Walking in the Country	Jesus Appears to Disciples in House and Ascends	Jesus Appears to Disciples in House without Thomas
Scene 4	N/A	Jesus Appears to Eleven at Table and Ascends	N/A	Jesus Appears to Disciples in House with Thomas
Scene 5	N/A	N/A	N/A	Jesus Appears to Disciples by Sea of Galilee

Shaded scenes in this table are generally considered to be later additions to the original Gospels. Almost all scholars accept the position that all verses after Mark 16:8 are later additions because the earliest manuscripts do not include them. The earliest manuscripts conclude Mark's Gospel at the point in which the women flee the site of the tomb, but later manuscripts have either a short ending or a longer ending. Some experts believe Mark intended the readers to think that the women eventually do tell the disciples about the empty tomb. Others claim that Mark has a lost longer ending. In either case, the shorter ending and the longer ending in modern translations were added by later scribes or editors.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>For the shorter and longer endings of Mark, see the commentary notes in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, 5th ed., ed. Michael Coogan. Oxford:

Similarly, most experts agree that chapter 21 was added either by the Evangelist himself or by a later redactor within the same community as the Evangelist. A few experts, however, believe that John 21 was original because all existing copies have it. Regardless, from the table above, it is apparent that there are both similar scenes and different scenes in these Gospels. But even the scenes in common have differences: they are not worded the same way, the chronologies of the scenes vary, and the settings change within the overall story of each Gospel. And as the following chapters will explain, the wording, chronologies, and settings within each scene itself are also dissimilar in each Gospel, with John having the most changes. The chapters in this project will follow John's chronology of scenes when examining his resurrection narrative for possible sources.<sup>8</sup>

### **Literature Review and Methodological Survey**

While the entire Johannine-Synoptic problem is not the focus here, it is helpful to make a few remarks about the major scholarly solutions to this question in recent decades. The possible answers to the problem include the following: first, John knew and depended on one or more of the Synoptics; second, John knew about one or more of Synoptics but did not depend on any of them; and third, John did not know any of the

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Oxford University Press, 2018, 1862-63; see also Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 967-69.

<sup>8</sup>For the majority view on John 21 as a later edition, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XI)* 1077-80; see also Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 665-68; also Chris Keith "The Competitive Textualizations of the Jesus Tradition in John 20:30-31 and 21:24-25," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 78 (2016): 322.

Synoptics and drew only from other sources.<sup>9</sup> Historical critics have proposed almost every imaginable variation of these answers. Because of the diverse scholarly opinions, it is easy to oversimplify the history of the debate, but one can roughly summarize it as follows: the majority view from the days of the early Church until the early 1900s was that John at least knew and used (or even responded to) the Synoptic Gospels in some manner.<sup>10</sup> Then, as form criticism and the study of oral tradition developed, critics began to say that John was independent of the Synoptics and perhaps did not even know about them; this view claimed a majority for several decades until the late-twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> Later in the century, however, some methodological changes brought new life to the dependence theory, although experts generally have continued to prefer Johannine independence.<sup>12</sup>

Scholars supporting the theory of Synoptic dependence drew their conclusions using multiple criteria. One reliable criterion is verbal agreement between one Gospel and another; in other words, if John and a Synoptic Gospel have exact wording in enough

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<sup>9</sup>James D. Dvorak, "The Relationship between John and the Synoptic Gospels," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (1998): 201-13.

<sup>10</sup>For the majority view before the early 1900s, see Smith, *John among the Gospels* 1-12.

<sup>11</sup>For the majority view in the late 1970s, see D. A. Carson, "Current Source Criticism of the Fourth Gospel: Some Methodological Questions," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97 (1978), 411-29; for the majority view in the 1980s and 1990s, see Borgen, 408-37.

<sup>12</sup>Smith, xi; for a small revival of dependence hypotheses, see Frans Neirynck, "John and the Synoptics: Response to P. Borgen," in *The Interrelations of the Gospels*, ed. David L. Dungan (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 438-50.

places, then it would suggest that John used it.<sup>13</sup> Another criterion is chronological agreement, which states that if John and a Synoptic Gospel agree enough on their sequences of events, then it would suggest dependence.<sup>14</sup> An additional piece of evidence would be John's preservation of Synoptic redaction; this criterion states that if John includes a detail that was clearly changed by one Synoptic author's use of another Synoptic Gospel, then John is probably dependent on the Gospel that performed the redaction, such as Matthew or Luke. Some scholars have tried to find Markan redaction preserved in John by looking for distinct Markan motifs in John. This is a flawed method, however, because Mark's sources have not been preserved, so there is no sure way to tell if a motif is from Mark or one of Mark's sources. Finally, there is the assumption of Synoptic details, which means that if John assumes enough material that the reader would not know without reading the Synoptics, then John is likely dependent on them.<sup>15</sup>

Even so, when applying these criteria, it is important to keep in mind that many of them could apply just as easily to traditions that John received; in other words, John could have encountered an independent written or oral source that had a Synoptic-like detail in it and incorporated it into his Gospel, which would cause it to pass some of these

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<sup>13</sup>Smith, *John among the Gospels*, 177-9; for the use of verbal agreements as a criterion of dependence, see C. K. Barrett, "John and the Synoptic Gospels," *The Expository Times* 85 (1974): 228-33.

<sup>14</sup>For an example of chronological agreements, see Dvorak, "The Relationship between John and the Synoptic Gospels," 203; see also Smith, *John among the Gospels*, 177-79.

<sup>15</sup>For an example of these redaction-critical methods, see Norman Perrin and D. C. Duling, *The New Testament: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 332-37; see also Dvorak, "The Relationship between John and the Synoptic Gospels," 202-3.

criteria. The way to avoid this is to ensure that no single criterion is considered informative without sufficient confirmation of other criteria or the same criteria in multiple instances in John's Gospel.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, experts supporting Johannine independence find these criteria insufficient for justifying the conclusion that John used the Synoptics; their argument consists of using alternative criteria that, in their view, are stronger than the four mentioned above. The most important method these scholars advocate is to find differences between John and the Synoptics that can only be explained by John's use of other sources.<sup>17</sup> If John's Gospel knowingly contradicts a detail in a Synoptic Gospel for no good reason, then what are the chances that he used it as a source? In these cases, it is easier to assign these passages to oral traditions instead of the Synoptics. Most advocates of independence have espoused this method in one form or another.<sup>18</sup>

Regarding the Johannine resurrection narratives particularly, a larger majority agrees that John did not use the Synoptics. They come to this conclusion because the four criteria of dependence fail to yield consistent results, whereas the criterion of independence succeeds quite well. In the 1930s, Percival Gardner-Smith was one of the first to address the resurrection narratives in detail as products of oral tradition. As with the rest of his analysis, his conclusion was that common oral tradition was a better

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<sup>16</sup>For the view that John assumes readers' familiarity with the Synoptic Gospels, see Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), 238; see also Smith, 180.

<sup>17</sup>The first major proposal in this regard came from Percival Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938).

<sup>18</sup>Smith, *John among the Gospels*, 182.



explanation for the Johannine resurrection stories than Synoptic dependence.<sup>19</sup> Later experts followed his lead; C. H. Dodd and Raymond E. Brown suggested a similar position in the 1960s.<sup>20</sup> Around the 1970s and late 1980s, Robert T. Fortna and William Lane Craig defended the independence of John's resurrection account.<sup>21</sup> More recently, James D. G. Dunn proposed it in the early 2010s.<sup>22</sup> Even most scholars supporting John's use of the Synoptics conceded that John most likely did not use them for his resurrection stories, other than possibly having been "slightly affected by synoptic traditions."<sup>23</sup> Thus, while the majority view is small for John's dependence on the Synoptics as a whole, the majority view in favor of independence is larger for John's resurrection narratives. In this state of the field, this study will suggest a deeper conversation between the field of source criticism outlined above and the younger field of Johannine community studies.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels*, 73-87.

<sup>20</sup>C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 138-47; see also Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, 966-1123.

<sup>21</sup>Robert T. Fortna, "Diachronic/Synchronic Reading: Reading John 21 and Luke 5," in *John and the Synoptics*, ed. Adelbert Denaux (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 387-99; see also Robert T. Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) and *The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor* (London: T&T Clark International, 1988); also William Lane Craig, "The Disciples' Inspection of the Empty Tomb (Lk 24,12.24; Jn 20,2-10)," in *John and the Synoptics*, ed. Adelbert Denaux (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 614-19.

<sup>22</sup>James D. G. Dunn, *The Oral Gospel Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 138-63.

<sup>23</sup>C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1978), 560.

<sup>24</sup>For some minority voices that posit extensive use of the Synoptics in John 20-21, see Keith, "The Competitive Textualizations of the Jesus Tradition in John 20:30-31 and

## **Proposed Method: Johannine-Community Hypotheses and Source Criticism in Conversation**

From the discussion above, one can see that a highly relevant issue is not discussed as much as it should be in this field, namely, the history of the community behind John's Gospel. Experts since the 1960s have attempted to reconstruct the communal setting behind the Gospel, and while some scholars are skeptical of the project, the basic idea that a distinct "Johannine community" produced the Gospel has gained wide-ranging support.<sup>25</sup> Despite some source critics' lack of careful attention to this field, a reconstruction of the Johannine community can do much to help New Testament scholars assess the external likelihood that John would have used the Synoptic Gospels as sources. Because experts do not agree on the strengths of the dependence criteria, a new approach would be to establish a background probability for dependence based on a reconstruction of the Johannine community and then apply the criteria. The background probability, of course, is not a mathematical probability; rather, in history, it simply refers to the strength of a historical argument given the current state of evidence compared to what its strength would be given alternative scenarios of evidence. For example, if historians determine that the Johannine community was largely isolated from other groups of Christians, then this decreases the likelihood that John's Gospel depended

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21:24-25," 321-37; see also John A. Bailey, *The Traditions Common to the Gospels of Luke and John* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963), 85-102.

<sup>25</sup>For the most influential studies of the Johannine community, see Wally V. Cirafesi, "The Johannine Community Hypothesis (1968-Present): Past and Present Approaches and a New Way Forward," *Currents in Biblical Research* 12 (2014): 173-93; see also Wally V. Cirafesi, "The 'Johannine Community' in (More) Current Research: A Critical Appraisal of Recent Methods and Models," *Neotestamentica* 48 (2014): 341-64.

on the Synoptics compared to the scenario in which the Johannine community was in close communion with the other Christians who produced the Synoptics.<sup>26</sup>

As the next chapter will argue, the reconstructed historical situation of the Johannine community decreases the external likelihood that John depended on the Synoptics; in other words, what is known about John's community makes it less likely that John used Matthew, Mark, and Luke; but it makes it more likely that he mostly used traditions circulating in his own community. This explains John's differences (because independent traditions would take different forms and then be further changed by the author) and explains the similarities to the other Gospels (because the community traditions originated closer to the events than the Synoptics). The historiography of the Johannine community and the arguments in favor of this position are covered in more detail in the following chapter.

In short, what this project will contribute to the Johannine-Synoptic debate is a source-critical analysis that takes into account the background probability provided by a study of the Johannine community. It proposes the following method for judging the likelihood of Synoptic dependence. First, one should construct a backdrop for the Gospel from the historical clues in its own text and hypothesize what types of sources would have been available based on that backdrop. Then, one should apply the five criteria and judge whether Synoptic dependence or exclusive use of independent traditions explain John's similar details better. This method will be applied in the case of the Johannine

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<sup>26</sup>For a few resources on judging historical probabilities and hypothetical scenarios, see Daniel Nolan, "The Possibilities of History," *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 10 (2016): 441-56; see also Cass R. Sunstein, "Historical Explanations Always Involve Counterfactual History," *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 10 (2016): 433-40.

resurrection narratives, particularly with the stories that are similar to the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>27</sup>

### **Main Arguments and Project Outline**

Using the methods outlined above and drawing on previous scholarship, this study will argue that John more likely drew from traditions produced by his community than from the Synoptic Gospels for his resurrection narratives. Chapter 1 will present four points of agreement among most experts on the Johannine community and argue that these four points collectively support the idea that John did not use the Synoptic Gospels as sources, relying instead on traditions produced by his own community. Chapter 2 will apply the five tests of Synoptic dependence to the empty tomb narratives and the appearances to the women: verbal agreement or disagreement, chronological agreement or disagreement, evidence of Synoptic redaction, assumption of Synoptic details, and incidental differences; and given the community model presented in Chapter 1, this chapter will conclude that John's narrative is better explained by his use of community traditions than by Synoptic dependence. Chapter 3 will apply the same five tests to John's two consecutive stories of Jesus' post-resurrection appearance to the disciples in a house; likewise, this chapter will conclude that the five tests fail to prove Synoptic dependence but match what the stories would look like if John used community traditions. Chapter 4 will apply the five tests to the epilogue of John's Gospel, which is Jesus' final post-resurrection appearance. In this case, too, the chapter will conclude that community traditions account for this story better than Synoptic dependence. Finally, the conclusion

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<sup>27</sup>Smith, *John among the Gospels*, 177-82.

will summarize the arguments and survey the implications of these results for the discipline of New Testament studies, particularly for the study of the historical Jesus and the post-resurrection experiences of his disciples, as well as for the study of early Christian diversity.

As a final word, the results of this thesis will also be presented with a dose of modesty and respect for opposing viewpoints. The arguments contained in this work are sometimes highly complex, but they are condensed here for brevity and clarity. The footnotes contain many qualifications and additional comments in order to do some justice to the nuances in different arguments that would be difficult to integrate into the body of the text. Finally, it is necessary to point out that this project claims no definitive answer: it simply maintains that using the method adopted here, one would conclude that John's Gospel most likely used traditions in the Johannine community instead of the Synoptic Gospels for his resurrection accounts. It does not argue that John must have been totally unaware of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but simply that for chapters 20-21, John seems not to have used or even needed them, given his access to other sources that his community would have had available that the Synoptics did not have. And even though John could have used community traditions as well as the Synoptic Gospels, the incidental differences suggest that John did not use the Synoptics at all; if he had, many of those incidental differences would not exist. Regardless, one should be open-minded and remember that the scholarship has "now reached a point at which neither assumption is safe, that is, neither can be taken for granted," as Dwight Moody Smith put it in 1996.<sup>28</sup> Taking his advice, this project will ensure that neither view is taken for granted.

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<sup>28</sup>Smith, *John among the Gospels*, 189.

CHAPTER 1: JOHN'S COMMUNITY, THE COMPOSITION OF THE  
GOSPEL, AND THE BACKGROUND PROBABILITY OF SYNOPTIC  
DEPENDENCE

**Introduction, Literature Review, and Arguments**

An important argument in this study is that the context of the Johannine community affects the probability that the author used the Synoptic Gospels as sources. The methodology promoted here is to compare each Gospel only after constructing a historical background of each one on the basis of its own text.<sup>1</sup> The project pursues this method because the verbal agreements between John and the Synoptics are too minimal to be strong evidence for dependence by themselves, as scholars on all sides agree.<sup>2</sup> Thus, this chapter will present a view of John's community and the Gospel's composition that is as uncontroversial as possible, which will allow subsequent chapters to evaluate the sources behind the Johannine resurrection narratives credibly and reliably.

The historiography on the Johannine community is extensive and often contentious; while some debate the nature and history of the community, others question the usefulness of community hypotheses altogether. Only a short summary is possible here, but it will serve to contextualize the arguments in this chapter. In 2014, Wally

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<sup>1</sup>For some historiography on the communities of the Gospels, see Edward W. Klink III, "The Gospel Community Debate: State of the Question," *Currents in Biblical Research* 3 (2004): 60-85.

<sup>2</sup>James W. Barker, *John's Use of Matthew* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 16.

Cirafesi outlined the debate on the Johannine community from 1968 to 2010.<sup>3</sup> He divided the scholarship into three groups. First, there appeared a series of traditional historical-critical studies in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>4</sup> The first major study of John's community came from J. Louis Martyn in 1968. He suggested a "two-level" reading of the Gospel, which allowed the reader to see not only an account of Jesus' life but also the history and struggles of the Johannine community.<sup>5</sup> In 1979, Raymond E. Brown attempted to provide a full community history by tracing the issues addressed in the Gospel and the later Johannine Epistles. The basic models that Martyn and Brown offered had a major role in shaping subsequent scholarship.<sup>6</sup>

Second, there was a wave of social-scientific studies in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>7</sup> These studies sought to explain the different social functions of the beliefs and practices within the Johannine community. One of the first attempts to do this was Wayne Meeks' 1972 article for the *Journal of Biblical Literature*. His contention was that the community used language about descension and ascension in order to demonstrate Jesus'

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<sup>3</sup>Cirafesi, "The Johannine Community Hypothesis," 173-93.

<sup>4</sup>Cirafesi, "The Johannine Community Hypothesis," 174-81.

<sup>5</sup>J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1968), 46; see also J. Louis Martyn, "The Johannine Community among Jewish and Other Early Christian Communities," in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies*, ed. Tom Thatcher (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 183-90.

<sup>6</sup>Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1979).

<sup>7</sup>Cirafesi, "The Johannine Community Hypothesis," 182-85.

incomprehensibility, especially to those outside the community.<sup>8</sup> Others, like Jerome Neyrey in 1998, attempted to use sociology and anthropology to theorize that the community went through three distinct stages of development as a social and religious group.<sup>9</sup>

And third, around the early 2000s there arose a small but significant dissenting view questioning the usefulness of the community hypothesis.<sup>10</sup> For instance, Richard Bauckham's 1998 article "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?" which questioned the idea that reconstructing Gospel communities is necessary to interpret them.<sup>11</sup> His student, Edward Klink, continued the argument with a 2007 monograph entitled *The Sheep of the Fold*.<sup>12</sup> More recent works have focused on different methods, such as David A. Lamb's sociolinguistic study of the Johannine community, which concluded that the type of language in John's Gospel does not match the type of language that close-knit communities use among their own members.<sup>13</sup> While these studies clarified some issues

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<sup>8</sup>Wayne Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972), 44-72.

<sup>9</sup>Jerome Neyrey, *An Ideology of Revolt: John's Christology in Social-Science Perspective* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988).

<sup>10</sup>Cirafesi, "The Johannine Community Hypothesis," 185.

<sup>11</sup>Richard Bauckham, "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?" in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 9-48.

<sup>12</sup>Edward W. Klink III, *The Sheep of the Fold: The Audience and Origin of the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>13</sup>David A. Lamb, *Text, Context, and the Johannine Community: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Johannine Writings* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).



in Gospel community research, the idea that each Gospel had a community behind it is still the prevalent view in the field.<sup>14</sup>

The various community hypotheses have undergone significant methodological changes since their first appearance in the 1960s, such as less frequent use of purely historical-critical methods, a newer preference for literary analysis, and some influence from social memory theory.<sup>15</sup> Despite the weaknesses in historical-critical methods, it does not seem clear yet that the newer methods are always superior; often, purely literary and social-scientific approaches tend to superimpose generalized theoretical categories on the text, and New Testament scholars still use historical criticism the most, especially when answering questions about the Johannine community and the composition of John's Gospel. This project mainly uses historical criticism, not because it is flawless but because it enjoys the best reputation among mainstream historians and New Testament experts. And in any case, most newer approaches must respond to or interact with historical criticism because it forms the bulk of the secondary literature.<sup>16</sup>

Considering the diverse and sometimes contradictory claims of current Johannine scholarship, this chapter will argue that the most common scholarly views on John's community and composition support literary independence. Rather than adopting a single, specific model of the Johannine community as definitive, it will present the most

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<sup>14</sup>Cirafesi, "The Johannine Community Hypothesis," 185.

<sup>15</sup>Barry Schwartz, "Where There's Smoke, There's Fire: Memory and History," in *Memory and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Tom Thatcher (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2014), 7-37.

<sup>16</sup>Wally V. Cirafesi, "The 'Johannine Community' in (More) Current Research," 341-64; see also the extensive engagement with historical-critical theories in Lamb, 1-53.

common views about the historical situation of the community.<sup>17</sup> Scholars generally agree on four issues: first, the community had a Palestinian origin; second, the community was largely isolated from other believing groups; and third, it had access to sources not used by the Synoptics, such as the Beloved Disciple; and fourth, the Gospel was produced by the community in multiple stages. These four areas of agreement lend more weight to the idea that John did not use Matthew, Mark, or Luke when writing his Gospel. The rest of this work will use this community background in conjunction with textual analysis to decide how likely it is that John used the Synoptic resurrection narratives as sources for his own.

### **Palestinian Origin**

The Palestinian background of John and his community increases the likelihood that John was independent of the Synoptics. Since the Synoptic Gospels demonstrate much less knowledge of Palestine than John, the author would have had less need to rely on Synoptic sources if there were sufficient traditions from Palestine from which to draw. Much of the internal evidence in John suggests that the traditions from which the author drew were close to the events they narrate. The primary reason for this conclusion is

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<sup>17</sup>For a list of community hypotheses that shows the diversity of opinions and lack of consensus on many points, see Thomas L. Brodie, *The Quest for the Origin of John's Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 20-21; for an example of a highly detailed reconstruction of the Johannine community and its practices, see John Cristopher Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2004); see also Patrick J. Hartin, "A Community in Crisis: The Christology of the Johannine Community as the Point at Issue," *Neotestamentica* 19 (1985): 37-49; also D. A. Ihenacho, *The Community of Eternal Life: The Study of the Meaning of Life for the Johannine Community* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001); also Adele Reinhartz, "Torah Reading in the Johannine Community," *Journal of Early Christian History* 5 (2015): 111-16; also Johan Ferreira, *Johannine Ecclesiology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

John's more extensive geographical knowledge of the region. As one scholar writes, "John has more archaeologically verified and topographically accurate details . . . than all the other Gospels put together."<sup>18</sup> Among these details, John's Gospel accurately reproduces names and places in Judea and Jerusalem. For instance, the Gospel knows about the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem. It is mentioned during the healing story of the man blind from birth; in this account, Jesus tells the man to wash in the Pool of Siloam to receive his sight.<sup>19</sup> The existence of this pool is corroborated in both earlier and later Jewish sources, such as Isaiah 8:6 and in later Rabbinic sources unconnected with John's Gospel.<sup>20</sup>

Another location in Jerusalem that John knew about is Solomon's Portico. John portrays Jesus as walking in the portico when the Jews approach him and ask him to disclose his identity.<sup>21</sup> If John's Gospel or its sources were far removed from events it narrates, then how did such striking detail make it into the story? While it is possible that a source from outside Palestine could develop a story about Jesus in the Jerusalem Temple, the discussion of the portico in conjunction with knowledge of the Jewish Feast of Dedication points to a local source. Whoever ultimately informed the author of the

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<sup>18</sup>Paul N. Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction to John* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 47; see also William H. Brownlee, "Whence the Gospel According to John?" in *John and Qumran*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1972), 166-74.

<sup>19</sup>John 9:7, NRSV.

<sup>20</sup>Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII)*, 372-73.

<sup>21</sup>John 10:22-24, NRSV.

Gospel or a source behind it knew the Temple well enough before its destruction in 70 CE.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to understanding Judea, John's knowledge of Samaria is also considerable. Early in the Gospel narrative, Jesus converses with a woman in Samaria after he leaves Jerusalem.<sup>23</sup> The introductory verses precisely describe the location: "He left Judea and started back to Galilee. But he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon."<sup>24</sup> Three locations, namely, the town of Sychar, the traditional spot of Jacob's well, and the route from Judea to Galilee through Samaria are attested by external archaeological and textual sources. Although modern interpreters have disagreed on whether the Gospel is referring to the town located at modern Askar or to the ancient town of Shechem, John's precision is impressive. This preservation indicates that the source came from Palestine and probably did not leave the region before being incorporated in the Johannine tradition.<sup>25</sup>

Likewise, Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well indicates John's understanding of Jewish-Samaritan relations, as well as Samaritan theology. In the

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<sup>22</sup>Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII)*, 401-2.

<sup>23</sup>John 4:4-42, NRSV.

<sup>24</sup>John 4:3-6, NRSV.

<sup>25</sup>For the view that the town is equivalent to Askar, see Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 231; for the view that the town is equivalent to Shechem, see Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII)*, 169.

narrative, Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. He asks her to give him a drink, and she replies, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?"<sup>26</sup> John clearly knows that Jews generally disdained Samaritans and avoided their company. He then betrays knowledge of ancient Samaritan and Jewish theological disputes in the rest of the conversation. In the text, the woman says to Jesus, "Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem."<sup>27</sup> Samaritans worshipped on Mount Gerizim, whereas Jews worshipped at the Jerusalem Temple, and the Jews believed that the Samaritans were worshipping incorrectly. The origins of this difference stretched deep into Israel's history. The Samaritans were descended from a combination of Babylonians, Medians, and the remaining Jews after the Assyrian conquest of Israel in 722 B.C.E. Because of their ethnic distinctions, they refused to worship in Jerusalem, leading to theological disputes with the Jews. The disputes ultimately led the Jewish high priest to destroy the Samaritan temple at Gerizim in 128 B.C.E., which cemented mutual disdain by each group.<sup>28</sup>

The fact that the author knew all of these details shows that he was either Jewish and had a Jewish audience or was much more aware of the strained relationships between Jews and Samaritans than most Gentiles in the eastern Mediterranean world probably would have been. It is also quite possible that John's Gospel preserved these details

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<sup>26</sup>John 4:9, NRSV.

<sup>27</sup>John 4:20, NRSV.

<sup>28</sup>Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 215-16; see also Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII)*, 170-72; also Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 230-31.

because there were Samaritan converts in the Johannine community and the author was teaching them how faith in Jesus transcended the regional and ethnic disputes between Jews and Samaritans. In any case, these precise details are best explained by Palestinian source material that John ornamented with his theology.<sup>29</sup>

John is also intimately familiar with Jewish theology in the Second Temple period. One sees this clearly when comparing John to the Dead Sea Scrolls, which provide a vast store of knowledge about Second Temple Judaism. Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, many historical critics of John assumed that his Gospel bore similarities to Gnosticism.<sup>30</sup> Critics cited John's apparent dualism of light and darkness, among other motifs, as evidence for their view. However, after archaeologists and historians recovered the Qumran scrolls, the view that John was a quasi-Gnostic Gospel fell out of favor. For example, scholars noticed that John's type of dualism is more similar to the type of dualism in the Dead Sea Scrolls than to Gnostic dualism. While it is unlikely that John or any of the New Testament documents directly borrowed from the scrolls, many experts agree that John echoes common themes in the religious milieu of his period, which the Dead Sea Scrolls illustrate in much greater detail.<sup>31</sup> If

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<sup>29</sup>Raymond E. Brown, "Johannine Ecclesiology: The Community's Origins," *Interpretation* 31 (1977): 389-90.

<sup>30</sup>For the most famous early-twentieth century scholar to find Gnostic influences in John's Gospel, see Howard M. Teeple, *The Literary Origin of the Gospel of John* (Evanston, IL: Religion and Ethics Institute, 1974), 10-12. The current majority is against Teeple's opinion, preferring to draw a connection between John and Judaism instead of John and Gnosticism.

<sup>31</sup>Raymond E. Brown, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament," in *John and Qumran*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1972), 1-8.

John's were not firmly anchored in Palestine, then it is unlikely that they would have preserved the geographical, social, and theological details found in the final form of his Gospel. This also indicates that Jews were a significant part of the Johannine community, if not the overwhelming majority.<sup>32</sup> In summary, then, it is not quite true that John's sources are further removed from the events of Jesus' life than the Synoptics. As one historian aptly writes, "From such accuracy we may say that the Fourth Gospel reflects a knowledge of Palestine as it was before its destruction in A.D. 70."<sup>33</sup>

### **Isolation from Other Christians**

Additionally, the Johannine community's isolation from other Christian communities makes Synoptic dependence less likely. If the community had very little to do with other Christian groups, then it is much less likely that the author used sources from outside the community, such as the Synoptics. The term *isolation* here does not necessarily refer to geographical isolation as much as to communal isolation; in other words, the community could have existed in regions close to communities started by Peter, James, and Paul's preaching without being in direct communion with them.<sup>34</sup> Of course, if one could prove that the Johannine community was totally geographically separated from the other Christian communities, then arguing for his independence would be easy. Almost no data exist, unfortunately, on early Christian populations in the first

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<sup>32</sup>Regarding the presence of Jews in the Johannine community, see Celestino G. Lingad, Jr., *The Problems of Jewish Christians in the Johannine Community* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 2001).

<sup>33</sup>Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII)*, xlii.

<sup>34</sup>Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 88-91.

century, but proposed locations for John's community include places in Palestine, Syria, Samaria, and Ephesus, each of which would have contained other Christian groups as well. The map below provides a general idea of some of the suggested locations of the community. Each possible location is enlarged and in boldface type, whereas the other named locations provide context for their geographical surroundings in the world of the New Testament and the early Christians.<sup>35</sup>

Figure 1: Possible Community Locations



<sup>35</sup>For possible locations of the Johannine community, see Thomas L. Brodie, 15-21.



What is apparent is that the author of John was aware of other early Christians, such as those affiliated with apostolic groups. But if the different communities did not coordinate much, then it is less likely that they would have drawn from each other's traditions or written sources. Experts do not fully agree on how isolated the community was other than saying that it was much less connected to other communities. As one can see from Thomas Brodie's short survey of different community theories, most accept the idea that John's Gospel is alleging some type of distance between Johannine Christians and other Christians, as well as separation from the Jews.<sup>36</sup> Regardless, it is clear from John's Gospel that the community believed that outside Christians were legitimate followers of Jesus. For example, some have postulated that while the Johannine community viewed Peter as the legitimate head of the church, the Johannine Christians saw themselves as possessing special spiritual insight that the Synoptic Christians did not possess.<sup>37</sup>

The textual evidence in John suggests the kind of isolation described above for two reasons. First, John addresses different theological and communal issues. It is a common scholarly position that the Evangelists mainly wrote their Gospels to address the contexts of their own communities rather than to provide a newspaper-style account of Jesus' life; thus, one can construct a rough image of each community by looking at what issues each Gospel discusses in its stories, often implicitly.<sup>38</sup> John, for example, addresses

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<sup>36</sup>Brodie, 15-21.

<sup>37</sup>Urban C. von Wahlde, "Community in Conflict: The History and Social Context of the Johannine Community," *Interpretation* 49 (1995): 385.

<sup>38</sup>*The Gospels*, ed. John Muddiman and John Barton, 20-21; see also Jeffrey E. Brickle, "The Memory of the Beloved Disciple: The Poetics of Johannine Memory," in *Memory*

the Jews' expulsion of Christians from their synagogues, a situation not addressed in the Synoptic Gospels. Most experts think that John allegorizes the memory of the expulsion in chapter 9, in which Jesus heals a man born blind. The man enters a controversy with his fellow Jews because his faith in Jesus contradicts their teachings, and they insist that anyone who confesses Jesus as the Christ would be cast out of the synagogue. The man talks with his fellow Jews about Jesus' identity, saying that they cannot account for Jesus' healing abilities without his being of God. But they attack his character: according to the Gospel, "They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?' And they drove him out."<sup>39</sup> After the man is cast out, he finds Jesus and worships him. Exegetes agree that John used the story to strengthen his fellow Christians after their removal from the Jewish faith community.<sup>40</sup> Most experts also assign the historical underpinning of this story to an early stage in the development of the community. Brown, for example, believes it was the first of four "phases" of the history of the community.<sup>41</sup> Regardless of the timeframe, it is remarkable that the Synoptic Gospels do not discuss an expulsion from the synagogues. If the Johannine community

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*and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Tom Thatcher (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2014), 188.

<sup>39</sup>John 9:34, NRSV.

<sup>40</sup>Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 46-66; see also Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 22; for a minority dissenting position which questions the expulsion from the synagogues, see Edward W. Klink III, "Expulsion from the Synagogue? Rethinking a Johannine Anachronism," *Tyndale Bulletin* 59 (2008): 99-118; see also Jonathan Bernier, *Aposynagōgos and the Historical Jesus in John: Rethinking the Historicity of the Johannine Expulsion Passages* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); also Cirafesi, "The Johannine Community in (More) Current Research," 350-54.

<sup>41</sup>Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 22.

were in close communion with the Christians who produced the Synoptics, then it is likely that the Synoptics would have addressed it to comfort and instruct fellow Christians just as John did.

Another sharp difference between John and the Synoptics is how they address the issue of Jesus' origins, which strengthens the case for the Johannine community's isolation. The Johannine prologue portrays Jesus as having existed from the beginning with God, but the Gospel as a whole does not comment directly about how Jesus became incarnate.<sup>42</sup> Rather, the prologue focuses on the meaning of Jesus' origin, such as the embodiment of divine wisdom.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew and Luke each narrate Jesus' divine conception by the Holy Spirit within Mary and his birth in Bethlehem as the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies. The point of these narratives is to show that Jesus was actually from Bethlehem and not Nazareth, which is where many of the Jews assumed Jesus was from originally.<sup>44</sup> John's Gospel, however, never asserts that the Jews are wrong when they say that he is from Galilee. As Jesus teaches in the temple in Jerusalem, the Jews say, "...we know where this man is from; but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from."<sup>45</sup> The Johannine Jesus

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<sup>42</sup>John 1:1-18, NRSV.

<sup>43</sup>Regarding John's prologue as telling the origin of Jesus and his association with wisdom, see Sheri D. King, "Wisdom Became Flesh: An Analysis of the Prologue to the Gospel of John," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 40 (2013): 179-87.

<sup>44</sup>For a concise and readable treatment of the Matthean and Lukan infancy narratives, see Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan, *The First Christmas: What the Gospels Really Teach about Jesus' Birth* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2007).

<sup>45</sup>John 7:27, NRSV.

replies, “You know me, and you know where I am from.”<sup>46</sup> Then the Jews dispute among themselves, saying, “Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he?”<sup>47</sup> The narrative seems to assume that Jesus came from Galilee and not Judea, which is where Bethlehem was located. If the author of John knew and believed the Synoptic traditions that Jesus was indeed from Bethlehem and not Nazareth, he could have corrected the whole misunderstanding. But he does not; in fact, he does not even respond to the tradition at all, either to affirm it or deny it. This strongly suggests that the Johannine community that produced this Gospel was isolated enough not to encounter or care about the traditions of Jesus’ birth that had already appeared at least ten to twenty years before John was written, assuming the common scholarly dates of Gospel composition are accurate.<sup>48</sup>

Second, John used the contrast between the Beloved Disciple and Peter to put his community on the similar level of legitimacy as the apostolic Christians, which further implies the Johannine community’s distinct identity.<sup>49</sup> Peter and the Beloved Disciple are first mentioned interacting together at the Last Supper. Here, John’s Gospel positions the Beloved Disciple as reclining next to Jesus, and Peter has to motion to the Disciple to

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<sup>46</sup>John 7:28, NRSV.

<sup>47</sup>John 7:41, NRSV.

<sup>48</sup>For the idea that the Gospel of John just assumes that Jesus is from Galilee and not Bethlehem, see Dale B. Martin, *New Testament History and Literature* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 156-58.

<sup>49</sup>For a summary of views of the relationship between Peter and the Beloved Disciple, see Patrick J. Hartin, “The Role of Peter in the Fourth Gospel,” *Neotestamentica* 24 (1990): 49-61.

communicate with Jesus. This implies that the Beloved Disciple has a special relationship with Jesus even though Peter is the unofficial leader of the Twelve.<sup>50</sup> Later, after the Jews arrest Jesus, Peter and the Beloved Disciple follow the authorities into the high priest's courtyard. Peter is only able to enter because the Beloved Disciple knows the high priest and tells the guard to admit him. At this point, Peter falters and denies Jesus.<sup>51</sup> The Beloved Disciple, however, remains until Jesus' execution, watching his master die on the cross.<sup>52</sup>

The last two chapters of John, however, bring the subtle competition between Peter and the Beloved Disciple to a climax and resolution. When Mary Magdalene discovers Jesus' empty tomb, she runs and tells Peter and the Beloved Disciple. Upon hearing Mary's report, the Beloved Disciple outruns Peter and reaches the tomb first, but it is Peter who enters the tomb first.<sup>53</sup> Some experts interpret this as a deliberate literary device that gives each disciple the chance to be "first."<sup>54</sup> Even so, the Gospel still emphasizes that it is the Beloved Disciple who "saw and believed."<sup>55</sup> The final chapter closes the interaction: the resurrected Jesus appears to the disciples at the Sea of Galilee,

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<sup>50</sup>John 13:23-25, NRSV.

<sup>51</sup>John 18:15-27, NRSV.

<sup>52</sup>John 19:26-27, NRSV.

<sup>53</sup>John 20:2-6, NRSV.

<sup>54</sup>*The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, ed. Michael Coogan, 1951.

<sup>55</sup>John 20:8, NRSV; see also Brendan Byrne, "The Faith of the Beloved Disciple and the Community in John 20," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 7 (1985): 83-97; also Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 82.

where he restores Peter after his denial. In this scene, the Beloved Disciple is the first to recognize Jesus, which continues the motif that he has special spiritual insight compared to the other disciples. When Jesus restores Peter and predicts Peter's death, Peter turns to the Beloved Disciple and asks Jesus, "Lord, what about him?" to which Jesus replies, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!"<sup>56</sup> Here, the author of the Gospel affirms Peter's authority but also gives special consideration to the Beloved Disciple.

For reconstructing the Johannine community, it is important to understand how the author relates Peter and the Beloved Disciple. Most exegetes do not believe that John portrays the Beloved Disciple as competing with Peter for authority; rather, they are both true disciples who take on different roles in the church, with Peter leading the church officially and the Beloved Disciple possessing unique spiritual insight.<sup>57</sup> Taken together, these passages support the idea that the Johannine community was itself an independent religious group while still acknowledging the legitimacy of other Christian churches, represented in this Gospel by Peter. Thus, the Johannine community was more isolated in their worship and thus would have been less likely to use written Gospels by other communities as sources. This does not mean that John was necessarily unaware of the

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<sup>56</sup>John 21:20-22, NRSV.

<sup>57</sup>Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 82-8; see also Kevin Quast, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple: Figures for a Community in Crisis* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 8-16.

Synoptic Gospels, but it would suggest that he more likely drew from the sources and traditions present in his own community.<sup>58</sup>

Additionally, this argument for the isolation of the Johannine community is extremely important because it implies a lower probability that John used the Synoptics regardless of the locations of the various Synoptic Christian communities. This is significant because some recent work on the Johannine-Synoptic problem attempts to argue in favor of dependence because one or more of the Synoptic Gospels were widely circulated among the earliest Christians before John's composition. James Barker used this type of thinking to contend that John knew and used Matthew. He believed that Matthew's intention was to circulate his Gospel broadly, and he thus assigns a higher probability that John used it.<sup>59</sup>

That argument is flawed for a few reasons. First, just because Matthew intended his Gospel to be read widely does not mean that it was read widely, especially not necessarily by John's time. It may be true that close proximity to Synoptic communities would imply a greater likelihood that John knew about the Synoptics, but it would not necessarily imply that John used them. If the Johannine community were as communally separated as scholars suggest, then it does not matter how close the Synoptic communities were because the author would have been more likely to rely on the sources he knew within his own churches, which will be the focus in the section below. Thus,

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<sup>58</sup>Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 84; see also Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 586; also Patrick E. Spencer, "Narrative Echoes in John 21: Intertextual Interpretation and Intratextual Connection," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 22 (2000): 65-67.

<sup>59</sup>Barker, *John's Use of Matthew*, 16-17.

even if Barker were right about the circulation of Matthew, it is necessary to reason from the evidence within John's Gospel that the community would have been receptive to it.<sup>60</sup> At face value, it would seem unlikely because, as scholars agree, Matthew is the most "pro-Jewish" Gospel and that John is the most "anti-Jewish" Gospel, although John's "anti-Jewishness" is based not on ethnicity but rather on the theological positions of the Jews in the narrative who do not accept Jesus.<sup>61</sup>

### **Access to Other Sources**

The last argument here is that dependence on the Synoptics is less likely because of the author's access to different sources from the Synoptic sources. Other than the Synoptics, two sources of information would have been available to John, namely, common oral traditions and the traditions from the Beloved Disciple. While it is possible to group these two together, the Beloved Disciple will be treated separately. First, oral traditions were plentiful before and during the writing of the Gospels. The form-critical movement in the early 1900s attributed many stories in the four Gospels to the circulation of oral tradition.<sup>62</sup> Soon thereafter, scholars tried to use oral tradition to explain the similarities and differences between John and the Synoptics. They proposed that John received all of his material from common oral tradition rather than from the Synoptic

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<sup>60</sup>Barker, *John's Use of Matthew*, 16-17.

<sup>61</sup>Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 314; see also Raimo Hakola, *Identity Matters: John, the Jews, and Jewishness* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 12; for a discussion of how the Gospel of John portrays the Jews, see Adele Reinhartz, "Judaism in the Gospel of John," *Interpretation* 63 (2009): 382-93.

<sup>62</sup>Notable work on that subject can be found in Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, trans. Bertram Lee Woolf (Cambridge: James and Clarke Company, 1971).



Gospels.<sup>63</sup> Of course, literary interdependence among the Synoptics was an unavoidable conclusion due to their verbal agreements.<sup>64</sup> But Synoptic dependence was not as necessary in John's case because there is extensive evidence of these oral traditions in his Gospel.<sup>65</sup>

But in addition to broadly circulating oral traditions, the Johannine community would have had access to its own distinct traditions. When one examines John's Gospel, it appears likely that the community privileged its own traditions over those it may have encountered from outside. This easily explains why John is ninety-two percent different from the Synoptics.<sup>66</sup> If the Synoptic Gospels influenced John's Gospel directly, then it would match them more than eight percent. If the community hypothesis is essentially right and the Beloved Disciple was a historical person who led the community, then there is an additional source of oral tradition that explains most of John's differences. Brickle, for example, believed that the Beloved Disciple was a real person and that his memories had an important role in the Gospel, and the author was shaped by and shaped the memories to speak to the current communal situation and its difficulties.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Percival Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938).

<sup>64</sup>*The Gospels*, ed. John Muddiman and John Barton, 244-50.

<sup>65</sup>Regarding the general shift toward Johannine independence of the Synoptics in twentieth-century scholarship, see Smith, *John among the Gospels*, 10.

<sup>66</sup>Gary M. Burge, *Interpreting the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992), 23.

<sup>67</sup>Brickle, "The Memory of the Beloved Disciple: The Poetics of Johannine Memory," 190.

The textual evidence is friendly to this idea because the Gospel itself claims to draw from the testimony of the Beloved Disciple. In fact, John makes more claims to eyewitness testimony than any other canonical Gospel.<sup>68</sup> The most important of these claims comes at the end of the Gospel. After narrating Peter's reinstatement in chapter 21, the author writes, "This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true."<sup>69</sup> Experts debate whether this verse is a direct claim to authorship of the Gospel or simply an ancient way of giving credit to a source that provided information for the composition of the document. Regardless of one's particular view, most agree that the author intends to convey that the Beloved Disciple, in some form, provided traditions that the author used in the Gospel, and these could have been either a written or oral tradition. Assuming the author is not intentionally deceiving his readers, this means that he had access to at least one stream of tradition that the Synoptic Gospels most likely did not possess, making it less necessary to use those accounts, if he even knew about them.<sup>70</sup>

### **Multiple Stages**

The final issue is how many times the Gospel was edited, and the small number of editions support independence. Presumably, more editions would support Synoptic

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<sup>68</sup>Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel*, 48-49.

<sup>69</sup>John 21:24, NRSV; for a close analysis of John's claims to eyewitness testimony, see Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel*, 48-49.

<sup>70</sup>Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Beloved Disciple as Eyewitness and the Fourth Gospel as Witness," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 24 (2002): 3-26; see also Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 384-411; also Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 31-32.

dependence, whereas fewer editions would support independence. This is because the more editions there were, the more time and opportunity the author or editor had to encounter the Synoptics or to use them. Many scholars think that the Johannine community produced the Gospel of John in more than one stage; yet, they disagree on whether there were two, three, or more stages. Despite this, most experts agree that the prologue in 1:1-18 and the epilogue in 21:1-25 form part of a later edition, whereas the rest of the Gospel forms part of the earlier edition or editions; beyond this, there is less agreement on which passages go in which edition.<sup>71</sup> Exegetes relegate the prologue, a Christological hymn, to a later edition because it uses imagery and language not used in the rest of the Gospel; however, the other imagery is similar enough to suppose that it originated within the Johannine community.<sup>72</sup>

Regarding the epilogue, scholars assert that it is in a later edition for three reasons. The first is its placement after an appropriate ending remark in chapter 20. Chapter 20 summarizes the purpose of the Gospel and mentions that Jesus did many other miracles. According to the author, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you

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<sup>71</sup>For the addition of the prologue, see Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII)*, 19-20; for the addition of the epilogue, see Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 665. While Carson concedes that the majority view is for a later edition, he believes it was part of the original. Brown accepts the later-edition hypothesis but believes it makes little exegetical difference for interpreting the Gospel.

<sup>72</sup>For the reasons that the prologue was added to the Gospel but still found its origin in Johannine groups, see Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XXII)*, 19-20.

may have life in his name.”<sup>73</sup> These verses certainly look like the ending of the Gospel; yet, another full chapter appears afterward, leading most critics to believe that this was the original conclusion.<sup>74</sup> The second reason is the writing style of chapter 21. It exhibits twenty-eight words that appear nowhere else in the Gospel, such as synonyms for the Greek verb meaning “to ask” and synonyms for the word “children.” These distinct words imply a different writing style.<sup>75</sup> The third reason is an apparent redundancy in dealing with discipleship issues. While chapter 20 already deals with discipleship, chapter 21 adds extra themes like the restoration of Peter even though many interpreters believe that the ending is satisfactory without it. There are also some peculiar differences, such as the fact that the Gospel only here implies Peter’s identity as a fisherman.<sup>76</sup> Whether this chapter was original or not, this project will assume that the epilogue was not part of the original narration of Jesus’ appearances because it is the majority view and the argument does not hinge on its originality. And significantly, this means that if one demonstrates Synoptic dependence in chapter 21, then it does not necessarily follow that chapter 20 depended on the Synoptics.

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<sup>73</sup>John 20:30-31, NRSV.

<sup>74</sup>For the idea that John 20:30-31 concludes the Gospel, see Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 575; see also Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 665-68.

<sup>75</sup>For the list of twenty-eight words, see Bultmann, 700-1; for a dissenting view, see Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 665.

<sup>76</sup>For further discussion of the thematic differences, see Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 576; see also the *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. Michael Coogan, 1953.

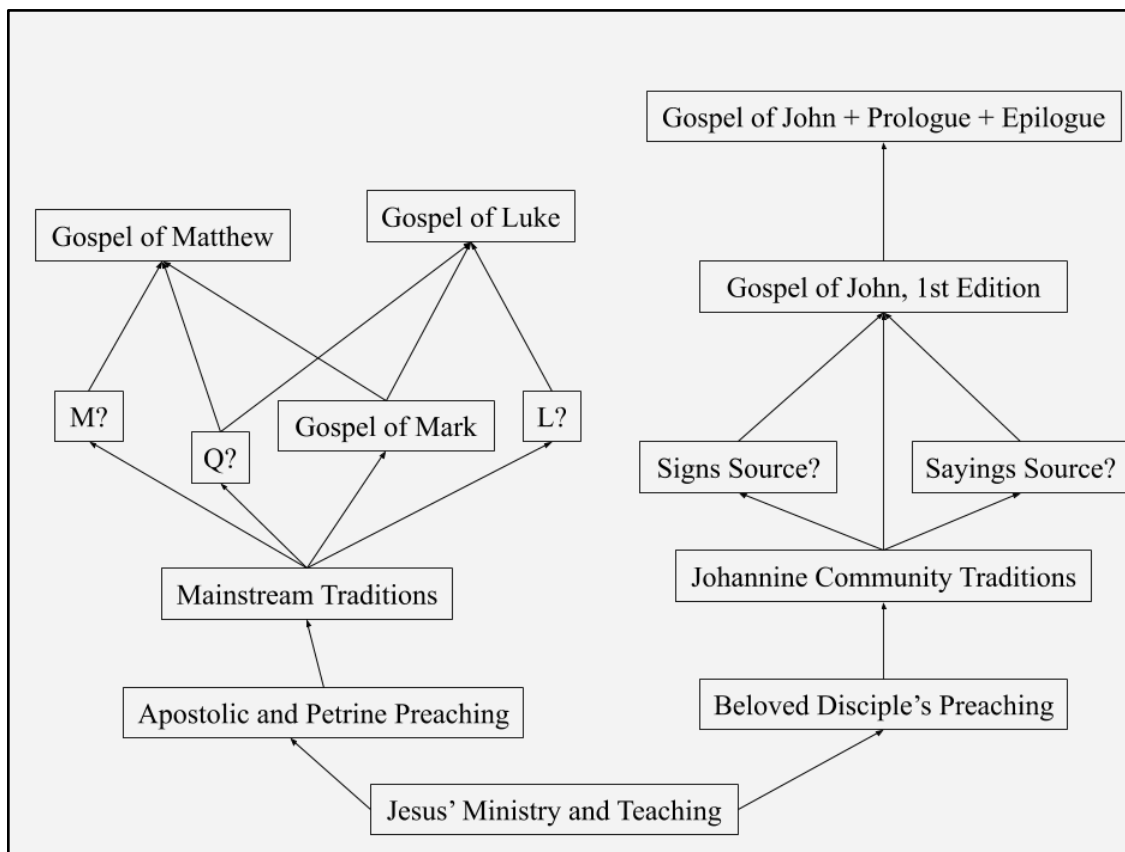
## Summary of Johannine Traditions and Synoptic Traditions

The chart below illustrates the streams of traditions one would expect from the above study of John's community and background. The factors mentioned above point to a largely independent Christian group that formulated its own traditions, many of which found their way into the Gospel of John and not into the Synoptic Gospels. The Synoptic Gospels clearly have an interrelationship, but John's differing content suggests a different situation. For the Synoptic Gospels, the chart below assumes that the two-source solution to the Synoptic problem is correct, but the argument about John's independence stands regardless of which solution one adopts for that question.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>The two-source hypothesis that this chart illustrates is described in *The Gospels*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman, 244-50. People who think the M source and L source were written documents refer to the same basic idea as the "four-source" hypothesis; practically speaking, the two ideas are basically the same theory. The references to the "Signs Source" and "Sayings Source" come from Bultmann's commentary *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, as well as Fortna's work *The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor*.

Figure 2: Probable Streams of Tradition in the Gospels



Given this probable setting, what evidence is there that the Synoptic Gospels entered the Johannine stream of tradition before the author was writing? Did the author encounter the Synoptics and then use some of their material for his resurrection narrative? Considering what is known about the Johannine community, it seems unlikely that the author would have chosen to use the Synoptic Gospels if he encountered them because an isolated group of Christians originating in Palestine with access to other material would certainly have multiple traditions about Jesus' appearances. If a study of the Johannine community behind the Gospel exposed evidence of close communion and cooperation with other Christians and references to more similar material to the Synoptics, then the possibility of dependence would be greater. However, the reality

differs starkly from that. While the Johannine community regarded many other Christian groups as legitimate, the group's more sectarian nature probably caused it to treat outside sources with higher suspicion than sources originating within the group.<sup>78</sup>

It is also helpful to note another aspect of these theoretical streams. In the chart, the traditions are portrayed as splitting into two groups directly after Jesus' ministry, namely, the apostolic group represented by Peter, James, and Paul and the Johannine group represented by the Beloved Disciple. The traditions may or may not have separated this early, but the evidence surveyed above does indicate that the Johannine community must have become isolated fairly quickly. The apparent lack of Q material in John's Gospel could imply that the community was already separate from the Pauline and Petrine Christians by perhaps the 50s CE, before the composition of the Q document. This makes sense, for in the first couple of decades after Jesus' crucifixion and reported disappearance from the tomb, the Beloved Disciple would have been most active and thus his community would have no need to seek out other Christians and their sources for Jesus' words and deeds. This project will not press that evidence further than it should go, and possible intersection of early tradition will not affect the argument here, which is that John in its final form betrays no evidence of depending on the final forms of the Synoptic Gospels. Also, many experts who accept Johannine independence work with the assumption that oral traditions passed along between Christian groups before the evangelists wrote the Gospels.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>For more on Johannine sectarianism, see Martin, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 162-67.

<sup>79</sup>For information on the text and parallel material in Q and the other Gospels, see *The Critical Edition of Q: Synopsis including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and*

## Summary of Argument and Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the most common scholarly views on the Johannine community and John's composition make it less likely that his Gospel depended on the Synoptic Gospels. The community's Palestinian origins, its isolation from other Christian groups, its access to other sources, and the small number of later editions all indicate that the author had little need to use the Synoptics – if he even knew they existed. The positions outlined here are as uncontroversial as possible despite the contentious nature of many claims in New Testament studies in general and Gospel source criticism in particular. Equipped with an understanding of John and his community, it is now possible to do a source-critical analysis of chapters 20-21 and to assess whether John drew from the Synoptics or from some other source in each of the four resurrection appearance narratives and the appearance by the Sea of Galilee. Each succeeding chapter in this thesis will analyze a single appearance narrative, using traditional historical-critical methods, represented by the criteria of dependence as outlined in the introduction to this project.

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*Thomas with English, German, and French Translations of Q and Thomas*, ed. James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann and John S. Kloppenborg (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2000).



## CHAPTER 2: MARY, PETER, AND THE BELOVED DISCIPLE AT THE EMPTY TOMB

### Introduction and Arguments

“The difficulties of St John’s resurrection account are notorious,” wrote Percival Gardner-Smith in 1938 regarding the Johannine-Synoptic problem, “and the importance of its bearing on our present enquiry hardly needs to be emphasized.”<sup>1</sup> As with the rest of the problem, Gardner-Smith’s statement is just as true now as it was nearly one hundred years ago. To begin navigating the difficulties of this resurrection account, the next step in this project is to examine the Johannine empty tomb narrative in comparison with the three Synoptic parallels before analyzing the other resurrection appearances. Critics categorize the Johannine stories in slightly different ways. Some divide John chapter 20 into two scenes: first, the empty tomb and Jesus’ appearance to Mary; and second, his appearances to the disciples inside a house without Thomas and then with Thomas.<sup>2</sup> Others divide the chapter into four episodes, each of which could adequately conclude the Gospel in a literary sense.<sup>3</sup> Still others prefer to speak of five episodes.<sup>4</sup> This project

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<sup>1</sup>Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels*, 73.

<sup>2</sup>For the two-scene division, see Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)* 965, 995; see also Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 560, 567.

<sup>3</sup>For the four-episode division, see John Ashton, *Understanding the Gospel of John*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 476-78.

<sup>4</sup>For the division into five episodes, see Barnabas Lindars, “The Composition of John XX,” *New Testament Studies* 7 (1961): 142-47.

treats the narrative as a set of two scenes, treating the first scene in this chapter and the second in the next chapter.

It should also be mentioned that some critics have tried to reconstruct the sources behind John's empty tomb story. Brown, for example, surveys several reconstructions ranging from the combination of one to three stories to form this narrative. Brown himself takes the position that the Evangelist used three narratives. This project does not attempt such detailed reconstructions; it simply tries to look for Synoptic dependence and assign the stories to community traditions when no dependence is found. It attempts to discover where the sources originated rather than reconstructing exactly what they were in their pre-Gospel forms.<sup>5</sup>

That being said, in conversation with the primary sources and vast secondary literature, this chapter will argue that the author of John's Gospel drew upon sources from his own community rather than depending on the Synoptic Gospels when writing his empty tomb story. Several reliable streams of evidence will be used to support this conclusion. First, there are almost no verbal agreements, and there are significant verbal differences between John and the Synoptics. Second, they have significant differences in chronology. Third, John does not preserve evidence of Synoptic redaction. Fourth, John does not assume enough Synoptic details to conclude that he depended on them. Fifth, there are simply too many incidental differences between John and the Synoptics that are inexplicable from the standpoint of ancient theological and literary conventions. This

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<sup>5</sup>Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)*, 996-98.

study will conclude that the community-tradition hypothesis better explains the range of the data in the empty tomb narratives than the Synoptic-dependence hypothesis.

### Analyzing the Gospel Texts

Before applying the criteria, the relevant Gospel texts will be analyzed collectively. The table below sets the empty tomb stories side-by-side in order to contextualize the arguments that follow in this chapter. This and all succeeding tables loosely follow the line-up that Kurt Aland designed in his *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (with some changes to suit the organizational purposes in this thesis), and they use the text of the New Revised Standard Version.<sup>6</sup> The rest of the tables will use a similar structure to this one, with one or more appearing for each narrative in each chapter.<sup>7</sup>

Table 2: Gospel Empty Tomb Narratives

Matthew 28:1-8	Mark 16:1-8	Luke 24:1-12	John 20:1-18
<b>1</b> After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <b>2</b> And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the	<b>1</b> When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. <b>2</b> And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun	<b>1</b> But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. <b>2</b> They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <b>3</b> but	<b>1</b> Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. <b>2</b> So she ran and went to

<sup>6</sup>For a very thorough compilation of parallels between all four canonical Gospels using the older Revised Standard Version of the Bible, see the *Synopsis of the Four Gospels: English Edition*, ed. Kurt Aland (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1985); for the Greek version, see *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, ed. Kurt Aland (Stuttgart: Deutsches Bibelgesellschaft, 1963); for the English translations, as rendered by the New Revised Standard Version, see *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, ed. Michael Coogan.

<sup>7</sup>For the parallel texts of these passages in Greek, see *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, ed. Kurt Aland, 495-98.

<p>Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. <b>3</b> His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <b>4</b> For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. <b>5</b> But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. <b>6</b> He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <b>7</b> Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." <b>8</b> So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <b>9</b> Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. <b>10</b> Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be</p>	<p>had risen, they went to the tomb. <b>3</b> They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" <b>4</b> When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. <b>5</b> As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. <b>6</b> But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. <b>7</b> But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." <b>8</b> So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.</p>	<p>when they went in, they did not find the body. <b>4</b> While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. <b>5</b> The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. <b>6</b> Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, <b>7</b> that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." <b>8</b> Then they remembered his words, <b>9</b> and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. <b>10</b> Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. <b>11</b> But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. <b>12</b> But Peter got up</p>	<p>Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." <b>3</b> Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. <b>4</b> The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <b>5</b> He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. <b>6</b> Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, <b>7</b> and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. <b>8</b> Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; <b>9</b> for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. <b>10</b> Then the</p>
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afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”		and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.	disciples returned to their homes.
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Table 3: Jesus' Appearance to Mary in John

Appearance Story Distinctive to John 20:13-18
<p><b>11</b> But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; <b>12</b> and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. <b>13</b> They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” <b>14</b> When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <b>15</b> Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” <b>16</b> Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). <b>17</b> Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” <b>18</b> Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.</p>

From these excerpts, one can see that multiple details appear in at least three of the four accounts.<sup>8</sup> Mark, Luke, and John narrate their empty tomb stories directly after the stories of Jesus’ burial; Matthew, however, places the story of the guards at the tomb between the burial story and the empty tomb story. All four Gospels explain that the tomb is empty and that women discover it. In John’s case only Mary appears, but even though

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<sup>8</sup>For a list of common elements between John and the Synoptic empty tomb narratives, see Lindars, “The Composition of John XX,” 142-47.

John only mentions her discovering the tomb, the author quotes her as saying, “we do not know where they have laid him,” which could imply that John assumes the presence of the other women.<sup>9</sup> In Matthew, Luke, and John, the women tell the disciples about the tomb; yet in Mark, the women’s telling the disciples is not explicitly narrated, although it is implied that the disciples will learn about Jesus’ resurrection eventually.<sup>10</sup> Other than that, the accounts differ considerably, and John differs from the Synoptics more than the Synoptics differ from each other, most notably in his prolonged discussion of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearance to Mary.<sup>11</sup> The literary relationships will now be examined using the criteria outlined above.

### **Verbal Agreements and Differences**

The lack of verbal agreements between John’s narrative and the Synoptic accounts casts doubt on Synoptic dependence but supports the use of community traditions. The sparse agreements consist only of scattered words and short phrases that are essential to the substance of the stories and could hardly have been written in a different way. Incidental words and phrases appearing in both sets of Gospels include

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<sup>9</sup>John 20:2, NRSV; see also Michael R. Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels? What We Can Learn from Ancient Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 171; also Raymond E. Brown, “The Resurrection in John 20 -- A Series of Diverse Reactions,” *Worship* 64 (1990): 195.

<sup>10</sup>*The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, ed. Michael Coogan, 1862-63; see also Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)*, 967-69.

<sup>11</sup>For a thorough discussion of the central part of Jesus’ conversation with Mary, namely, the *Noli Me Tangere* statement, see Reimund Bieringer, “I am Ascending to My Father and Your Father, to My God and Your God,” in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig R. Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 210-35.

terms like “Mary Magdalene,” “Sabbath,” “stone,” “Jesus,” “on the first day of the week,” and “my brothers” which are not indicative of dependence because those could not have been restated differently while still being descriptive enough. Everywhere else, the word choice and grammatical function of the words vary widely. The differences in grammatical function apply mostly to changes in the case, gender, and number of the words in the Greek language, and most of these do not carry into English clearly. But these differences show that the four Gospels do not replicate each other’s style much in these narratives, even among the Synoptic Gospels where verbal agreements abound in many other stories that they share apart from their resurrection stories.<sup>12</sup>

The sentence structures and word order also vary, as illustrated in the first verse of each chapter. John writes, “Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.”<sup>13</sup> But Matthew writes, “After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.”<sup>14</sup> Mark writes, “When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.”<sup>15</sup> Luke writes, “But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they

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<sup>12</sup>For the sparse verbal agreements in Greek, see *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, ed. Kurt Aland, 495-98.

<sup>13</sup>John 20:1, NRSV.

<sup>14</sup>Matthew 28:1, NRSV.

<sup>15</sup>Mark 16:2, NRSV.

had prepared.”<sup>16</sup> The only phrase that is duplicated exactly in the original Greek between John and a Synoptic Gospel in this verse is “early on the first day of the week,” which is shared by John and Luke, and it is a phrase too common to be useful as evidence for the kind of source criticism undertaken here.<sup>17</sup> Apart from this, the wording and phrasing are completely different not only between John and the Synoptics but between each Synoptic Gospel in these verses, as even some proponents of dependence, such as John Bailey, acknowledge freely.<sup>18</sup>

The trend persists when analyzing the other verses in the empty tomb stories. One is pressed to find even a moderately-sized phrase shared by John and Matthew, Mark, or Luke. In short, the only way to say John directly depended on the Synoptics is to say he used a dictionary to look up synonyms of certain nouns and verbs, changed the cases and tenses of other nouns and verbs, and reordered sentences specifically to make it look like he used other sources; yet, given that ancient authors were unaware of the fact that source criticism would later be invented, it is unlikely that John did all this just to fool post-Enlightenment New Testament scholars. Verbal agreements can do nothing to support Synoptic dependence here, which is a considerable blow to the dependence hypothesis, for which verbal agreement would be the strongest piece of evidence.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Luke 24:1, NRSV.

<sup>17</sup>John 20:1 and Luke 24:1, NRSV.

<sup>18</sup>For further discussion of this phrase, see Bailey, *The Traditions Common to the Gospels of Luke and John*, 90; see also Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)*, 980.

<sup>19</sup>For more discussion about the concerns of ancient authors, see Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?*, 1-8.



It is also helpful here to explain why these accounts of Jesus' life look the way they do and why they make modern critical projects difficult. Most experts agree that the Gospels are closest to the genre of Graeco-Roman biography, which had an interest in the faithful representation of their subjects' lives yet also had considerable freedom to write in ways that went beyond what modern people consider "factual." D. A. Carson, for example, downplays the differences in small details in the empty tomb narratives by saying, "Only the assumptions scholars make about the nature of the descent of tradition, coupled with peculiarly modern and Western notions of precise reportage, could discern any difficulty in such variables."<sup>20</sup> The Gospel authors, like other ancient biographers, thought that narrating a person's life truthfully was not limited to a bare recitation of events accurately; indeed, one might argue that a "bare-facts" approach to truth too easily strips people and events of what is most meaningful because meaning is not derived solely from "facts."

Given his ancient concerns, John's author would not necessarily have felt compelled to use all possible source materials, even if he had access to the Synoptic Gospels, especially if they differed from traditions that he received to which he gave greater weight. Thus, while the differences between John and the Synoptics make little sense in the context of a dependence theory, they make perfect sense if the author of John drew from oral or written traditions present in his own community. As shown in the previous chapter, the Evangelist had access to sources that would not have been available to the Synoptics, such as the testimony of the Beloved Disciple preserved by the

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<sup>20</sup>Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 632.

members in the community. While this does not prove that the empty tomb story goes back directly to the Beloved Disciple himself, the historicity of the Disciple and the Johannine community can provide explanations that work better than the Synoptic-dependence hypothesis because the former accounts for the verbal disagreements whereas the latter does not.

### **Chronological Similarities and Differences**

The chronological sequences in John and the Synoptics support independence but not dependence. In addition to having a different sequence of resurrection appearances, John's empty tomb chronology differs from the Synoptics. It both includes and excludes details found in different Synoptic Gospels or otherwise reworks the details entirely. The respective Gospel chronologies are listed in the table below. One immediately notices that John is much more distinct from the Synoptics than even the Synoptics are from each other.

Table 4: Gospel Empty Tomb Chronologies

Chronology	Matthew 28:1-8	Mark 16:1-8	Luke 24:1-12	John 20:1-18
Event 1	Women Approach Tomb	Women Approach Tomb	Women Approach Tomb	Mary Approaches Tomb
Event 2	Tomb Is Dramatically Opened	Women See Stone Already Moved	Women See Stone Already Moved	Mary Sees Stone Already Moved
Event 3	Angel Shows Women Empty Spot	Young Man Shows Women Empty Spot	Two Men Tell Women Jesus Is Risen	Mary Leaves to Tell Peter and the Beloved Disciple
Event 4	Women Leave to Tell Disciples	Women Leave and Tell No One	Women Leave to Tell the Apostles	Peter and the Beloved Disciple Run

				to and Look inside Tomb
Event 5	Jesus Appears to Women	N/A	Peters Runs to and Looks inside Tomb	Mary Weeps at the Tomb and Sees Two Angels
Event 6	N/A	N/A	N/A	Jesus Appears to Mary

Here, one can see that John's narrative contains a mixture of events included in the Synoptic Gospels but with different sequences. John starts the same way as the other Gospels: women discover the tomb, although John only mentions Mary.<sup>21</sup> Next, John agrees with Mark and Luke that the women (or just Mary) see the stone already rolled away.<sup>22</sup> Then, John differs from all three Synoptics by narrating that Mary immediately returns to the disciples, whereas the Synoptics say that angels talked with the women.<sup>23</sup> Next, John agrees with Luke that the women (or only Mary) tell Peter (or him and the Beloved Disciple) about the empty tomb and that Peter runs to it, whereas Matthew narrates that Jesus appeared to the women right after they left the tomb, and Mark says nothing more after the women leave the tomb.<sup>24</sup> Thereafter, John discusses the angels' conversation with Mary, whereas the Synoptics include this detail earlier in their chronologies.<sup>25</sup> Finally, John narrates Jesus' appearance to Mary, which does not appear

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<sup>21</sup>John 20:1-2, Matthew 28:1-2, Mark 16:1-4, and Luke 24:13, NRSV.

<sup>22</sup>John 20:1-2, Mark 16:1-4, and Luke 24:13, NRSV.

<sup>23</sup>John 20:2, Matthew 28:5-7, Mark 16:6-7, and Luke 24:4-7, NRSV.

<sup>24</sup>John 20:2-4, Matthew 28:9-10, Mark 16:8, and Luke 24:10-12, NRSV.

<sup>25</sup>John 20:11-13, Matthew 28:2-7, Mark 16:5-7, and Luke 24:4-7, NRSV.

in any of the Synoptics.<sup>26</sup> While Matthew has an appearance scene to the women in which Mary was present, it occurs before the women tell the disciples, and Mary is in a group of women when she sees Jesus rather than alone as John narrates.<sup>27</sup>

From the above analysis, it is clear that if John had used one or more of the Synoptic Gospels as sources, it is likely he would have followed one of their empty tomb chronologies more faithfully. Instead, he has one event from one Synoptic Gospel, another from a different Gospel, and still another from yet another Gospel; and on top of that, he shuffles the events so that they are not in the same order as the other Gospels.<sup>28</sup> Now, to be fair, he does indeed narrate a few things in the same order, such as the women's discovering the empty tomb before telling the disciples about the empty tomb – but that is only because those events literally had to occur in that precise order to make any sense.<sup>29</sup> The chronology in this scene is sensible, though, if John used traditions from elsewhere, such as those that the Johannine community preserved and changed in the transmission process. And considering that the Beloved Disciple appears in John's empty tomb story as a character, it may not be too bold to say that some parts of this narrative could be based on traditions that he passed on to his community of believers. This is not at all an unreasonable claim if one thinks that the Beloved Disciple played a pivotal role

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<sup>26</sup>John 20:14-18, NRSV.

<sup>27</sup>Matthew 28:9-10, NRSV; see also Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 632; also Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?*, 1-8.

<sup>28</sup>For the same conclusion, see Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels*, 73-87.

<sup>29</sup>Dvorak, "The Relationship between John and the Synoptic Gospels," 203.

in the community's history, as experts like Brown and Bauckham have maintained.<sup>30</sup>

Even more boldly, Dunn maintained that the Beloved Disciples and Mary Magdalene were likely sources for some of the content in chapters 19-21 of John. Whether that was the case is not critical here, but the point is that John had many possible options for sources.<sup>31</sup>

### **Preservation of Synoptic Redaction**

John does not clearly preserve any Synoptic redactions in this narrative, and that fact is best explained by his use of community traditions.<sup>32</sup> The redaction-critical argument for Johannine dependence on the Synoptics is already weak because it suffers from an important flaw from the start: it is a contestable hypothesis built upon another contestable hypothesis. One must assume that a certain solution to the infamous Synoptic problem is correct before one can judge whether John preserved a redaction made by a Synoptic Gospel that used an earlier Synoptic Gospel as a source. For example, if one supposes that the two-source hypothesis is right, then one would expect that Matthew and Luke redacted Mark's stories. If, for instance, John used Luke and preserved a redaction made by Luke, then that would strongly suggest John used Luke; otherwise, why would a distinctly Lukan characteristic appear in John's account? However, if the two-source

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<sup>30</sup>Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 31-32; see also Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 384-411.

<sup>31</sup>Dunn, *The Oral Gospel Tradition*, 195.

<sup>32</sup>Smith, *John among the Gospels*, 177-80.

hypothesis is wrong, then the preserved redaction cannot be the explanation of why John's story looks more like Matthew than Mark's.<sup>33</sup>

Setting those difficulties aside for the moment, there is only one possible instance in which John may have preserved a Synoptic redaction in the empty tomb narrative.<sup>34</sup> John writes that there are two angels inside the tomb when Mary looks into it; similarly, Luke writes that there are two men (presumably angels) in the tomb when the women enter it to look for Jesus' body.<sup>35</sup> Mark, however, simply writes that there was a young man (also presumably an angel) inside the tomb. Assuming Luke used Mark as a source, he must have redacted Mark to say that there were two men instead of one.<sup>36</sup> Then John, using Luke as a source, preserved Luke's redaction of Mark. This argument is unconvincing. First, as explained above, it must assume that Luke used Mark as a source, and then it must assume that John did not have access to another tradition that coincidentally mentioned that there were two angels, especially since John decided to say "angels" instead of "men" as Luke says. The case might be stronger if the purported preserved redaction were a distinctly Lukan theme that appears nowhere else in John, but this isolated incident does not show such a strong thematic mark. It is much more reasonable to suppose that the two angels come from a separate Johannine tradition. And

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<sup>33</sup>For more detailed information on the two-source hypothesis and other competing solutions to the Synoptic problem, see, *The Gospels*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman, 244-250.

<sup>34</sup>Bailey, *The Traditions Common to the Gospels of Luke and John*, 87-92.

<sup>35</sup>John 20:12 and Luke 24:4, NRSV.

<sup>36</sup>Bailey, *The Traditions Common to the Gospels of Luke and John*, 87-92.

considering the probable background of the Johannine community constructed in the previous chapter, it is likely that the author of John would have known traditions about the empty tomb that did not stem from a Synoptic source, or perhaps he had a pre-Synoptic source in common with another Synoptic Gospel, such as Luke.<sup>37</sup>

### **Assumption of Synoptic Details**

Furthermore, Synoptic details that John could be assuming do not support dependence because John could just as easily be assuming traditions already known to his community.<sup>38</sup> The only detail John could be assuming here is Matthew's text that narrates the rolling away of the stone. But this is weak evidence because none of the other Evangelists narrate the opening of the tomb, and John could just be following the narration as it had been handed to him. In other words, John could just as easily be assuming familiarity with community traditions as with Synoptic traditions. Most likely in this case, John was narrating a parallel tradition that he received that perchance happened to agree with Mark and Luke because the three traditions represented the most historically plausible situation: the women found the tomb after the stone had been moved. It is also important to notice that John could hardly have written his story without "assuming" a detail of the empty tomb because the story would not work without it.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels*, 77-78.

<sup>38</sup>Smith, *John among the Gospels*, 180.

<sup>39</sup>Matthew 28:2-4 and John 20:1, NRSV.

## Incidental Differences

Finally, the incidental differences between John's empty tomb narrative and the Synoptic narratives pose serious problems for the dependence hypothesis but do make sense if John used community traditions. This is the strongest argument against dependence. If John were using the Synoptics, why would he change small, theologically insignificant details for no reason? Often, when scholars see changes in the Gospel stories, it is possible to discern why the authors modified the stories for theological or literary purposes. But many details in John's Gospel have no discernible motivations for being different from the Synoptics. A difference between John and the Synoptics with no discernible theological motive makes more sense as originating from oral traditions because details in oral traditions are changed in the process of transmission in a way that does not occur in the use of written sources. The first examples appear at the start of the empty tomb narrative. John emphasizes that Mary came to the tomb "while it was still dark."<sup>40</sup> Matthew, Mark, and Luke, however, say the women went "as the first day of the week was dawning,"<sup>41</sup> "when the sun had risen,"<sup>42</sup> and at "early dawn,"<sup>43</sup> respectively.<sup>44</sup> A few verses later, when the angels appear to the women, John writes that two angels were sitting, while Matthew says one angel was sitting on the stone after having moved

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<sup>40</sup>John 20:1, NRSV.

<sup>41</sup>Matthew 28:1, NRSV.

<sup>42</sup>Mark 16:2, NRSV.

<sup>43</sup>Luke 24:1, NRSV.

<sup>44</sup>Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?*, 171-72; see also Brown, "The Resurrection in John 20 -- A Series of Diverse Reactions," 195.



it, while Mark has one young man sitting, and while Luke writes that two men were standing.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, what the man, or men, or angel, or angels say or says to the woman or women is different in each Gospel, although John's account is by far the shortest, in which the angels ask Mary, "Woman, why are you weeping?"<sup>46</sup> The idea that the details were reworded in diverging oral traditions makes the best sense of the differences. Even if John had access to one or more of the Synoptic Gospels, the author must have given precedence to other sources here, presumably traditions most trusted by his community.

John also differs in trivial details when narrating Peter's approach to the tomb.<sup>47</sup> John has this story in common only with Luke but diverges widely from him. In John, Mary Magdalene tells Peter and the Beloved Disciple about the empty tomb, and they both run to see it; in Luke, the three women together tell all the disciples, who do not believe them, while Peter alone runs to the tomb. In both Gospels, Peter examines the empty tomb and then leaves without understanding its significance, yet John's version of tomb examination is much more detailed than Luke's.<sup>48</sup> Then, in John, Mary experiences

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<sup>45</sup>John 20:12, NRSV; see also Matthew 28:2; also Mark 16:5; also Luke 24:4; also Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?*, 173.

<sup>46</sup>John 20:13, NRSV; see also Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?*, 173.

<sup>47</sup>For a discussion of three possible explanations for why this story is held in common between Luke and John, see Craig, "The Disciples' Inspection of the Empty Tomb (Lk 24,12.24; Jn 20,2-10)," 416-17.

<sup>48</sup>Regarding the two disciple's puzzlement at the tomb, see Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels*, 77. He finds it interesting that John says that Peter and the Beloved Disciple do not understand the scriptures regarding Jesus' resurrection. If John were using Mark as a source, for example, in which Jesus thrice predicts his resurrection, then it is quite odd that John makes no attempt to incorporate that idea into his empty tomb narrative.

the risen Jesus; but in Luke, she drops out of the narration after the women tell the disciples about the empty tomb. The impression from John's narration when read against Luke's is that John cuts and pastes random details, deletes others, and inserts new ones. That does not make sense if John used Luke, but it would make sense if oral tradition had scrambled some of the details during the process of transmission, which John's author reorganized when writing the Gospel.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, the differences suggest that John's appearance to Mary is probably not derived from Matthew's appearance to the women. In John, Jesus appears only to Mary; in Matthew, Jesus appears to Mary and the "other Mary" at once. In John, Jesus appears to Mary after she tells Peter and the Beloved Disciple; in Matthew, Jesus appears to both women before they tell Peter and the other disciples.<sup>50</sup> Jesus' words in both stories are also extremely different, although these actually can be explained by theological and literary conventions. For example, if Craig Koester is correct, John's Gospel creates a literary juxtaposition with Peter and the Beloved Disciple and Mary Magdalene. The author creates this juxtaposition using multiple pairings: seeing the burial cloths twice; asking about the reason for weeping twice; or turning toward Jesus twice. Koester explains these not as the combination of multiple sources but a deliberate attempt to highlight John's theological themes of seeing and believing.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Craig, "The Disciples' Inspection of the Empty Tomb (Lk 24,12.24; Jn 20,2-10)," 416-17.

<sup>50</sup>See John 20:14-18 and Matthew 28:9-10, NRSV.

<sup>51</sup>Craig Koester, "Hearing, Seeing, and Believing in the Gospel of John," *Biblica* 70 (1989): 343-47; see also Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?*, 176.

If Koester is correct, then John might have reworked Matthew's story of the women to suit this purpose; yet in this context, it makes much more sense that John applied those theological and literary devices (like juxtaposition) to the oral or written tradition he received within his own community. For example, John could have received a tradition about multiple women and then excised them from the story just as easily as he could have excised Matthew's "other Mary."<sup>52</sup> Additionally, if John received a tradition saying that Mary's experience of the risen Jesus happened after telling the disciples, then he easily could have transported the appearance to Mary from beforehand to afterward. Changing the Synoptic Gospels was not the only way to create the stories that the author wanted; he could change oral traditions just as easily. Why should one prefer John's use of oral tradition here? The other incidental differences, such as the different times in the morning that the tomb was discovered, make Matthew an unlikely candidate to stand behind John's source, but John's use of community traditions can explain those differences. Indeed, the incidental differences in the empty tomb stories collectively indicate that the community shaped John's sources before they got to him, after which he shaped them further, resulting in the differences readers can now see among the Gospel resurrection narratives.<sup>53</sup>

### **Summary and Conclusion**

To summarize, John's empty tomb narrative and the Synoptic empty tomb narratives exhibit almost no clear signs of literary dependence. Additionally, John's

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<sup>52</sup>Matthew 28:1, NRSV.

<sup>53</sup>Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?*, 176.

account contains incidental differences in chronology, details, and dialogue that suggest the author used only community traditions and none of the Synoptic Gospels. Even those who support Synoptic dependence tend to explain John's additional material with separate oral traditions. The question that this project asks is why any Synoptic dependence needs to be asserted at all if most of the narrative came from other traditions anyway? The few details that look Synoptic-like could easily have been shaped in that way unintentionally during oral transmission. Based on current community scholarship, John certainly drew on the memories passed on by those who formed his community. Significantly, the community hypothesis provides scholars with the possibility of an important source that the apostolic and Synoptic Christians did not have: this source would be, of course, the Beloved Disciple. Because this disciple features as a prominent character in the empty tomb narrative, it may be that he had something to do with creating some of the tradition that ultimately found its way into John's distinctive account of the first Easter morning. With so much evidence for alternative sources, there is no need to suppose any Synoptic dependence.

## CHAPTER 3: JESUS' APPEARANCE TO THE DISCIPLES AND THEN TO THOMAS

### **Introduction and Arguments**

After narrating the discovery of the empty tomb and Jesus' appearance to Mary, John leaves this scene and writes about Jesus' two final appearances in chapter 20, first to the disciples in a house without Thomas, and then to the disciples in the same house with Thomas a week later. Unlike the empty tomb story that has a version in each Gospels, the story of the house occurs only in John and Luke. John attaches the Doubting Thomas story to his house story, which creates a two-part scene that parallels the two-part empty tomb scene that occurs earlier in the chapter. In other words, John packages the empty tomb story and appearance to Mary as one part, and then he packages two appearances in the house together.<sup>1</sup> Because the house scene appears in Luke, some experts are certain that John used this Gospel, calling the similarities "too great to be accidental."<sup>2</sup> Others are more cautious; as one critic observed, "It is impossible to identify any of John's sources here, and to estimate their worth."<sup>3</sup> Perhaps it is impossible to do so with certainty, but even so, surely some process of elimination is possible: either John relied on Luke along with other traditions or used only independent traditions.

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)*, 965, 995.

<sup>2</sup>Bailey, *The Traditions Common to the Gospels of Luke and John*, 92.

<sup>3</sup>Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 567.

This chapter also argues that John relied on community traditions rather than the Synoptic Gospels when writing these two episodes, just as he did when writing the two episodes in the empty tomb scene. As in the previous case, any verbal agreements, chronological agreements, apparent Synoptic redaction, and assumed details between John and the Synoptics are too minimal or nonexistent to be strong evidence for dependence, whereas the incidental differences point to John's use of other sources. Given the existence of an independent Johannine community, the better hypothesis is that the author drew from the memories and traditions passed along within that group; in particular, an isolated stream of tradition explains both the similarities and differences better than Synoptic dependence.

### Analyzing the Gospel Texts

The options for Synoptic dependence are limited here because John shares this appearance story only with Luke while the Doubting Thomas story is distinctive to John. The table below sets the texts of the first appearance in the house side-by-side, while the Johannine text on Thomas' story appears alone. As before, the text is drawn from the New Revised Standard Version.<sup>4</sup>

Table 5: Jesus' Appearance to the Disciples in a House

Luke 24:33-43	John 20:19-23
<b>33</b> That same hour they [the two disciples on the road to Emmaus] got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. <b>34</b> They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to	<b>19</b> When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <b>20</b> After he said this, he

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<sup>4</sup>For the parallel passages of these texts in Greek, see *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, ed. Kurt Aland, 502-4.

<p>Simon!" <b>35</b> Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. <b>36</b> While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." <b>37</b> They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. <b>38</b> He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? <b>39</b> Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." <b>40</b> And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. <b>41</b> While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" <b>42</b> They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <b>43</b> and he took it and ate in their presence [Jesus then explains the scriptures to the disciples and ascends].</p>	<p>showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <b>21</b> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." <b>22</b> When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <b>23</b> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."</p>
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Table 6: Jesus' Appearance to the Disciples in a House with Thomas

Appearance Story Distinctive to John 20:24-29
<p><b>24</b> But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <b>25</b> So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." <b>26</b> A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <b>27</b> Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." <b>28</b> Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" <b>29</b> Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."</p>

Perhaps it might be suggested that these two parallel appearance stories do not describe the same event because the setting is too generic; after all, the narratives simply

describe an appearance to a group of disciples in a house. However, based on Jesus' words and the themes in the two Gospels, it is likely that they describe the same experience. In both accounts, the disciples struggle with belief in the resurrection, and Jesus shows his wounds to them to prove that he is risen. And in both accounts, the appearance takes place on the same day as the resurrection, which implies that a common memory ultimately informed both Gospels.<sup>5</sup> In John's case, it is clear that he received this story from somewhere other than his own imagination because the previous scene has almost no connection to this scene; if the author created the story himself, then the apparent narrative inconsistencies between this appearance and his empty tomb story are largely inexplicable.<sup>6</sup> Given John's having borrowed the story, the task is to show that Luke is not the source behind John, which would leave community traditions as the most probable source.

### **Verbal Agreements and Differences**

As in the empty-tomb stories, the verbal agreements between Luke and John are sparse; John's use of community traditions explains them just as well as dependence on

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<sup>5</sup>For this inconsistency, see Bailey, *The Traditions Common to the Gospels of Luke and John*, 92-93. Bailey sees this as evidence for Synoptic dependence but does not seem to give much credit to the idea that basic themes of recognition and belief in the physical body of the resurrected Jesus could have survived transmission via oral tradition rather than a written source.

<sup>6</sup>See Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XII-XXI)*, 1027-28. Brown is sure that John did not create this appearance in the house of those narrative inconsistencies. For example, the fact that the Beloved Disciple does not show his evidence of belief in this story (or even appear in it as a character). Additionally, Mary Magdalene's belief does not seem to have affected the disciples despite her having told Peter and the Beloved Disciple in the previous scene.



Luke. In both accounts, Jesus greets the disciples by saying, “Peace be with you.”<sup>7</sup> This greeting, however, is so simple and commonplace that it could have survived independent transmission easily, especially if the greeting had acquired a special significance among the early Christians.<sup>8</sup> The only other agreement in phrasing would be “After he said this, he showed...”<sup>9</sup> which is also a rather bland phrase. Using these two examples, one is hard-pressed to find evidence of Synoptic dependence here because both these phrases could have arisen simultaneously in the passage of tradition passed on by both the other early Christians and Johannine community, even if they did not stem from a common oral source that informed both the Beloved Disciple’s preaching and the apostolic preaching.

### **Chronological Similarities and Differences**

Additionally, the chronological agreements between John and Luke do not indicate John’s dependence on Luke. The best way to demonstrate the two sequences of events is to construct another table, setting Luke and John side-by-side. Although it is not easy to produce a chronology within a single scene, the list here is intended to encapsulate the basic chains of events so that the two accounts can be compared more easily.

Table 7: Chronologies of the Appearance in a House

Chronology	Luke 24:36-43	John 20:19-23
Event 1	Disciples Gathered in	Disciples Gathered in House

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<sup>7</sup>Luke 24:36 and John 20:19, NRSV.

<sup>8</sup>Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 568; see also Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XII-XXI)*, 1035.

<sup>9</sup>Luke 24:40 and John 20:20, NRSV. In this translation, the verbal agreement is not preserved in English as well as it is preserved in the original Greek.

	House in Jerusalem	in Jerusalem
Event 2	Jesus Appears to Disciples and Says, “Peace be with You”	Jesus Appears to Disciples and Says, “Peace be with You”
Event 3	Disciples Believe Jesus is a Ghost	Jesus Shows Disciples His Hands and Side
Event 4	Jesus Shows His Hands and Feet to Disciples to Prove He is Not a Ghost and Eats Broiled Fish	Disciples Rejoice, Jesus repeats “Peace be with You,” Breathes on Them to Receive the Holy Spirit, and Gives Them Power to Forgive Sins
Event 5	Jesus Explains Scripture, Commissions Disciples, and Ascends	Disciples Tell Thomas, Who Disbelieves
Event 6	N/A	A Week Later, Jesus Appears to Disciples and Thomas, Who Believes

One can see that John matches the Lukan chronology at certain points. The disciples gather in the house, Jesus appears to them, they are shocked, and he shows them his wounds. Yet, as an argument for dependence on Luke, the chronological agreement is unhelpful. As elsewhere, John matches Luke only because of logical necessity: there cannot be an appearance to the disciples in a house without the disciples’ gathering there first, and Jesus cannot show his wounds to the disciples until after he appears to them. Other than this, however, the divergences are great. In Luke, Jesus explains the scriptures to the disciples and then ascends to heaven. In John, Jesus gives the disciples the power to forgive sins and then breathes on them so that they will receive the Holy Spirit; then a full week passes by and Jesus appears to Thomas. Most interestingly, John narrates no ascension, so it does not feature as a chronological agreement with Luke. And even if there were an ascension, it would have to occur after the same event that Luke narrates in

order to have consistency. But even then, the author of John would have had to choose between the sequence in Luke 24:50-53 for Jesus' ascension or the chronology in Acts 1:1-11, which shares the same author (although the author of Luke-Acts was just using the literary compression to shorten the account in Luke for brevity, after which he narrated the full account in Acts). Regardless, John would have had to make a choice. Thus, the order of events in both accounts suggests that John did not depend on Luke but received a tradition about Jesus' appearance to the disciples in a house from elsewhere, likely members of his own community.<sup>10</sup>

### **Preservation of Synoptic Redaction**

Applying the criterion of Synoptic redaction is difficult in the case of this scene because Luke's source does not exist in written form. Neither Mark nor Matthew have the story, so Luke either got it from his distinctive written L source or some oral material that scholars would assign to the L source. Despite not having Luke's sources available, redaction criticism can still use Lukan literary tendencies to deduce what aspects of the story may be Lukan redactions. For example, the breaking of bread is mentioned twice in Luke's resurrection story with reference to the disciples' recognition of Jesus, and some experts believe that the bread represents theological themes in Luke.<sup>11</sup> This could imply that Luke either added the reference to bread or that the traditions just happened to include bread, and Luke kept that detail in the story. Either way, Luke uses the bread as

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<sup>10</sup>For the literary device of compression in Luke and Acts, see Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?*, 20, 177.

<sup>11</sup>For the connection between breaking bread and the resurrection of Jesus in Luke, see Paul B. Decock, "The Breaking of Bread in Luke 24," *Neotestamentica* 36 (2002): 39-56.

part of his redactional overlay. Because bread plays no part in this appearance narrative, John does not preserve this possible redaction; in fact, no food of any kind is mentioned, not even the piece of broiled fish that Luke explicitly uses to prove the physicality of Jesus' body.<sup>12</sup> If John used Luke, then he must have deleted the two references to bread along with the Emmaus story in which the references appear. This would be a strange choice for John to make, however, because the Emmaus story supplies two themes that match two of John's themes: the recognition of Jesus as shown in the appearance to Mary at the tomb,<sup>13</sup> and the idea that bread refers to spiritual life, as when Jesus says earlier in the Gospel, "I am the bread of life."<sup>14</sup> John apparently did not use Luke's appearance stories and may not have even known they existed. If he had known about them, then he likely would have used them in his Gospel.

Similarly, John does not preserve Luke's obvious concern about proving the physicality of Jesus' resurrected body. Experts agree that Luke reworked his source material in order to show that Jesus' new body is not only a spiritual body but also a physical body.<sup>15</sup> In Luke, Jesus says to the disciples in the house, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see

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<sup>12</sup>For more on the theological motifs in Luke's resurrection narrative, see I. Howard Marshall, "The Resurrection of Jesus in Luke," *Tyndale Bulletin* 24 (1973): 78-79.

<sup>13</sup>John 11-18, NRSV.

<sup>14</sup>John 6:35, NRSV.

<sup>15</sup>D. A. Smith, "Seeing a Pneuma(Tic Body): The Apologetic Interests of Luke 24:36-43," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 72 (2010): 752-72.

that I have.”<sup>16</sup> Jesus then goes on to show the disciples his hands and feet, and then he asks them for food. Again, John mentions no food here. But the Johannine Jesus does show his hands and side to the disciples, although John does not record Jesus’ showing his feet to them. This is the only place where John may preserve a Lukan redaction in this appearance story. The argument suffers from the same flaw as before: the desire to prove the bodily nature of Jesus’ resurrection is not distinctly Lukan. Many of the earliest Christians took care to describe the resurrection in bodily terms. And if one accepts the standard hypotheses about the community behind John’s Gospel, then it makes sense that a story about Jesus’ physical body would have appeared in the tradition of Johannine preaching, just as it appeared in other surviving sources about the resurrection. Perhaps it appeared in the Beloved Disciple’s early preaching, if he knew about that experience.

### **Assumption of Synoptic Details**

This slice of text does not have many details that John could be assuming. The only detail that John could be assuming is Jesus’ ascension, which Luke narrates in his Gospel as well as in Acts.<sup>17</sup> John does not narrate it, but he implies Jesus’ ascension when he discusses Jesus’ conversation with Mary, in which he says, “Do not hold onto me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father.”<sup>18</sup> But a few facts militate against the idea that John is assuming what Luke makes explicit. First, only Luke narrates Jesus’ ascension; Matthew and Mark’s original ending do not include it, and it makes little sense

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<sup>16</sup>Luke 24:38-39, NRSV.

<sup>17</sup>Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:9, NRSV.

<sup>18</sup>John 20:17, NRSV.

to say Mark and Matthew were assuming what Luke wrote since both Gospels probably came before Luke.<sup>19</sup> Second, if John 21 was part of the original Gospel, then the fact that John does not narrate Jesus' ascension makes sense because Jesus has to sort things out between Peter and the Beloved Disciple by the Sea of Galilee. Yet, even if that chapter is a later addition, John would be acting no stranger than Mark or Matthew for leaving the ascension out of the main storyline.

### **Incidental Differences**

If John used Luke as a source, then he differs from Luke in describing the giving of the Holy Spirit.<sup>20</sup> In John, Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to the disciples in the house: "When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" <sup>21</sup> The Lukan Jesus, however, tells the disciples to remain in Jerusalem and await the giving of the Holy Spirit: "And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."<sup>22</sup> The same author narrates a similar saying in his sequel, the Acts of the Apostles, in which Jesus says the disciples "will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."<sup>23</sup> The next chapter narrates this giving of the Holy Spirit itself: "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound

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<sup>19</sup>For the composition of each Gospel, see *The Gospels*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman, 27-28, 85, 137, and 187.

<sup>20</sup>Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 570.

<sup>21</sup>John 20:22, NRSV.

<sup>22</sup>Luke 24:49, NRSV.

<sup>23</sup>Acts 1:5, NRSV.

like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting ... All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.”<sup>24</sup> The reception of the Holy Spirit is dramatic in Acts, followed by the explosive birth of the church, but in John, there are no special effects; Jesus simply tells them that they are receiving the Holy Spirit, but nothing else seems to happen; indeed, the Johannine resurrection story would lose no real content if the statement were removed.<sup>25</sup>

From a historical-critical perspective, there is an apparent contradiction here regarding when and how the disciples receive the Holy Spirit. It is possible that if John knew Luke, he disagreed with Luke on when the Holy Spirit was given, which would contradict both Luke’s Gospel and the Pentecost story in Acts. But there are two reasons not to accept that conclusion: first, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, John’s community considered the apostolic Christians to be legitimate followers of Jesus, which makes outright contradiction less likely; and second, John could be using the ancient literary conventions of displacement or compression to highlight the point that the disciples receive the Holy Spirit and the power to forgive sins without extending his narrative beyond his purposes of illustrating his theological themes regarding faith in Jesus.<sup>26</sup> Yet, an important question remains: did John displace or compress Luke or displace or

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<sup>24</sup>Acts 2:1-4, NRSV.

<sup>25</sup>John 20:22, NRSV.

<sup>26</sup>For the contrast between Thomas as the other disciples’ faith, see Koester, “Hearing, Seeing, and Believing in the Gospel of John 345-47.

compress a tradition he received from his community?<sup>27</sup> In the absence of other indications of dependence, it is more likely that John knew the commonly held view that the apostles were blessed with the Holy Spirit after Jesus' resurrection and incorporated it into his Gospel in his own way.

Another incidental difference is the suggested number of disciples. Luke suggests that a group larger than the Twelve is present, whereas John suggests that a smaller group was present, such as the Twelve minus Judas and Thomas.<sup>28</sup> The size of the group is largely irrelevant to John's version of the story, unless he deliberately implies only the Twelve so that they have the apostolic authority to forgive sins.<sup>29</sup> That however, would not support Lukan dependence because John could have easily altered the tradition rather than altering Luke, especially since background characters are easily lost during oral transmission. According to the methodological approach adopted in this project, reading John and the Synoptics in the light of the community hypothesis provides extra possibilities from which John could draw material. Given the more sectarian character of his community, the balance is tipped in favor of independence because a tightly-knit group like the Johannine community would have favored a tradition from their own sources than an outside Lukan tradition.

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<sup>27</sup>Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?*, 20.

<sup>28</sup>Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 568. Barrett himself is not completely confident that John implies only the presence of the group composing the Twelve, but it seems here to be a reasonable inference and serves as a possible incidental difference.

<sup>29</sup>John 20:23, NRSV.



## **Summary and Conclusion**

Jesus' appearance to the disciples in a house on the same day of his resurrection is one of the most fascinating appearance narratives, and as this chapter has argued, it is most likely that John acquired the story from a source other than Luke. As with the other stories in John's resurrection account, when one compares Synoptic dependence with the idea that the author had access to traditions passed on by his community, it makes more historical sense to assign the stories to that stream of tradition. So far, the empty tomb scene and the appearance in the house both seem to stem from stand-alone Johannine traditions.

## CHAPTER 4: THE EPILOGUE TO JOHN'S GOSPEL AND LUKE'S MIRACULOUS CATCH OF FISH

### Introduction and Arguments

Now it is time to cover the final resurrection appearance in John's Gospel, which primarily functions to discuss the relationship between Peter and the Beloved Disciple. In this epilogue, some of Jesus' disciples are fishing in the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus appears to them, primarily for the purposes of restoring Peter after his denial and clarifying the relationship between Peter and the Beloved Disciple. Scholars like Willem Vorster divide this chapter into three parts, which are the miraculous catch of fish in verses 1-14, the relationship between Peter and the Beloved Disciple in 15-23, and the identification of eyewitness testimony in 24-25.<sup>1</sup> Again, most experts consider this story to be a later addition to the Gospel.<sup>2</sup> While a sizable minority has challenged that view, theories promoting the originality of chapter 21 have not swayed many experts.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Willem S. Vorster, "The Growth and Making of John 21," in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Franz Neirynck*, ed. F. Van Segbroeck (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 2208; see also Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XII-XXI)*, 1082.

<sup>2</sup>Quast, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple*, 126.

<sup>3</sup>Keith, "The Competitive Textualizations of the Jesus Tradition in John 20:30-31 and 21:24-25," 321-37; see also Carsten Claussen, "The Role of John 21: Discipleship in Retrospect and Redefinition," in *New Currents through John: A Global Perspective*, ed. Francisco Lozada Jr. and Tom Thatcher (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 55-68; also Peter F. Ellis, "The Authenticity of John 21," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 36 (1992): 17-25; also Paul Sevier Minear, "The Original Functions of John 21," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102 (1983): 85-98.

Even so, some believe that the author of the epilogue was the same as the author of the rest of the Gospel, but others are content to say it was someone else within the same community of faith. For example, Raymond Brown surveyed the evidence for unity but concluded modestly that the epilogue is a later edition by a redactor.<sup>4</sup> Howard Teeple also assigned John 21 to the work of the final redactor of the Gospel and other parts to an editor or two separate sources.<sup>5</sup> This project assumes the majority position that a later redactor added the final chapter, but the identity of the author and whether the chapter was original does not affect the argument regarding Synoptic dependence.

Regardless of the relationship between the epilogue and the rest of John's Gospel, any source-critical study of the Johannine resurrection stories should include Jesus' final appearance in Galilee. This chapter will test John 21 for Synoptic dependence in the same manner as the other appearance stories: any potential evidence of dependence will be judged against the background of John's community and explained either in terms of textual dependence or the shaping of oral tradition within the community. Of all the appearance stories, this one poses the most challenges for those who argue for Synoptic dependence. The only portion that has anything close to Synoptic material is the first part, verses 1-14.<sup>6</sup>

Certainly, the reinstatement of Peter in verses 15-23 is slightly reminiscent of Matthew and Mark's statements about Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah during

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<sup>4</sup>Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XII-XXI)*, 1077-80.

<sup>5</sup>Teeple, *The Literary Origin of the Gospel of John*, 245-51.

<sup>6</sup>Vorster, "The Growth and Making of John 21," 2210-11.

his ministry, but few scholars have ever proposed that John directly depended on the Synoptics for that portion due to extensive differences in wording and context, so it will not be treated here.<sup>7</sup> John 21:1-14, therefore, is the part of the text on which this chapter will focus. And if the epilogue is indeed a later edition, this would mean that the Johannine community, even in the final stages of the Gospel's composition, did not use the Synoptics, which would further strengthen the overall argument for independence of the earlier resurrection stories in chapter 20 as well.

### Analyzing the Gospel Texts

For this episode, it is difficult to select particular Synoptic texts from which John may have drawn. The narrative scholars recognize as the most similar (or perhaps the least dissimilar) is Luke's story of the miraculous catch of fish, in which Jesus calls Peter to be his disciple. New Testament commentators have noted the small resemblance between the two passages.<sup>8</sup> Both Gospel stories are lined up side-by-side as in previous chapters of this thesis.<sup>9</sup>

Table 8: The Lukan and Johannine Fishing Scenes

Luke 5:1-11	John 21:1-14
<b>1</b> Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, <b>2</b> he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of	<b>1</b> After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. <b>2</b> Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin,

<sup>7</sup>Vorster, "The Growth and Making of John 21," 2212-13; see also Matthew 16:17-19 and Mark 8:27-29, NRSV.

<sup>8</sup>Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 578.

<sup>9</sup>For parallel texts of these passages in Greek, see *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, ed. Kurt Aland, 506-7.

them and were washing their nets. **3** He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. **4** When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." **5** Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." **6** When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. **7** So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. **8** But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" **9** For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; **10** and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." **11** When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. **3** Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. **4** Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. **5** Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." **6** He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. **7** That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. **8** But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. **9** When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. **10** Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." **11** So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. **12** Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. **13** Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. **14** This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. [Then in the rest of the chapter, Jesus reinstates Peter and resolves tension between Peter and the Beloved Disciple, after which the author emphasizes the eyewitness testimony behind the Gospel.]

Even though Matthew and Mark have narratives in which Jesus calls new disciples while they are fishing, they are much shorter and do not include the similarities that Luke has with John; for example, neither of those Gospels includes a miraculous catch of fish. For that reason, they are not judged here as possible sources for John's account because even if John used them, he could not have borrowed more than a sentence or two. And if he had, he would have needed to reword them, change their contexts, and then draw from other sources for the rest of the story.<sup>10</sup> That makes Luke the only Synoptic candidate for John's story. There are a few minor similarities between the two Gospels. In both stories, the group of men fail to catch any fish, but when Jesus tells them to cast out their nets again, they catch more fish than they can handle.<sup>11</sup> Also, Peter and the sons of Zebedee feature as characters in each passage.<sup>12</sup> Finally, in both stories, the Sea of Galilee serves as the setting in which the events take place.<sup>13</sup> Regardless of these similarities between the Gospels, the divergences between Luke and John are even more substantial and require an explanation that dependence cannot easily provide. The two texts will be assessed below in this final application of the criteria of dependence.

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<sup>10</sup>The Matthean and Markan accounts of the calling of fishermen to be disciples appear respectively in Matthew 4:18-22 and Mark 1:16-20, NRSV.

<sup>11</sup>Luke 5:4-7 and John 21:5-6, NRSV.

<sup>12</sup>Luke 5:10 and John 21:2, NRSV.

<sup>13</sup>Luke 5:1 and John 21:1, NRSV. While Luke and John each call the lake by a different name, they refer to the same body of water.

## Verbal Agreements and Differences

This project has already emphasized the importance of verbal agreements between John and the Synoptics as the only criterion that is strong enough to defeat all others because the chances of exact wording between two independent sources is extremely small. And as in the previous chapters, the number of verbal agreements is insufficient to compete with the hypothesis that John relied on community traditions when writing this post-resurrection appearance story. There are no sentence-level agreements and not even phrase-level agreements here, which alone renders this criterion too weak to suggest the conclusion that John directly borrowed the Lukan story and inserted it into chapter 21.

However, John does share some individual words in common with Luke, but as with the empty-tomb stories, these words are not indicative of dependence because they are necessary for telling the story. These words include proper nouns like “Peter” and “Jesus,” common nouns like “boat,” “net,” and “fish” but almost no others. These words do not imply that John took them from Luke because they would have been in any source that John could have used; they were the only words available and thus one should expect him and Luke to have those in common if they tell a similar story.

And as with the other appearance stories, the grammatical cases and numbers of the words vary between John and Luke because John includes these words in different contexts within his sentences than Luke does. If John used Luke, then he must have purposefully altered the sentence styles to change the cases and then changed singular plural nouns to singular. For example, John refers to only one boat and one net.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>John 21:8 and 21:11, NRSV.

However, Luke refers to multiple boats and multiple nets.<sup>15</sup> Now, as Michael Licona has argued recently, changing cases and numbers was a normal practice in Graeco-Roman biography, but whether John changed Luke, or Luke changed John is indeterminable, which means that the idea that John used Luke rests on a slim foundation.<sup>16</sup>

### **Chronological Similarities and Differences**

There are no tell-tale chronological agreements between Luke and John here, but there are significant chronological differences, which support the independence of John 21 from Luke 5. John not only changes the setting and purpose of his story of the catch of fish, but he changes the events that occur within the story. This eliminates the chain of events that was present in Luke, which makes detecting Synoptic dependence almost impossible using this criterion. The table below sketches the chronologies of each story by roughly separating each main event.

Table 9: Fishing Scene Chronologies

Chronology	Luke 5:1-11	John 21:1-14
Event 1	Jesus Is Pressed by Crowd and Teaches from Boat	Disciples Go Fishing
Event 2	Jesus Tells Peter to Cast Nets and Peter Obeys Reluctantly	Jesus Stands on Shore and Tells Disciples to Cast Net
Event 3	Peter Catches Many Fish and Other Boats Help Him	Disciples Catch Many Fish, Recognize Jesus, and Bring Boat to Shore
Event 4	Peter Falls at Jesus' Feet and Jesus Calls Him as a Disciple	Jesus Gives Breakfast to Disciples

<sup>15</sup>Luke 5:2-6, NRSV.

<sup>16</sup>Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?*, 182.



Event 5	N/A	Jesus Reinstates Peter
Event 6	N/A	Jesus Resolves Tension between Peter and Beloved Disciple

From the chart, it is apparent that there are some agreements here. In both Gospels, the disciples venture into the lake in the boat. Then they fail to catch fish. Then Jesus enters the scene and commands the disciples to cast their net again. Then they catch a large amount of fish and they marvel at Jesus' power. That is the extent of the sequential agreement. As one can tell, the order is the same in both accounts by necessity. Each event had to occur in that order for the other events to occur. This is the only way the stories would make sense. John would have used that same order whether he borrowed from Luke or not.

But as in the previous chapters of this thesis, the chronological agreements are overshadowed by John's differences in these verses. In Luke, the failure to catch fish is implied. Luke lets the reader know that it has already happened because of Peter's words, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing."<sup>17</sup> Here, Peter mentions an event presupposed by the narrative but which is not itself narrated. However, John narrates the night of failed fishing explicitly before Jesus appears in the scene: "Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples... They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing."<sup>18</sup> Instead of compressing the material, John has

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<sup>17</sup>Luke 5:5, NRSV.

<sup>18</sup>John 21:2-3, NRSV.

a more expanded version of the story. Thus, in his narration, he discusses the night of fishing before Jesus appears, whereas Luke begins with Jesus' meeting the disciples.

So, what theory explains the differences? Some commentators believe that the story of the miraculous catch of fish began as a resurrection appearance story rather than a miracle story set during Jesus' ministry. It is difficult to determine which type of story it was because there are only two accounts: the Lukan version places the story in Jesus' ministry, and John places it after the resurrection. But if the original tradition was a resurrection story, then John has preserved the original setting even though his version of it is most likely newer than Luke's version.<sup>19</sup> If John preserved the original form, then he undoubtedly received the story from an oral or written tradition other than Luke, and when Luke acquired the related tradition at an earlier time, he used the ancient literary devices of compression and displacement, resulting in the differences that now appear between John and Luke.<sup>20</sup> John was not the only Gospel shaping the tradition; it is possible that one of the Synoptic Gospels shaped a common tradition much more than the later Johannine Gospel did, resulting in a later Gospel preserving a more primitive form of a story.

### **Preservation of Synoptic Redaction**

The lack of discernible Synoptic redaction in John 21 also favors John's independence here because details that look like redactions are based on slim evidence. Only two details in John 21:1-14 look similar to Luke's Gospel. For example, both John

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<sup>19</sup>Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XII-XXI)*, 1091.

<sup>20</sup>Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?*, 20.

and Luke include Peter and the sons of Zebedee together in the same fishing scene, whereas Mark gives Peter and the sons of Zebedee separate but connected scenes. Does John preserve Luke's redaction of Mark by including all three disciples together? It is theoretically possible, but as with the other examples of possible Synoptic redaction, the similarity does not demand dependence as its explanation. Even if John did use Luke, then he must have redacted the redaction to be reused in his resurrection appearance story when Luke had included it in his totally different story near the beginning of his Gospel in which both Peter and the sons of Zebedee first encounter Jesus.

A more promising argument might be John's inclusion of the recognition motif in chapter 21 as well as in chapter 20, but this suffers from the same problems as the other recognition scenes because it is not clearly a Lukan redaction. The only true recognition scene is in Luke's Emmaus story, and some scholars have indeed noticed the similarities between the disciples' recognition of Jesus on the shore in John and the recognition of the disciples in the Emmaus story.<sup>21</sup> As the previous chapter of this thesis observed, if John took his extensive recognition motif from Luke, then it makes no sense that John would leave out the Emmaus story. It is almost unthinkable that John would take a single theme from the Emmaus story, apply it to multiple appearance stories of his own, and then discard the Emmaus story itself when he could have just incorporated the entire story rather than redacting two or three separate appearance stories to include it.

Again, however, this possible evidence for dependence suffers from a flaw already mentioned earlier in this thesis: one must assume that the two-source hypothesis

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<sup>21</sup>Vorster, "The Growth and Making of John 21," 2211-12; see also Frans Neirynck, "John 21," *New Testament Studies* 36 (1990): 324-25.

is correct, or at least that Luke used Mark. If that is untrue, then the argument that John kept a change that Luke made to Mark is killed. Additionally, a new weakness in the redaction-critical method shows itself here: both of the above arguments mainly exhibit changes or themes that appear in only one instance in Luke rather than as leitmotifs throughout the entire Gospel. For example, recognition of the risen Jesus is only a theme in the Lukan resurrection stories and not present in the rest of the Gospel, and as mentioned earlier, Luke's sources for his individual appearance narratives do not exist in written form (recall that Mark's original ending narrates no appearances), so one cannot be sure that the recognition motif is even a Lukan characteristic at all. It is much simpler to assign the recognition motif to early common oral traditions that entered the Lukan and Johannine texts separately.<sup>22</sup>

### **Assumption of Synoptic Details**

There are only two slim possibilities where John could be assuming Synoptic details. First, chapter 21 is the only place in John where Peter is explicitly portrayed as a fisherman. According to the Gospel, "Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing'. . . They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing."<sup>23</sup> Clearly, John supposes that Peter knows how to fish, and the fact that he and the other disciples catch nothing is unrelated to their skill; rather, it is the setting for Jesus to appear and perform a miracle. The rest of the Gospel does not discuss his profession, so the ancient Christian reader needed to have prior knowledge for this to make sense. The second possibility is

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<sup>22</sup>Marshall, "The Resurrection of Jesus in Luke," 83.

<sup>23</sup>John 21:3, NRSV.

the reference to the “sons of Zebedee” as accompanying Peter on the fishing trip.<sup>24</sup> So, did John’s redactor simply assume Peter’s identity as a fisherman and James and John’s relationship to Zebedee? Did he accidentally forget to explain these elsewhere in the Gospel when editing it and thus betray his knowledge of the Synoptic Gospels?

That is a possible explanation of these features, but when one judges this proposal against the background of a self-standing community of Johannine Christians, it makes more sense to say that the author of chapter 21 was writing to a group of Christians who already knew who Peter was and thus needed no explanation of his profession earlier in the Gospel. Furthermore, if one allows the possibility that the Beloved Disciple was the primary source for the early streams of Johannine tradition, then he and all the other first-generation Christians would have known that Peter was a fisherman. For that community of Christians, as well as the other early Christian groups, Peter’s profession would have been common knowledge. That knowledge would have survived until the Evangelist or redactor added the epilogue to the Gospel.

### **Incidental Differences**

Incidental differences also cause the dependence hypothesis to suffer severely in this case. For example, the most convincing difference is how Luke and John each refer to the Sea of Galilee.<sup>25</sup> Luke calls it the “Lake of Gennesaret,” but John calls it the “Sea of Tiberias.”<sup>26</sup> If John depended on Luke here, then why did he change the name? There

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<sup>24</sup>John 21:2, NRSV; see also Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 578.

<sup>25</sup>Robert T. Fortna, “Diachronic/Synchronic Reading John 21 and Luke 5,” 390.

<sup>26</sup>Luke 5:1 and John 21:1, NRSV.

seems to be no literary or theological reason for him to have done so. The only other time that John refers to the Sea of Galilee is near the beginning of his Gospel when he narrates his version of the feeding of the five thousand: “After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias.”<sup>27</sup> The author of John refers to the body of water as the Sea of Galilee but then clarifies that it is also called the Sea of Tiberias. He never mentions that it is also called the Lake of Gennesaret, which is a name used only by Luke. Since John often clarifies things for his readers, if he used Luke and assumed that his readers might have been familiar with it, then it would have been characteristic of him to explain that some people referred to the Sea of Galilee as the Sea of Tiberias. Again, this detail gives the impression that John used a different source present in his own community.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter argued that John’s final resurrection story more likely stemmed from community traditions than from Luke’s Gospel. The traditional tests for Synoptic dependence have failed here extensively, especially compared to how successful those criteria have been for establishing the relationships among the Synoptics themselves. Furthermore, given the current scholarship on the self-standing community behind John’s Gospel, there was a body of independent community traditions from which John’s author could have drawn in order to write his Gospel. This is especially true if John has indeed preserved the earlier form of the miraculous catch of fish compared to the form that Luke includes. Once again, Raymond Brown summarized the evidence well when he wrote that

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<sup>27</sup>John 6:1, NRSV.

by his time few experts accepted the theory that the epilogue is a “pastiche of elements drawn from the Synoptic Gospels.”<sup>28</sup> Given the advances made in the fields of John’s community and criteria of literary dependence, the case for the independence of John 21 is even stronger than the case for the independence of John 20.

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<sup>28</sup>Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XII-XXI)*, 1081.

CONCLUSION: JOHN'S RESURRECTION STORY RELIED ON COMMUNITY  
TRADITIONS WITH NO REASON TO POSIT SYNOPTIC DEPENDENCE

**The Results of the Study**

In setting out to determine whether it is more likely that the Johannine resurrection story used the Synoptic Gospels or only oral traditions as sources, this study has concluded that John drew exclusively from oral traditions without any discernible trace of other Gospel material. The reasons are the following: first, John's community had distinct sources that the Synoptic Gospels did not have and would have been more inclined to use them instead of sources from outside the community; second, all the classic tests for Synoptic dependence fail to yield any reliable evidence, especially when one takes into account the incidental differences in the narratives and the specific situation of the Johannine community. Therefore, there is no reason to posit Synoptic dependence in the Resurrection narratives.

**Review of the Arguments**

To review the major points quickly, scholars have discussed the question about John's relationship to the Synoptics for hundreds of years. Until the early 1900s, most assumed that John knew and even used the Synoptic Gospels when writing his Gospel. Around the 1930s, scholars began to emphasize the role of oral tradition in Gospel composition, leading to the view that the work was largely if not wholly independent of



the Synoptics.<sup>1</sup> Toward the end of the twentieth century, However, several voices arose challenging the newly established view, leaving the field without a firm consensus either way.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, scholarship on the communities underlying each Gospel developed regardless of the source-critical conclusions. This research established some basic facts about the different groups of Christians that produced each of the four Gospels. Particularly, the two-level reading of John devised in the 1960s uncovered the context of a communal history that differed markedly from the histories behind the Synoptic communities. This shed light on other sources of tradition that the author of John would have known, such as the Beloved Disciple, the idealized follower of Jesus and a leading figure in the early Johannine community.<sup>3</sup>

As this project has emphasized, much of the discussion about the relationship between John and the Synoptics went in a strictly source-critical direction while others worked on Gospel communities. While not all scholars were so confined to specialized fields, this predominant separation was inadequate for comprehensive work on John's relationship to the Synoptics. Thus, to add a newer perspective to the long debate about this crucial question, this project proposed a closer conversation between two fields of study, namely, Johannine community scholarship and traditional Gospel source criticism. Combining these methods has led to the conclusion that John did not need to use any Synoptic sources. Oral traditions circulating within his own community are sufficient to

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<sup>1</sup>Smith, *John among the Gospels*, 182; see also Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels*, 73-87.

<sup>2</sup>Smith, *John among the Gospels*, xi.

<sup>3</sup>Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 46.

explain the similarities between John and the Synoptics that some scholars have attempted to use as evidence for dependence. At the same time, oral tradition accounts for John's large divergences between his Gospel and the Synoptics in a way that literary dependence cannot: incidental differences in John are largely inexplicable if the author relied on any of the three other Gospels in front of him when writing, especially when his own community had a long-standing stream of tradition about Jesus's life and teaching already.

In short, the study has sought to strengthen the already widely held view that chapters 20 and 21 of John's Gospel were independent of the Synoptic Gospels. This project does not take a position on John's possible use of Synoptic sources in the rest of his Gospel, although the methods employed here tend to suggest that John is most likely fully independent. Also, strictly speaking, this thesis does not claim definitively that the author knew nothing at all about the Synoptic Gospels when he was writing his account, but it does claim that he had no need and probably no desire to consult them.<sup>4</sup>

### **Reconstructing the Progression of John's Sources**

It is helpful to integrate the results of this study into a reconstruction of the composition of John's Gospel as it relates to early history of the Johannine community. This study maintained that the Synoptic Gospels were not among the sources used by the Evangelist and later redactors. Thus, the history of composition as it relates to the life of the community may have looked something like the following: after Jesus' death, the apostles began preaching that he had risen. The Beloved Disciple, a historical person and

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<sup>4</sup>Dvorak, "The Relationship between John and the Synoptic Gospels," 201-13.

probably a Judean follower of Jesus, either experienced a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus or was associated with disciples who had experienced such an appearance.<sup>5</sup> The Beloved Disciple played a large role in a new Christian community of churches. After some time, this community came to value the traditions passed on by the Beloved Disciple and elevated his status and his memory.<sup>6</sup>

In the next few decades, either the Beloved Disciple himself or one of his followers compiled traditions that he passed on and combined them with other stories he had received orally from other Christians, perhaps visiting preachers trusted by the community.<sup>7</sup> Many traditions associated with the earliest sources about Jesus and his ministry, such as the Q material, seem not to have entered the stream of Johannine stories at all; this probably means that by the 50s and 60s C.E., the Johannine community was already developing a distinct, and even a separate, identity from the Petrine and Pauline Christians producing the Synoptic stories. These collected Johannine traditions became the first edition of John's Gospel, with no clear traces of Synoptic material in it. The community then relied on this Gospel for instructing members and for communal worship. As conflicts arose within the community regarding leadership and Christology, the Johannine Epistles were written, and the Gospel of John was redacted to include the prologue and the epilogue. Whether both were added in the same redaction is unclear, but both changes were made to reflect issues troubling the Johannine community, which were

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<sup>5</sup>John 21:20-25, NRSV.

<sup>6</sup>Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 31-32.

<sup>7</sup>Brickle, "The Memory of the Beloved Disciple: The Poetics of Johannine Memory," 187-208.

the debate about Christology and the status of the Beloved Disciple who was now dead.<sup>8</sup> The changes in John's Gospel reflect no obvious use of the Synoptic Gospels, and the Johannine Epistles clearly seem to be targeted at dissidents within the Johannine community, such as those who believed that Jesus did not come "in the flesh" in 1 John or the Johannine church leader Diotrephes who liked to "put himself first" in 3 John.<sup>9</sup>

If Raymond Brown and other historians of the Johannine community are correct, the disagreements among the factions within the community, such as those with different views of Christology, ruptured the churches and ended their communion. As a result of these Christological debates, some of the community members may have either formed or joined Gnostic or quasi-Gnostic groups, whereas other members were absorbed into the emerging proto-orthodox group of Christians that were already using the Synoptic Gospels extensively.<sup>10</sup> Those former community members brought their beloved Gospel with them, and the entire collection of Johannine writings found their way into the Christian canon, although not without some debate and struggle.<sup>11</sup>

### **Why This Project Matters**

The question "so what?" sometimes emerges in biblical scholarship. Why does John's relationship to the Synoptics matter? And in particular, why does the

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<sup>8</sup>Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 59-91.

<sup>9</sup>1 John 4:2-3 and 3 John 1:9, NRSV; see also Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 93-144.

<sup>10</sup>Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 145-55.

<sup>11</sup>Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 295-360.

independence of John's resurrection story matter? To whom does it matter? Should it matter? It is often easier to answer those questions for issues in New Testament studies than many other historical fields. Both professionals and laypeople in modern Western society realize the importance that the New Testament had in the history of Europe and everywhere that European ideas and religion traveled. But for most of European history, the precise historical background of the New Testament was not as important to people as its status as revelation and its portrayal of the redemption and reconciliation of God's people back to himself.<sup>12</sup>

This focus changed with the coming of modernity. The Enlightenment period introduced new ideas in many people's minds about what kinds of knowledge were important and what fields of study were important. Science and history gained immense prestige as conduits of certainty and progress. Accordingly, people became interested in reading the New Testament historically to learn about the texts in their original setting. Who wrote the texts? What did the authors originally mean? What really happened? But the New Testament books were not written to accommodate all of these questions with the precision demanded by modernists. While the Gospel authors had some interest in expressing the basics about what really did happen in Jesus' life, they were not as concerned as the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment scholars were about historical precision regarding things like chronology, verbatim reporting, and "unbiased" accounts of religious and political events. To get the answers to the kinds of questions that many

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<sup>12</sup>For more on the history of biblical interpretation in the modern period, see Henning G. Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 4, trans. Leo G. Perdue (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2010), 3-109.

people in modern society were asking, experts developed diverse methodological approaches involving much trial-and-error, such as the historical-critical methods employed in this project.<sup>13</sup>

Even though the optimism of the Enlightenment has waned drastically in the past several decades, people are still interested in the questions that this significant intellectual movement has raised. Historical questions in general still draw people's interest, and that includes historical questions about the New Testament. Even though the field is defined such that historical research cannot definitively validate or refute doctrinal claims made by or about the canonical books, many people are nevertheless interested in knowing more about the New Testament and its world.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, it is appropriate here to recite some of the reasons why Johannine independence matters both in scholarship and in the public arena. First, John's independence of the Synoptics shows the diversity of early Christians in how they portrayed the resurrection of Jesus. Even though all four Gospels discuss common themes about the significance and meaning of the resurrection, John talks about these things in a different way from the Synoptics. Those differences reflect the distinct theological language and interests within the Johannine community. Johannine independence shows that multiple Christian groups were thinking about and reflecting on Jesus' resurrection in

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<sup>13</sup>Licona, *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?*, 1-184; see also Reventlow, 3-109.

<sup>14</sup>Some of the stronger voices of dissatisfaction with Enlightenment-era and modernist historiography can be found in more postmodern approaches like Ethan Kleinberg, *Haunting History: For a Deconstructive Approach to the Past* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017). While most historians do still believe that a reasonably accurate portrayal of the past is possible, it is not considered as accessible as historians thought in the nineteenth century.

similar but distinct ways, which enriches scholarly understanding of what was happening in early Christian communities.<sup>15</sup>

Second, Johannine independence has major effects on research into the historical Jesus, a field which tries to establish what most probably happened in Jesus' life. Lest one be confused by the term "historical Jesus," it should be emphasized that this term does not mean the "real Jesus" exactly as he was in the past. It is simply a term referring to the collection of Jesus' sayings and deeds that historians think have a high probability of being authentic. Certainly, the real Jesus did much more than what historians can comfortably assert. The historical Jesus is simply a scholarly reconstruction that is designed to produce an "assured minimum" of facts about Jesus. For example, historians have established that the historical Jesus was indeed crucified under Roman authority, most likely with the cooperation of the Jewish Sanhedrin. Historians use diverse criteria to reach this conclusion: multiple independent sources from Christian, Jewish, and pagan sources refer to it; and it is an embarrassing event that the early Christians would not have invented unless it really happened. Other sayings and deeds of Jesus, however, such as his statements that seem to refer to later church issues, are often considered not historical because they do not pass the criteria of historicity and seem to reflect a time after his life.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>For more on the development of early Christianity, see Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>16</sup>For examples of the application of the criteria of historicity to Jesus' sayings and deeds in the Gospels, see John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1991).

Some have found the idea of testing the historicity of Jesus' sayings and deeds to be troubling, especially since some secular popularizers have weaponized historical theories about Jesus to discredit the claims of the Christian faith. But most concerns that people have about reconstructing the "historical Jesus" generally stem from popular misunderstandings about how history works and from some scholars' lack of communication with the general public. A historical theory is not exactly the same as the actual past, although it seeks to approximate it as much as possible. Additionally, history relies on an epistemology that is different, but not incompatible with, religious epistemologies that allow people to believe reasonably that Jesus did more than what historians have been able to "prove." It is hoped that misunderstandings that persist can be minimized by scholars' careful use of language and by making more resources available to those who would benefit from scholarship on Jesus and the Gospels.<sup>17</sup>

Given those qualifications, here is the main effect that Johannine independence has in historical Jesus research: if John's resurrection account is independent, then there is more attestation that some type of experience in the disciples' lives occurred that caused them to preach that Jesus was alive again. If one adds John to the Synoptic and Pauline sources about the disciples' experience, then a historian has a high degree of confidence that this experience had a significant effect on the disciples' preaching, affecting how they portrayed and interpreted Jesus' life and ministry. This helps explain why Christianity emerged as it did in its earliest decades. The experiences motivated the disciples to be highly evangelistic, which resulted in a steady growth rate that made the

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<sup>17</sup>Martin, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 179-98.



new faith a major player in the Roman Empire within a few centuries. The historicity of the disciples' experience also explains how early Christian views of Christology developed. In any case, these examples show that a better understanding of the sources behind John's Gospel can help find the answers to other relevant scholarly questions about early Christian history.<sup>18</sup>

### **Final Remarks**

It can be difficult to conclude a study that is connected to many other interesting and important questions. The answer to the current question is simple: John used community traditions rather than the Synoptic Gospels to write his resurrection story. The project ends here, but new projects can pick up where this one has left off and continue to advance the field, perhaps giving more accurate answers to related issues, such as the questions mentioned above about diversity in early Christianity and about the historical Jesus. For example, if the Synoptic, Johannine, and Pauline ways of talking about the resurrection were largely independent of each other, what trends are distinct to each group, and how do they relate to developing understandings of the resurrection from the 50s to the 90s C.E.? How do these fit into understandings of Jesus' body in later proto-Gnostic and Gnostic writings? Regarding the historical Jesus, does the independence of John's Gospel provide solid ground for saying that the discovery of the empty tomb was historical, given that both his author and the Synoptics refer to it?

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<sup>18</sup>For the development of Christology, see Charles H. Talbert, *The Development of Christology During the First Hundred Years, and Other Essays on Early Christian Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); for a more controversial, popular-level book on the same topic, see Bart Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2014).

Finally, it is important to maintain humility and modesty regarding these conclusions. The Johannine-Synoptic problem as it relates to the resurrection narratives may not be solved by the completion of this small research project, but it is hoped that the proposed nuances to the problem presented here will help tip the balance in the direction of independence. If not, then it is hoped that some of these observations will spur further discussion and contribute to a fuller understanding of this ancient and modern problem, whether future scholars conclude that John used the Synoptics or that John did not use the Synoptics. Either way, experts must attempt to place controls on their presuppositions and pursue an answer to their questions with genuine interest in following the truth wherever it may lead. That is easier said than done, but one must strive to do so as much as possible.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Smith, *John among the Gospels*, 189.

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