

# John's Transposition Theology: Retelling the Story of Jesus in a Different Key

ANDREAS KÖSTENBERGER

## 1. Introduction

You might say that my acquaintance with Professor Hengel is not unlike our relationship with the apostolic witness contained in the canonical Gospels. I never met Professor Hengel personally (though I heard him speak once at the occasion of the 1998 annual meeting of the Institute of Biblical Research in Orlando, Florida), but I spent numerous hours poring over the voluminous texts Professor Hengel has produced. While I did not therefore have the privilege of knowing Professor Hengel directly (even though I could, of course, talk to the living eyewitnesses who have known him well), I have great appreciation for him and stand in his debt for his contribution to my understanding of the canonical Gospels and their relationship to one another and to the traditions preceding them.

The last decade of Professor Hengel's illustrious scholarly career was significantly taken up with the question, How is it that there was for Paul only one gospel, while we possess at the same time in the New Testament four, in part rather different, written accounts regarding Jesus that are called "Gospels"?<sup>1</sup> Hengel was convinced that Mark was the originator of the name "Gospel" for a "kerygmatic Jesus biography," and that his gospel and that of the other Synoptic writers were not far removed from that of Paul. He also rejected the Two-Source Hypothesis, according to which Matthew and Luke independently used Mark plus Q, and argued not only that Matthew and Luke used Mark but that Matthew also used Luke. He also contended that a mere literary paradigm was inadequate to explain the rather complex relationship among the Synoptics which involved both oral and written material. While, according to Professor Hengel, the Synoptic

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<sup>1</sup> For a concise summary of Hengel's conclusions, see Armin D. Baum, "Die vier Evangelien und das eine Evangelien von Jesus Christus. Martin Hengels Gesamtsynthese zu den kanonischen Evangelien," *TBei* 40 (2009): 352–54. See also the Chronological Table in Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Collection and Origin of the Canonical Gospels* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 208.

Problem could be solved only in the most incomplete fashion,<sup>2</sup> he believed Markan Priority to be secure, dating Mark's composition, compiled on the basis of Peter's preaching, to AD 69/70. Luke's Gospel was written in AD 75–85 by a one-time Gentile God-fearer, who had accompanied Paul on some of his travels, drawing on Mark and various other sources. In AD 90–100, an unknown Jewish-Christian teacher composed Matthew in Syria/Palestine, using Mark, Luke, and other materials. Later, as Hengel developed at great length in his 1993 monograph *Die johanneische Frage*, John the Elder, an otherwise unknown Jewish member of the Jerusalem aristocracy, wrote the Fourth Gospel in Ephesus sometime between AD 85 and 100 or 105, and the author's pupils edited his work subsequent to his death prior to publication.<sup>3</sup>

My purpose here is not to address Professor Hengel's extensive writings on the Synoptic problem. Nor is it my intent to interact with Hengel's views on John's Gospel. My aim is rather to address the knotty question of the relationship between John and the Synoptics, on which I share the following common ground with Professor Hengel. As he does, I believe that the Synoptics were written prior to John, though the exact solution to the Synoptic Problem will not detain us here. Also like Hengel, I believe that John was written by a towering theologian, though I respectfully demur regarding Hengel's theory of the authorial *Doppelantlitz*.<sup>4</sup> What is more, I also concur with Hengel that John's Gospel is a valuable primary source containing historical information not found in any of the other canonical Gospels, which suggests a degree of independence and underscores the historical value of the Johannine material, a fact often inadequately recognized during the last century of Gospels research.<sup>5</sup>

On the basis of this common ground, and laying aside some differences in detail, I will seek to build on some of the assured broad results of Hengel's research in attempting to reassess the question that has proved to be almost as intractable as the Synoptic problem, the relationship between John and the Synoptics. In this, my focus will not be primarily historical,

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<sup>2</sup> Martin Hengel, *Die vier Evangelien und das eine Evangelium von Jesus Christus: Studien zu ihrer Sammlung und Entstehung* (WUNT 224; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2008), 318.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage* (WUNT 67; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); idem, "Eyewitness memory and the writing of the Gospels," in *The Written Gospel* (ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Donald A. Hagner; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 83, n. 15.

<sup>4</sup> See my "Review of Martin Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage*," *JETS* 39 (1996): 154–55.

<sup>5</sup> See Martin Hengel, "Das Johannesevangelium als Quelle für die Geschichte des antiken Judentums," in *Judaica, hellenistica et Christiana: Kleine Schriften II* (WUNT 109; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1999), 293–334.

though historical questions will inevitably surface and always loom in the background. Neither will it be my goal to reconstruct the detailed history of John's use of written and/or oral sources. No particular theory of Johannine authorship is presupposed by the following investigation (though I'll call the author "John"), nor does the ensuing study privilege any one historical setting or context of composition. Even the question of historicity is largely bracketed out, though I seek to avoid undue skepticism in this regard. My starting point will be the text of John's Gospel, and my aim will be to assess the most likely relationship between John and the Synoptics on the basis of a comparison between John's overall literary plan and major theological distinctives and those of the Synoptics. While doubtless Professor Hengel, if he were here, would not agree with all of the following material, I trust that my study builds respectfully and constructively on the overall model that Hengel has bequeathed on subsequent generations of Johannine scholars, being every bit the towering theologian in our day that John was in his.

## 2. The Literary Relationship Between John's Gospel and the Synoptics

### *2.1 History of Research*

The relationship between John and the Synoptic Gospels has been the subject of sustained and extensive debate over the centuries.<sup>6</sup> Traditionally, it was held that John wrote to supplement the other canonical Gospels (*Ergänzungstheorie*).<sup>7</sup> Only at the turn of the nineteenth century did scholars begin to propagate the view that John wrote to correct or replace Matthew, Mark, and Luke (*Verdrängungstheorie*). At the turn of the twentieth century, it was still widely assumed that, since John wrote a generation after the other canonical Gospels, he knew and used the Synoptics.<sup>8</sup> Yet the question continued to persist why, if John knew the other Gospels, he made so little use of them. In fact, while 93 percent of Mark is found in

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<sup>6</sup> For surveys of research, see D. Moody Smith, *John among the Gospels: The Relationship in Twentieth-Century Research* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1992); Adelbert Denaux, ed. *John and the Synoptics* (BETL 101; Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1992). See also the survey by James D. Dvorak, "The Relationship between John and the Synoptic Gospels," *JETS* 41 (1998): 201–13.

<sup>7</sup> Dvorak, "Relationship," 201, calls this "the dominant view" until about World War II. The nomenclature and taxonomy in this paragraph follows Hans Windisch, *Johannes und die Synoptiker: Wollte der vierte Evangelist die älteren Evangelien ergänzen oder ersetzen?* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1926), 1.

<sup>8</sup> See B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels* (rev. ed.; London: Macmillan, 1930).

Matthew and Luke, only 8 percent of John parallels the Synoptics.<sup>9</sup> What is more, even in the overlapping material, John rarely (if ever) is close enough in wording to justify the conclusion that he had one or several of the Synoptics in front of him as he wrote.<sup>10</sup>

In a small yet highly influential book published in 1938, Percival Gardner-Smith drew what seemed to be the most logical conclusion: What if John in fact drew on his own independent traditions that *antedated* the Synoptics?<sup>11</sup> If so, it could no longer be assumed that where John had no Synoptic parallels, or where John and the Synoptics seemed to disagree, the latter were accurate and John was in error. Instead, the possibility presented itself that the Johannine and the Synoptic traditions were independent and both contained an actual historical core. In Gardner-Smith's own words, "If in the Fourth Gospel we have a survival of the type of first century Christianity which owed nothing to synoptic developments, and which originated in quite a different intellectual atmosphere, its historical value may be very great indeed."<sup>12</sup> Thus Gardner-Smith proposed the theory that John wrote independently of the Synoptics (*Unabhängigkeitstheorie*).<sup>13</sup>

Then, in 1957, John A. T. Robinson famously chronicled the *status quaestionis* in Johannine research by contrasting the "old look" (which had gradually replaced the traditional view) with a "new look" on the Fourth Gospel.<sup>14</sup> The "old look" held that (1) John was dependent on the Synoptics; (2) John's background was Greek, most likely Gnostic; (3) John was not a reliable witness to the historical Jesus; (4) John's theology reflected developments prevalent at the end of the first century AD; and (5) the author was neither the apostle John nor an eyewitness. The "new look," on the other hand, maintained, in part due to Gardner-Smith's influence, that (1) John drew on a tradition independent from the Synoptics; (2) John's background was predominantly Jewish; and (3) there was a genuine con-

<sup>9</sup> See Gary M. Burge, *Interpreting the Gospel of John* (Guides to NT Exegesis; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 23, with reference to Westcott.

<sup>10</sup> For a representative comparative study, see Paul W. Barnett, "The Feeding of the Multitude in Mark 6/John 6," in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 6 (ed. David Wenham and Craig Blomberg; Sheffield: JSOT, 1986), 273–93, who concludes that the two accounts were essentially independent, "with each resting in all probability on independent eyewitness recollection" (p. 289). See also Barnabas Lindars, "John and the Synoptic Gospels: A Test Case," *NTS* 27 (1981): 287–94.

<sup>11</sup> Percival Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>13</sup> See further the discussion of the contribution of Gardner-Smith and Robinson's "new look" below.

<sup>14</sup> John A. T. Robinson, "The New Look on the Fourth Gospel," in *Studia Evangelica* (ed. Kurt Aland et al.; TU 73; Berlin: Akademie, 1959), 338–50; repr. in idem, *Twelve New Testament Studies* (SBT 34; London: SCM, 1962), 94–106.

nection between Johannine tradition and the historical Jesus. In addition, Robinson proposed that John may have written his Gospel in the AD 60s because he was conspicuously silent regarding the destruction of the Temple.<sup>15</sup> While the “new look” resulted in a partial reversal of the low esteem for the historical value of John’s Gospel, however, it did not return to the traditional view that the apostle John wrote the Gospel and that he knew and used the other canonical Gospels.<sup>16</sup>

The last few decades of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of a variety of scholarly theories related to the sources and life-setting of John’s Gospel.<sup>17</sup> Robert Fortna, in part on the basis of alleged “literary seams,” believed to be able to reconstruct the written sources underlying the Fourth Gospel.<sup>18</sup> In subsequent debate, however, Fortna’s proposal did not win the day, in large part owing to the demonstrable literary integrity of the Gospel, which makes it difficult to discern with any degree of confidence underlying literary sources.<sup>19</sup> As Pierson Parker famously put it, “It looks as though, if the author of the fourth Gospel used documentary sources, he wrote them all himself.”<sup>20</sup>

Others, such as Raymond Brown, in further development of a hypothesis first proposed by his colleague at Union Seminary, J. Louis Martyn, used redaction-critical methodology to delineate as many as five stages in the history of the “Johannine community.”<sup>21</sup> However, even Brown himself

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<sup>15</sup> John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1976); idem, *The Priority of John* (London: SCM, 1985).

<sup>16</sup> A case in point is the work of C. H. Dodd, who on the one hand could conclude that John was “better informed than the tradition behind the Synoptics” but at the same time rejected the “symbolic” use of place names in John’s Gospel. See his *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 120; app. See the critique by D. A. Carson, “Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel: After Dodd, What?,” in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels* (ed. R. T. France and David Wenham; Sheffield: JSOT, 1981), 83–145.

<sup>17</sup> See the analysis by Tom Thatcher, “Anatomies of the Fourth Gospel: Past, Present, and Future Probes,” in *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism: The Past, Present, and Futures of the Fourth Gospel as Literature* (SBLRBS 55; Atlanta: SBL, 2008), 6–8, who discusses the history of Johannine scholarship of this period under the headings “In the Shadow of the Sources” and “In the Shadow of the Community.”

<sup>18</sup> Robert T. Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs: A Reconstruction of the Narrative Source Underlying the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); idem, *The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor: From Narrative Source to Present Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

<sup>19</sup> See Gilbert van Belle, *The Signs Source in the Fourth Gospel: Historical Survey and Critical Evaluation of the Semeia Hypothesis* (BETL 116; Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1994).

<sup>20</sup> Pierson Parker, “Two Editions of John,” *JBL* 75 (1956): 304.

<sup>21</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist, 1979); J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper

acknowledged that his proposal was “at most probability” and that he would be happy if only 60 percent of his “detective work” were accepted.<sup>22</sup> While the Martyn-Brown proposal, despite its precarious evidentiary base, had reached virtual paradigmatic status in the early 1990s, however, the “Johannine community hypothesis” in its various versions has now peaked and is fast receding in influence.<sup>23</sup> Others, such as R. Alan Culpepper, in his landmark study *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, engaged in a close literary reading of the Johannine narrative focused on the final text of the Gospel while laying aside questions of historicity.<sup>24</sup> However, Culpepper did not discuss John’s relationship to the Synoptics.

More recently, James Dunn proposed that the Gospels represent “Jesus remembered” and that oral tradition had a more significant part in the transmission of Jesus material than mere literary theories on Gospel relationships typically recognize.<sup>25</sup> Dunn, in turn, became the target of a major critique by Richard Bauckham, who in his *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* lodged a massive, and to my mind largely compelling, case for the Gospels as eyewitness testimony in keeping with ancient historiographic conventions.<sup>26</sup> Bauckham’s proposal significantly advanced the state of research beyond the “new look” in several ways. In particular, he appropriately questioned the nebulous notion of “traditions” that in the “new look” had replaced the traditional belief in apostolic authorship. Instead, Bauckham contended that the Gospels, including John, were rooted directly in apostolic eyewitness testimony.<sup>27</sup> Others, including Margen Hengel in his essay on “eyewitness memory” in *The Written Gospels*, similarly urged further study on the role of memory in the composition of written documents.<sup>28</sup>

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& Row, 1968; 2d ed. Nashville: Abingdon, 1979; 3d ed. NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> Brown, *Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 7.

<sup>23</sup> See the discussion in Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John’s Gospel and Letters* (BTNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), Chap. 1, esp. section 2.1.2.1.

<sup>24</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

<sup>25</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Christianity in the Making 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> Note, however, that Bauckham does not affirm the apostolic authorship of John’s Gospel, on which see the discussion in Köstenberger, *Theology of John’s Gospel & Letters*, Chap. 1, section 2.1.3.1.

<sup>28</sup> Hengel, “Eyewitness memory.” See also Tom Thatcher, ed., *Jesus, the Voice, and the Text: Beyond The Oral and the Written Gospel* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008); Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study* (Studies in Theological Interpretation; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), esp. chap. 6: “Living Memory and Apostolic History”; Scot McKnight and Terence C. Mournet, eds., *Jesus in*

Bauckham's work on the Gospels as eyewitness testimony has radically recast the landscape of Gospels and Johannine studies. While it is admittedly inadequate to understand John as merely having written to supplement or to replace the Synoptics, it is likewise precarious to characterize John's method simply in terms of drawing on early independent traditions. Add to this the recognition, as Bauckham argued in another seminal work, *The Gospels for All Christians*, that John, like the other canonical Gospels, was most likely aimed at a general audience rather than constituting the product of a sectarian community. This broader purpose places John in closer proximity to the Synoptics and renders a more direct relationship between the Synoptics and John more feasible than would be the case with a sectarian theory.<sup>29</sup>

In this scholarly climate, it seems entirely reasonable to reopen the question of whether John, while quite manifestly not following the Synoptic Gospels in wording or order or literary plan, knew and worked from the Synoptics in some way as he prepared his own distinct account. D. A. Carson's observation two decades ago still rings true: "The thesis that John is *literarily* dependent on one or more of the Synoptic Gospels has not been demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt, but neither has the thesis that John is *literarily independent* of the Synoptics."<sup>30</sup> In what follows I will sketch the contours of a new proposal that assesses the literary evidence concerning the relationship between John and the Synoptics Gospels in a fresh and perhaps provocative new way.

## 2.2 John's Transposition Theology

A thorough reading of John's Gospel relative to the Synoptic witness surfaces various strands of evidence that converge to suggest that in addition to drawing on eyewitness recollection and possibly other oral or written sources, John in all probability deliberately and skillfully transposed Mark, and possibly Luke (*Transpositionstheorie*).<sup>31</sup> What do I mean by "transpo-

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*Early Christian Memory: Essays in Honor of James D. G. Dunn* (LNTS 349; London: T&T Clark, 2007); cf. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, chap. 13: "Eyewitness Memory" (with additional bibliographical references).

<sup>29</sup> See Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

<sup>30</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 51 (emphasis original).

<sup>31</sup> Among those who continued to affirm that John was familiar with one or several of the Synoptic Gospels is C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978); idem, "John and the Synoptic Gospels," *ExpTim* 85 (1974): 228–33; see also R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel: A Commentary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956); and the comment by D. Moody Smith, "John and the Synoptics: Some Dimensions of the Problem," *NTS* 26 (1980): 443: "I am beginning to be able to

sition”? In his work *The Drama of Doctrine*, in a section titled “Doctrine and Creative Understanding,” Kevin Vanhoozer writes that “[d]octrines ought not and cannot be exact repetitions of past understandings.”<sup>32</sup> Vanhoozer observes that the biblical canon “neither leaves earlier texts in their own epochs nor distorts what they were originally about. On the contrary: later biblical texts reincorporate the earlier material. They translate; they typologize; they improvise. In sum, later canonical texts understand earlier texts *creatively*.”<sup>33</sup>

Vanhoozer proceeds to explain that canonical creativity may be understood as improvisation, which does not amount to *creatio ex nihilo* but involves what Vanhoozer calls “ruled creativity.” In this form of theological creativity, Vanhoozer notes, “The improviser forgets nothing. On the contrary, everything that has happened up to the present moment is a necessary condition for what we might call the improviser’s ‘ruled creativity.’ Creative understanding, similarly, has nothing to do with capriciousness or inventiveness ...; it is rather a matter of *drawing upon the resources of the past for the needs of the present*.”<sup>34</sup>

Understanding a text creatively entails more than recovering its original sense. Following Mikhail Bakhtin, Vanhoozer points out that such creative theological understanding involves perceiving a matter in new contexts.<sup>35</sup> With this, Vanhoozer states the central thesis of his canonical-linguistic proposal, namely, that “*Christian doctrine is the realization of canonical potential*.”<sup>36</sup> Theological transposition involves the discovery of potential, albeit veiled, meaning in a given text. Rather than “historicizing and confining a text to its own epoch,” or “modernizing and distorting a text by

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conceive of a scenario in which John knew, or knew of, the synoptics and yet produced so dissimilar a gospel as the one which now follows them in the New Testament.” More recently, see Richard Bauckham, “John for Readers of Mark,” in *Gospels for All Christians*. In an oral discussion at the Annual Meeting of the SBL in Boston, MA on November 23, 2008, Bauckham cited the difference between John’s Gospel and the Synoptics as a (for him) insurmountable obstacle for accepting the apostolic authorship of John’s Gospel, since it seems to him inconceivable that from the same circle of the Twelve originated two so very different accounts as Matthew’s (cf. Mark, Luke) and John’s. Yet later in the discussion, Bauckham himself suggested other possible reasons for the difference between Mark and John: Mark’s reporting vs. John’s reflective mode, and John’s selectivity and greater narrative development of fewer miracles.

<sup>32</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 351.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. (emphasis original).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 352, referring to Mikhail Bakhtin, “Response to a Question from the *Novy Mir* Editorial Staff,” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 7.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. (emphasis original).

reading it in light of current interests,” such interpretation “develops the potentials [*sic*] implicit in the text.”<sup>37</sup>

In keeping with these observations, therefore, I contend in the present essay that, in addition to drawing on eyewitness recollection and possibly other oral and/or written sources, John creatively drew on Mark, and possibly Luke-Acts, in just such a manner, a manner I describe as “theological transposition.” “Transposition” is a term in use in many fields of human knowledge, including mathematics, logic, biology, games such as chess, and music, to name but a few. In mathematics, transposition denotes a permutation which exchanges two elements while keeping all others fixed. In philosophical logic, transposition refers to a rule of replacement. In biology, transposition may refer to a mutation in which a segment of a chromosome is transferred to a new position on the same or another chromosome. In chess, different moves, or a different order of moves, may lead to the same eventual position.

In music, last but not least, transposition refers to moving a note or a collection of notes up or down in pitch by a constant number of semi-notes, thus subtly altering the mood of a given piece of composition. In keeping with this kind of terminology, in particular in music, I use the term “transposition” with regard to John’s use of Mark’s and possibly Luke’s material to argue that John did have their written material available to him and creatively reworked various theological distinctives, literary patterns, and other features in keeping with his own theological purposes for writing. Theological transposition, then, is *the creative reworking of previous texts which realizes their hidden meaning potential and extends their message to a new distinctive context.*

While, as mentioned, it is widely acknowledged that John did not use the Synoptics literarily in the way they did one another (depending on one’s view on the Synoptic “problem”), the material presented in the remainder of this essay will suggest that there is sufficient implicit evidence to suggest that, apart from likely being an eyewitness to many of the events he records that are not included in the Synoptic Gospels, John had most likely read Mark, and possibly also Luke (or Luke-Acts). While the relationship is indirect, and at times fairly subtle, the adduced evidence below suggests that it was nonetheless real. As the proposed instances of Johannine transposition of Mark and possibly Luke below indicate, John most likely was aware of, and worked from, the literary plan and conspicuous theological distinctives of Mark if not Luke.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 352–53.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Dvorak, “Relationship,” 201–2, who sketches three distinct positions: (1) John is literarily dependent on one or more of the Synoptics; (2) John is literarily independent

The possibility of John's assumption of his readers' knowledge of one or several of the Synoptic Gospels or at least the broad contours of their storyline and thus an indication of his own knowledge of the Synoptics is already suggested by several instances in the Johannine narrative where information provided by the Synoptics but not previously (or at all) by John is assumed. Examples of this are the reference to Andrew as "Simon Peter's brother" early on in John's Gospel, which presupposes his reader's knowledge of Peter (John 1:40); the passing reference to John the Baptist's imprisonment which is nowhere else mentioned in John's Gospel but is narrated at some length in the other Gospels (John 3:24; cf. Mark 6:14–29); the casual mention of "the Twelve" at the midpoint of the first half of John's Gospel while omitting the account of the actual calling of the Twelve (John 6:67, 70–71; cf. Mark 3:13–19); and the reference to Mary of Bethany as "the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair" prior to the actual account of this event in John's Gospel, a story retold prominently in both Mark and Matthew (John 11:2; cf. 12:1–8; cf. Mark 14:3–9; Matt. 26:6–13). I also judge it highly implausible historically that John, writing his Gospel last, toward the close of the first century, did not have access to the Synoptics, or at least to one or two of them.

In my following remarks, I will therefore attempt to delineate a possible plausible scenario as to how John, in addition to drawing on eyewitness recollection and other oral and written sources, may have transposed some of Mark's distinctive theological emphases (which were also taken up and at times modified by Matthew) and possibly also aspects of Luke's presentation.<sup>39</sup> While realizing that any one of the individual points may not by itself be persuasive and remain open to alternative explanations, I believe that these items combine to make a persuasive, even compelling, cumulative case for John's transposition of Mark and possibly Luke.<sup>40</sup>

Also, while a possible scenario according to which John may have transposed various aspects of Mark's and possibly Luke's presentation is given below in what might seem to be a logical sequence, the exact chronology is, of course, virtually impossible to determine and is not an essential part of my proposal. Finally, while I am certainly open to the role of oral traditions preceding the composition of John and the Synoptics, my

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of the Synoptics and similarities between them are due to common traditions; (3) John is literarily independent of the Synoptics but was aware of them and their traditions.

<sup>39</sup> See the survey of the "mediating view" in Dvorak, "Relationship," 211–13, who cites especially Leon Morris' proposal in *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), later reinforced by D. A. Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 51–58, of "interlocking traditions" between John and the Synoptics.

<sup>40</sup> The individual points made in the following scenario are intended to be representative and suggestive rather than exhaustive.

primary argument is that John had as a major point of reference, though not the only one, the *written* Gospels of Mark and possibly Luke if not Acts (and perhaps even Matthew). After setting forth a series of Johannine transpositions of first Mark and then Luke-Acts, I will conclude with a brief discussion of the significance of these observations for Gospels and Johannine scholarship.

### 3. Probable Instances of John's Transposition of Mark

In what follows, I will discuss sixteen possible Johannine transpositions of Mark's Gospel. All are plausible, and many probable, in my judgment, but what is most compelling, I believe, is the cumulative force of the case made by these sixteen Johannine transpositions taken together (and more could be given).<sup>41</sup> I will return to this issue in more detail in the conclusion, but by way of brief preview, the possible instances of transposition discussed below tend to fall into one of the following four categories: (1) most foundationally, John probes the deeper theological significance of events recorded in Mark; (2) John shows the roots of early church doctrine or practice in Jesus' own teaching and practice; (3) John is led by certain considerations relating to literary structure; and (4) some transpositions may be related to the particular historical setting of John's Gospel vis-à-vis the Gospel of Mark (such as their composition prior/subsequent to the destruction of the Temple).

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<sup>41</sup> Other examples include the possible transposition of Mark's opening phrase *Archē tou euangeliou Iēsou Christou* (Mark 1:1) into John's opening *En archē ēn ho logos* (John 1:1; this instance was suggested to me by Jeff Miller, one of the attendees of an earlier presentation of my paper at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Atlanta, GA on November 18, 2010). See also Craig Keener's review of my *Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* presented at the same occasion on November 17, 2010, in which Keener writes of my transposition proposal, "I believe that this synthesis of the evidence cited by either side in the dependence/independence debate is the soundest one, and think this solution becomes clearest in the passion narrative, where John could surely assume his audience's familiarity with the earlier traditional passion narratives. John does not contradict that narrative so much as qualify it with additional information." Keener cites the following examples: (1) Jesus' prayer of anguish and submission in Gethsemane (Mark 14:36)//Jesus' prayer of anguish and submission in John 12:27–28; (2) Judas dipped with Jesus in the bowl (Mark 14:20–21)//Jesus gave Judas the morsel (John 13:26); (3) the Last Supper interprets Jesus' death in light of Passover (Mark 14:12, 22–26)//Jesus dies as the paschal lamb (John 19:31, 36); (4) Simon of Cyrene carries Jesus' cross (Mark 15:21)//Jesus carries his own cross (John 19:17).

*Transposition #1: From Miracles to Signs*

Jesus' working of miracles (*dynameis*) is an important part of Mark's (and in fact of the entire Synoptic) pattern of presentation of Jesus' public ministry. Many of these miracles are striking feats that display Jesus' power over nature, sickness, death, and the evil supernatural. John, for his part, chooses to accentuate in Jesus' works specifically their messianic significance, in the conviction that the miracles themselves are bound to be ineffective unless they are met with faith in Jesus on the part of their recipients. If people respond to Jesus' works with unbelief, that is, if they are attracted to the miracle itself while failing to perceive that it is designed to serve as a signpost to Jesus' messianic identity, the miracles' intended purpose has been thwarted. This important insight led John to attach the epithet "sign" (*sēmeion*) to selected works of Jesus, focusing on their messianic symbolism while deemphasizing their miraculous nature. As such, John made Jesus' signs the central focus of his Christological presentation of Jesus. This is made clear by the signs' placement at strategic junctures in the Gospel, such as at the end of the Book of Signs (12:37, 41) and in the purpose statement (20:30–31). In fact, the entire first half of the Gospel is built around Jesus' performance of selected signs aimed at eliciting faith in Jesus the Messiah. Tragically, however, Jesus' mission to the Jews ended in failure, although a Jewish remnant did believe and serve as the nucleus of the new messianic community, as John shows in the second half of his Gospel.

In his selection of "signs," the fourth evangelist seems to focus on particularly striking public events in Jesus' ministry, which in most instances entail a numerical dimension. Thus the first Johannine sign, Jesus' turning of water into wine at the wedding of Cana, produces a very large quantity of wine, the contents of six stone water jars each holding 20 or 30 gallons (John 2:6). Jesus' clearing of the Temple, considered to be a Johannine sign by some, revolves around the Jewish authorities' reference to the rebuilding of the Temple 46 years ago in contrast to Jesus' claim that he will destroy and rebuild the Temple in only three days (John 2:19–20).<sup>42</sup> The healing of the royal official's son, also in Cana, and a rare long-distance miracle, turns on the exact time – 1 o'clock in the afternoon – at which Jesus spoke the word and the royal official's son was healed (John 4:52–53). The lame man healed by Jesus had been in his condition for the considerable time span of 38 years (John 5:5). Jesus' multiplication of the loaves and the fish fed 5,000 men, not to mention women and children, and

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<sup>42</sup> For an argument for the Johannine Temple clearing as a Johannine sign, see my essay "The Seventh Johannine Sign: A Study in John's Christology," *BBR* 5 (1995): 87–103. For the understanding of John 2:20 in terms of the Temple having been rebuilt "46 years ago," see my commentary, *John* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 109–10.

yielded 12 baskets of leftover bread (John 6:10, 13). The blind man healed by Jesus in John 9 had been blind *from birth* (though no particular numerical aspect seems to be involved otherwise). Lazarus, finally, the dead man raised by Jesus, had been in the tomb already for four days after Jesus had delayed his departure by two days (John 11:39; cf. 11:6).

In all these instances, John deemphasizes the miraculous nature of the event (though in all but one case Jesus did perform a striking miracle) and instead accentuated the messianic symbolism of the act, in keeping with his theological purpose indicated in the Johannine purpose statement (John 20:30–31). Most likely, then, John transposed the Markan (Synoptic) notion of miracle into the more subtle messianic category of sign, in the conviction that the primary function of the signs was not the miracle itself but the way in which it pointed to Jesus as Messiah.

#### *Transposition #2: From the Temple Cleansing to the Raising of Lazarus*

In conjunction with John's above-mentioned "signs" theology, one of the most strategic decisions made by the fourth evangelist regarding the narrative peak of the first major portion of the Gospel was doubtless his selection of the raising of Lazarus as the culminating sign of the first half of his Gospel. Most likely, John chose the raising of Lazarus (11:1–44) as the culmination point of Jesus' ministry to the Jews, since it corresponded to and anticipated Jesus' resurrection and was thus judged to be the perfect climax of the "Book of Signs." John's selection of the raising of Lazarus as the climactic messianic sign of Jesus and his earthly ministry to the Jews meant that the Temple cleansing featured at the conclusion at the end of Jesus' ministry in Mark (and the other Synoptics) must be omitted, since of necessity there can only be one climax of the Gospel narrative leading up to the final events preceding Jesus' crucifixion. If the Lazarus narrative, therefore, is to be included, the temple cleansing must go, or at least be moved to another location in John's narrative.

While in Mark (and the other Synoptics) it is Jesus' cleansing of the Temple that serves as the final impetus for the crucifixion, in John it is the raising of Lazarus. This is clear, among other things, by the large amount of space given to the raising of Lazarus and its aftermath in John's Gospel from 11:1 all the way to 12:19 and its strategic placement after the Cana and Festival Cycles in a sort of bridge position in chapters 11 and 12 of John's Gospel. While it is impossible to know why none of the other canonical Gospels included the Lazarus narrative, it is easy to see why John, seeing that neither Mark (nor Luke, nor Matthew) had included it, chose to feature it. Not only does the Lazarus narrative nicely supplement Mark's account of the anointing of Jesus by Mary of Bethany, Lazarus' sister

(Mark 14:1–9; cf. Matt 26:6–13),<sup>43</sup> Jesus' raising of Lazarus is the most striking of the only three raisings of people by Jesus recorded in any of the Gospels and fits the pattern of the Johannine "sign" exceedingly well.

The account includes a reference to Lazarus having been dead for four days, in keeping with John's above-mentioned emphasis on particularly striking elements in Jesus' signs. Also, as a type of resurrection, the raising of Lazarus fittingly anticipates Jesus' own resurrection. In many ways, therefore, the inclusion of the raising of Lazarus was a compelling choice for the fourth evangelist, despite the resulting need to omit the Temple cleansing at the end of Jesus' public ministry featured in Mark and the other Synoptics, or at least to transfer it to an earlier location in John's narrative in order to make room for the Lazarus account.

*Transposition #3: From the Markan Temple Cleansing to the Johannine Temple Clearing*

The removal of the Markan (Synoptic) Temple cleansing and the inclusion of the Lazarus narrative, in turn, most likely led John to select another Temple clearing, performed at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, for inclusion (2:13–22). The fact that John did not merely remove the Markan/Synoptic Temple cleansing but included another Temple clearing at a different location in his Gospel may be taken as possible indirect evidence of John's knowledge of Mark and possibly one or two of the other Synoptic Gospels. John's replacement of a later Temple cleansing with an earlier one, or his transfer of the Markan/Synoptic Temple cleansing to an earlier point in his narrative, suggests that John considered the account of Jesus' cleansing of the Temple as indispensable. Yet in light of the above-mentioned compelling reasons for the removal of the Markan/Synoptic account of Jesus' Temple cleansing, John opted for the inclusion of the Temple clearing at an earlier juncture in his narrative.

There is, of course, no consensus on the relationship between the Johannine and the Synoptic Temple cleansings. Some believe that Jesus cleansed the Temple twice, while others hold that John moved the Synoptic pericope out of sequence for theological reasons. As already mentioned, however, such historical questions need not detain us here. Whatever the historical situation, the point remains that John's inclusion of a Temple cleansing other than that recorded in Mark and the other Synoptics and his omission of the Markan/Synoptic Temple cleansing and his inclusion of

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<sup>43</sup> See also Luke 10:38–42. The anointing of Jesus by a sinful woman featured in Luke 7:36–50 most likely refers to a different occasion: see Andreas J. Köstenberger, "A Comparison of the Pericopae of Jesus' Anointing," in *Studies on John and Gender: A Decade of Scholarship* (Studies in Biblical Literature 38; New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 49–63.

the Lazarus narrative may indicate his knowledge of the place of the Temple cleansing in Mark if not the other Synoptics and his deliberate theological transposition of Mark's Gospel in pursuit of his own narrative and theological purposes.

*Transposition #4: From the Markan Pivot at Caesarea Philippi to Peter's Confession Halfway through John's Book of Signs and/or to Martha's Confession*

Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ at Caesarea Philippi clearly marks the major pivot and turning point in Mark's Gospel (Mark 8:29; cf. Matt. 16:16; Luke 9:20). After this major breakthrough, Jesus regularly instructs his followers as to his impending death and resurrection and teaches them about the cost of following him (Mark 9:30–37; 10:32–45). This shows both that Jesus was well aware ahead of time that crucifixion awaited him. It also shows that at an important juncture in Jesus' ministry, his inner circle, the Twelve, came to a firm understanding of Jesus' messianic identity (albeit while still struggling with the notion that this involved the Messiah's violent death, Mark 8:31–33).

John, for his part, chose to include a similar confession, uttered by Peter, at the midway point of the first part of his Gospel, conventionally labeled "The Book of Signs." Subsequent to the feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus' "Bread of Life Discourse," many of Jesus' followers are shown to leave, but not the Twelve, and Peter, on behalf of the Twelve, utters the pivotal confession of Jesus as the "the Holy One of God" (John 6:69). In its structural parallelism to Mark's presentation, John's inclusion of Peter's seminal confession halfway through Jesus' public ministry suggests the probability that John, rather than writing independently and without reference to the other canonical Gospels, transposed Mark's account in his own way.

What is more, there is another interesting possibility of John's indirect reflection of Markan material in this regard. Even more closely than Peter's confession at John 6:69, it is Martha's confession at 12:27 that almost *verbatim* anticipates John's purpose statement in 20:30–31. Thus Martha declares, "Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world" (John 12:27), a statement that is reproduced almost exactly in the Johannine purpose statement, "[B]ut these [signs] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31). Thus, John placed Martha's confession of Jesus alongside Peter's and in fact awarded Martha's confession a more prominent role.

*Transposition #5: From the Markan Olivet Discourse to John's Realized Eschatology*

The main focal point of the Markan (and Synoptic) teaching on the end times is Jesus' Olivet Discourse (Mark 13; cf. Matthew 24; Luke 21:5–38). There, toward the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus predicts the Temple's destruction and instructs his followers concerning the signs preceding the end, culminating in the second coming and in the final judgment. As is well known, the Markan/Synoptic presentation essentially follows the pattern of Jewish teaching regarding the two ages, the present age and the age to come. In a remarkable move, John passed over the Olivet Discourse and instead chose to provide a pervasive, thoroughgoing presentation of realized eschatology. Without entirely eliminating references to the second coming (though this is, of course, disputed), John placed his primary emphasis on the spiritual reality that those who believed in Jesus experienced eternal life not merely in the afterlife but already in the here and now (e.g. John 5:24).

Martha, in particular, serves as a perfect foil for John's transposition of the Synoptic teaching on the end times. When, in response to Jesus' assurance that her brother would rise again, she voices her expectation that he would indeed rise again in the resurrection on the last day, Jesus makes clear that he *is* the resurrection and proceeds to raise Lazarus *at once*. Thus Lazarus epitomizes Jesus' realized eschatology. He literally experiences the resurrected life already in the here and now rather than having to wait for the final resurrection. At the same time, of course, Lazarus still died again and is still awaiting the final resurrection. In this, Martha serves as the representative of the conventional Jewish teaching on the resurrection followed by the Synoptics while Lazarus epitomizes the Johannine version.

In the history of scholarship controversy has often surrounded the question of whether John's eschatology is radically realized or inaugurated or a combination of the two, that is, whether John has subsumed the second coming entirely under believers' present experience. While I have a decided position on this question, this is not the place to take up the issue. My present purpose is merely to point to the difference between Johannine and Synoptic eschatology within our larger discussion of the relationship between these two corpora. It seems likely to me that both John's omission of the Olivet Discourse and his transformation of the Synoptic end-time perspective into a thoroughgoing realized one were part of a deliberate pattern of transposition.

Again, it appears, John transposes Mark's presentation into a different key, seeking to lead his readers into a deeper understanding of the benefits of Jesus' accomplished mission. Believers need not wait until the second coming to experience many of the saving benefits of Jesus' cross-work and

resurrection. They are able to enjoy the abundant life of the age to come already in the here and now in the power of the Spirit. This is not unlike Paul's teaching in some of his epistles, such as Colossians (assuming Pauline authorship), though I am certainly not going to attempt to argue in this paper that John had read Paul's letters and was trying to transpose Paul's theology. Finally, it should be noted that John wrote an entire book setting forth an apocalyptic end-time scenario, the Book of Revelation.

*Transposition #6: From Jesus' Prediction of the Destruction of the Literal Temple to Jesus' Prediction of the Destruction and Raising of the Spiritual Temple, the Body of Jesus*

This transposition is related to two other already mentioned Johannine transpositions. I am speaking of John's decision to replace Jesus' reference to the future destruction of the literal Jerusalem Temple in the Olivet Discourse with a reference to the destruction of the figurative Temple, Jesus' body (John 2:19–21). This, as mentioned, is likely part of John's signs theology if the Temple clearing is accepted as a Johannine sign. It also qualifies as a possible transposition of the Markan/Synoptic end-time teaching in that the focus is moved from the destruction of the Jerusalem sanctuary to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, thus uncovering the deeper messianic significance of the Temple clearing. Especially if written subsequent to the actual destruction of the Jerusalem central place of worship, this would have allowed John to present Jesus as the Temple's substitute and replacement.

The fact that John likely wrote after the year 70 while some or all of the Synoptic Gospels were written prior to the Temple's destruction may be an important factor in John's theological formulation and account, at least in part, for his transposition of Mark's Gospel. Likely, Professor Hengel, who, as mentioned, believed that only Mark, but not Matthew or Luke, was written just prior to the Temple's destruction while holding to an end-of-first-century date for John's Gospel would have allowed that John's post-AD 70 vantage point had a significant bearing on aspects of his theological and Christological presentation.

*Transposition #7: From the Kingdom of God to Eternal Life*

The just-mentioned historical location of John's Gospel subsequent to the destruction of the Temple may also, at least in part, account for John's shift of terminology from the kingdom of God to eternal life. As is well known, Mark and the other Synoptics feature Jesus' frequent teaching on the kingdom of God, especially in form of parables. There are a total of 20 references to "kingdom" in Mark (as well as 46 in Luke and 55 in Mat-

thew), compared with only 5 such instances in John.<sup>44</sup> Conversely, Mark only has 4 references to “life” (Luke has 5 and Matthew 7), while John mentions “life” a total of 36 times (plus 13 times in his letters and 23 times in Revelation). This data makes clear that an important conceptual shift from “kingdom of God” to “eternal life” has taken place. Most likely, this shift is the result of John’s deliberate theological transposition of Markan material.

But what accounts for this shift in presentation? The answer to this question may be bound up with the difference in historical setting between John and Mark’s Gospel, the AD 60s (Mark) and the AD 80s or 90s (John). In the interim between the composition of the two Gospels, Jewish nationalism was put down decisively by the Romans in the Jewish War in AD 66–73 and the destruction of the Temple in the year 70 (note also the increasing Roman persecution of Christians in the years following the Jewish War). By virtually omitting reference to the kingdom of God, and by qualifying Jesus’ kingship as non-political (see esp. John 18:36), John may forestall any misinterpretation of the Christian teaching on God’s reign among his people.

Also, speaking about the kingdom of God could have been perceived to run counter to John’s realized eschatology, which focused not on a future restored kingdom for Israel (including Jesus’ millennial reign) but on the way in which Jesus’ first coming already introduced eternal benefits in the lives of those who put their trust in him in the here and now. Thus there may be both theological reasons (such as realized eschatology, accentuating the universal scope of salvation in Jesus in keeping with the Gentile mission) and historical reasons (the Jewish War and the destruction of the Temple) that combine to account for John’s transposition of “kingdom of God” into “eternal life” terminology while relegating Jesus’ kingship primarily to the realm of Johannine irony (as John does with the phrase “king of the Jews” in chapters 18 and 19).

#### *Transposition #8: From Jesus’ Transfiguration to John’s Pervasive Glory Motif*

Mark, as well as the other Synoptic writers, includes an account of Jesus’ transfiguration, which narrates an occasion when Jesus took Peter, James,

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<sup>44</sup> Note, however, the 16 instances of *basileus* (“king”) in John’s Gospel, all but 4 of which are found in chapters 18 and 19 (1:49; 6:15; 12:13, 15; 18:33, 37, 39; 19:3, 12, 14, 15, 19, 21 [*bis*]). This should caution against the undue generalization that the “kingdom” motif is virtually absent from John’s Gospel. See esp. N. T. Wright, “The Kingdom and the Cross” (lecture delivered at the annual meeting of the Institute of Biblical Research, Atlanta, GA, November 19, 2010), who spoke at length about the way in which “kingdom” and “cross” theology are intertwined in John’s Gospel.

and John with him to a mountain and was transfigured before their very eyes, with a heavenly voice attesting, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him" (Mark 9:2–8; cf. Luke 9:28–36; Matt. 17:1–13). The impression left by this event on Peter was so great that the apostle wrote decades later, in obvious allusion to the Transfiguration, that "we were eyewitnesses of his [Jesus'] majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,' we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain" (2 Peter 1:16–18).<sup>45</sup>

John, for his part, does not feature the account of Jesus' Transfiguration, which is all the more remarkable since, according to the unified Synoptic witness, John was one of only three of Jesus' disciples joining him on that occasion. Rather than limit the revelation of Jesus' transcendent glory to this one particular occasion, the fourth evangelist writes at the very outset of his Gospel that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (John 1:14). In the ensuing narrative, John pervasively shows how God's glory, and Jesus' glory, was revealed in and through Jesus throughout his earthly ministry.<sup>46</sup> Again, John appears to transform the Markan concept of glory as surfacing at one particular occasion by showing that glory characterized the totality of Jesus' ministry.

*Transposition #9: From the Institution of the Lord's Supper to Jesus' Teaching on Eating His Flesh and Drinking His Blood*

Below I will discuss John's presentation of the pattern of Jesus' mission from Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria to the Gentiles in anticipation of the pattern of the mission of the early church in the Book of Acts. In a similar move, while omitting the Markan/Synoptic account of the institution of the Last Supper, John chose instead to include the references to eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood in Jesus' "Bread of Life Discourse." Most likely, he did this to demonstrate how the early church's practice of the Lord's Supper was rooted in the teaching of Jesus. On a related note, John's account of the Last Supper in chapters 13–17 focuses on the foot-washing and on Jesus' instruction to his followers in anticipation of the crucifixion and in preparation for the time subsequent to his physical departure from the earth and his return to the Father.

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<sup>45</sup> I realize that many dispute the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter. But see Michael J. Kruger, "The Authenticity of 2 Peter," *JETS* 42 (1999): 645–71.

<sup>46</sup> For a thorough exploration, see my essay "The Glory of God in John's Gospel and Revelation," in *The Glory of God* (Theology in Community; ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson; Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 107–26.

Similarly, in his substitution of his thoroughgoing realized eschatology for the Olivet Discourse, John is concerned to show the deeper theological grounding of Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper in his messianic ministry as a whole. Similar to the Temple clearing and the footwashing, John also shows that many events in Jesus' life and ministry prior to the crucifixion revealed underlying dispositions or realities that came to the fore only at a later time but already inhered the actions or words of Jesus at the time they were originally performed or uttered. In this, John reveals hindsight, as he frankly and repeatedly acknowledges in his narrative (e.g. John 2:22; 12:16). In so doing, the evangelist draws out the deeper theological significance of these events or teachings while respecting the original historical life-setting in Jesus' ministry (though this again is a highly debated question that cannot be fully argued here).

*Transposition #10: From the Markan Parables to John's Real-Life "Parables" and Symbolic Discourses*

In Mark and the other Synoptics, Jesus' teaching is conveyed to a considerable extent by various kinds of parables, especially on the topic of God's kingdom. Remarkably, John chose not include any of the Markan (or other Synoptic) parables, including those on the kingdom of God, featuring instead several symbolic discourses on Jesus as the good shepherd and as the vine (see esp. chaps. 10 and 15). Which underlying theological conviction would have led the fourth evangelist to omit the entire body of Jesus' parables, material that made up such a large part of Jesus' instruction of his followers? Of course, certainty is elusive, but perhaps John's omission of Markan/Synoptic parable material is grounded in the conviction that there were abundant spiritual lessons to be drawn from real-life events in Jesus' ministry so that there was no need to resort to Jesus' parables, made-up stories as it were. Why recount parables, when an interpreter as spiritually discerning and theologically astute as the fourth evangelist was able to perceive the deeper meaning of Jesus' coming in his messianic signs and other events and utterances that transpired during Jesus' earthly ministry?

The account of Jesus' healing of the man born blind serves as an excellent example of John's procedure and may be closest in character to a Markan/Synoptic parable. After recounting the actual healing of the blind man by Jesus and the healing's aftermath in considerable detail, the account concludes with the dominical pronouncement that closely resembles the dynamic of reversal underlying the Synoptic parables. Through Jesus' messianic ministry, the blind would be enabled to see while those who claimed to see would be confirmed in their blindness (John 9:39–41; see also John 12:37–41 citing Isaiah's messianic prophecy). Remarkably, however, in the case of John's account of healing of the man born blind, it

is not a parabolic, fictional story that conveys the spiritual lesson or moral of the story, but an actual healing, whose spiritual, messianic significance is progressively revealed in the Johannine narrative.

Similar things could be said regarding the symbolic discourses included in John's Gospel which serve as extended *paroimiai*, illustrations of the substance of Jesus' teaching and aspects of his messianic identity and of his relationship with his followers. Once again, the term "transposition," at least to my mind, seems to capture the movement from the Markan account to John's Gospel rather well. There is a certain affinity between John's and Mark's modes of presentation, to be sure, yet at the same time John manages to uncover the underlying spiritual dynamic of an entire swath of Markan (Synoptic) material, in this case Jesus' parables, by shifting the emphasis from imagined to real, from parable to messianic symbolism, as it is conveyed, not by way of made-up stories, but by real-life events. Doubtless this represents a considerable theological achievement on the part of the evangelist.

*Transposition #11: From Jesus' Demon Exorcisms in Mark to Satan as the Chief Antagonist of Jesus in John*

Mark's Gospel is notorious for featuring a large number of demon exorcisms performed by Jesus in order to show Jesus' power and messianic authority over the evil supernatural (Mark 1:21–28; 5:1–20; 9:14–29; cf. 3:20–30). This, in turn, is part of Mark's presentation of Jesus' miracles, which I have already discussed in relation to John's signs theology above. Rather strikingly, John, for his part, chose not to record any demon exorcisms but instead to focus all of his attention on Satan, the major supernatural antagonist in the Gospel (see esp. John 13:2, 27 and the references to the "ruler of this world" in John 12:31; 14:30; and 16:11).<sup>47</sup> Again, the contrast is obvious and undeniable, while the reason for the shift in presentation must be inferred. Most likely, John's pitting of Jesus the Messiah against Satan, the ruler of this world, is part of the fourth evangelist's conception of the Gospel story as a cosmic drama which thrives on sharp polarities and contrasts. Omitting reference to demons and focusing opposi-

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<sup>47</sup> For discussions see Ronald A. Piper, "Satan, Demons and the Absence of Exorcisms in the Fourth Gospel," in *Christology, Controversy and Community: New Testament Essays in Honour of David R. Catchpole* (ed. David G. Horrell and Christopher M. Tuckett; NovTSup 99; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 253–78; Eric Plumer, "The Absence of Exorcisms in the Fourth Gospel," *Bib 78* (1997): 350–68. See also Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), chap. 9, who suggests that in John's Gospel the entire ministry of Jesus is characterized as a battle with Satan, whereby the demonic is overcome by truth rather than by the power encounter of an exorcism.

tion to Jesus on Satan allowed John to present this cosmic conflict in the starkest of terms.

*Transposition #12: From Succinct Pronouncement Stories to Selected Extended Discourses*

John is selective in both the number of signs and the number of discourses he chose to record (cf. John 20:30–31).<sup>48</sup> In both cases, this enabled him to feature these events and speeches at considerably greater length. This, in turn, afforded him the opportunity to provide the reader with a more detailed presentation of Jesus' works and words. I have already discussed the "signs" above. A list of Jesus' discourses in John presents itself as follows: (1) Jesus' testimony regarding his unique relationship with the Father (John 5:19–47); (2) the Bread of Life Discourse (John 6:32–58); (3) the Good Shepherd Discourse (John 10:1–18); and (4) the Farewell Discourse and final prayer (John 13:31–17:25).<sup>49</sup>

These discourses are found primarily in the "Festival Cycle" (John 5–10) and at the outset of Act II of John's Gospel drama. Commentators regularly note that the discourses are couched in Johannine idiom, that is, that the language is virtually indistinguishable from the narrative sections in the rest of the Gospel. This is regularly taken as evidence that John either created or at least significantly embellished what Jesus actually said. However, if, as Richard Bauckham has argued, the Gospels (including John) represent eyewitness testimony, John would have heard Jesus teach and could have reproduced the essence of these discourses from memory.<sup>50</sup> It is also possible that Jesus' language impacted John's idiom rather than John imposing his diction on Jesus.

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<sup>48</sup> Richard Bauckham, "Historiographical Characteristics of the Gospel of John," *NTS* 53 (2007): 36, speaks of "John's extreme selectivity."

<sup>49</sup> For a discussion of the Johannine discourses in comparison with Greco-Roman literature, see the discussion in Bauckham, "Historiographical Characteristics," 30–36. Bauckham notes particularly the generative function of the "Amen, Amen, I say to you" formula (pp. 33–34). He also maintains that "[w]hat is typical of many of the distinctive characteristics of Jesus' speech in John is that, in many cases, John adopts a usage that is rare in the Synoptic tradition and makes more extensive use of it," citing as examples "Father" and "Son" language (Matt. 11:27; Mark 13:32; cf. Matt. 28:19) and references to "life" in parallelism to "kingdom" terminology (p. 35).

<sup>50</sup> See esp. the so-called "bolt from the Johannine blue" in Matt. 11:25–27, esp. v. 27: "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." This sounds very much like Jesus speaking in, say, John 5:19–23, suggesting that perhaps Jesus *did* speak the way John has him speak in his Gospel after all.

*Transposition #13: From the Markan Reference to Jewish Obduracy to John's Strategic Placement of the Same Reference*

In one of the major parables of Jesus recorded by Mark in his Gospel, the Parable of the Sower, Mark included Jesus' reference to Jewish obduracy in the book of Isaiah (Mark 4:12 citing Isa. 6:9–10; cf. Matt. 13:14–15; Acts 28:26–27). In all probability, John took the Markan reference to Jewish obduracy in Isaiah 6:9–10 and gave the passage more weight, placing it strategically at the end of his "Book of Signs" (John 12:40). In this way, and in conjunction with a citation of another Isaianic passage, Isaiah 53:1 (cf. John 12:38), John provided a theological rationale for the Jewish rejection of the Messiah. In this salvation-historical trajectory, the fourth evangelist aligned Jesus with Isaiah, and the Jews with those who had rejected the prophet's message in his own day. Again, what one finds here is John taking an element that is found in Mark and making it a strategic component of his theological presentation.

*Transposition #14: From the Markan Institution of the Lord's Supper to John's Extensive Farewell Discourse*

Just prior to the crucifixion, Mark records Jesus' eating of the Passover with the Twelve (Mark 14:12–25; cf. Luke 22:7–23; Matt. 26:17–29). After making preparations, the Twelve are reclining at table and eating, Jesus speaks about his impending betrayal by Judas, and then breaks the bread and takes the cup. He gives thanks and gives the bread and the cup to his disciples, and they all drink. Then Jesus says to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25).

Again, John goes his own way. In the place of Mark's account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, John includes an extensive account of Jesus' final instructions to his disciples in the Farewell Discourse including Jesus' final prayer (John 13–17). This capitalizes on the fact that John, as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (13:23), was an eyewitness and thus could draw on his recollection of this event while at the same time patterning this section of his Gospel after the model of Moses' farewell discourse in the Book of Deuteronomy. What is more, the "Bread of Life Discourse" provides the theological underpinnings of the Lord's Supper (John 6:31–58).

*Transposition #15: From the Cross as a Place of Shame and Suffering in Mark to the Cross as a Place of Glory and Exaltation in John*

Mark and the other Synoptics present Jesus' suffering primarily from the vantage point of his enduring of painful agony and separation from God on behalf of sinful humanity. According to Mark, once condemned by Pilate, Jesus is scourged and delivered to be crucified (Mark 15:15). He is mocked by the Roman soldiers (Mark 15:18–19) and sent off on his way to the cross. Once crucified, Jesus is mocked by those passing by (Mark 15:29–30), by the chief priests and scribes (Mark 15:31–32), and even those crucified with him (Mark 15:32). Finally, Jesus cries out in agony and separation, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). After this, he breathes his last, and is identified by the Roman centurion at the cross as the Son of God (Mark 15:39). Little in Mark's Gospel shows that the cross is anything but a place of shame, humiliation, and suffering for Jesus, even though it must be stressed that Mark does make clear that Jesus dies a substitutionary death as a "ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Things are rather different in John. When John opens the Passion narrative, he does so in the following manner: "Now before the Feast of Passover, when Jesus knew that the hour had come to depart out of the world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ... Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments ... and began to wash the disciples' feet" (John 13:1–5). Throughout the Farewell Discourse, Jesus refers to the impending crucifixion in euphemistic terms such as "going to the Father" (14:12, 28). What is more, the cross is consistently identified as the place where Jesus will be glorified (12:23, 28; 17:1–5). In this, John appropriates the Isaianic perspective on the "lifting up" of the Suffering Servant (Isa. 52:13), transforming the cross into a place where Jesus is exalted and glorified.

The Johannine transposition of Mark's (and the Synoptics') theology of the cross is striking indeed and marks a magnificent (although not original) theological achievement. John enlists Isaiah to show that, contrary to the world's perspective, the cross was not in fact a place of dishonor, humiliation, and shame, but instead constituted the location where Jesus was exalted for his willingness to die for the sins of the world as the Lamb of God and the obedient Son of the Father. In fact, the entire Passion narrative, and in particular the Farewell Discourse, is written from an exaltation vantage point, which parallels Luke's perspective in the Book of Acts (1:1), on which see further the discussion below. For John, therefore, suffering is

glorious if it is done in willing submission to God. This, in turn, has important entailments for John's theology of mission.

*Transposition #16: From Mark's Presentation of Jesus' Jewish and Roman Trials to the Cosmic Trial Motif in John*

Mark includes presentations that are roughly equal in length of both Jesus' Jewish and Roman trials before the Sanhedrin and Pontius Pilate, respectively (Mark 14:53–65; 15:1–15). John supplements Mark's portrait of Jesus' Jewish trial by recording Jesus' interrogation by Annas the (former) high priest (John 18:19–24). However, when expecting to find an account of Jesus' formal Sanhedrin trial before Caiaphas the high priest, the reader is stunned to discover that this account is entirely missing. In John 18:24, John writes, "Annas then sent him [Jesus] bound to Caiaphas the high priest." This is followed by the account of Peter's second and third denials of Jesus (John 18:25–27; cf. 18:15–18), and the Johannine statement, "Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters" (John 18:28). After this, John recounts at considerable length Jesus' Roman trial before Pilate (John 18:29–19:16).<sup>51</sup>

How are we to account for this rather obvious imbalance in John's presentation of Jesus' Jewish and Roman trials? Essentially, it is as if to show that the Jews, by rejecting their Messiah, brought God's judgment upon themselves. In other words, in truth it is not the Jews who put Jesus on trial with them serving as his accusers and Jesus standing in the dock as the defendant. Rather, the roles are reversed. Throughout the Gospel, John marshals numerous witnesses on Jesus' behalf confirming his messianic identity and origin from God his Sender: John the Baptist; Jesus himself and his works; God the Father; Moses and the Hebrew Scriptures; the Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of truth"; as well as the evangelist himself. All these witnesses uniformly testify in favor of Jesus and against the Jewish authorities who obdurately resisted drawing the obvious conclusions from Jesus' messianic signs: that he was indeed the Christ and Son of God (12:36–41; 20:30–31).

Thus John transforms the entire notion of a trial and presents Jesus' ministry *in its entirety* as a trial, yet not one where *Jesus* is on trial but one where those who rejected him, Jew and Gentile alike, are put on trial and found guilty by a series of weighty witnesses to Jesus' messianic identity. This again shows John's global outlook and his masterful theological synthesis transcending Mark's (and the other Synoptics') presentations of Je-

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<sup>51</sup> I have analyzed this portion of John's Gospel at some length in "What Is Truth? Pilate's Question in Its Johannine and Larger Biblical Contexts," in Andreas J. Köstenberger, ed., *Whatever Happened to Truth?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 19–51.

sus' trial. While it is possible that John arrived at these conclusions independently, again I judge it at least equally (if not more) probable that the fourth evangelist worked from the written Gospel of Mark, and perhaps other materials, in developing his overarching, all-encompassing notion of the trial of Jesus.

#### 4. Possible Instances of John's Transposition of Luke

##### *Transposition #1: From the Two Volumes of Luke-Acts to John's One-Volume Work in Two Parts, The Book of Signs and the Book of Exaltation*

Luke is unique among the canonical Gospels and distinguished from Matthew and Mark in that he wrote two books, Luke's Gospel narrating Jesus' earthly ministry, "all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1), and the Book of Acts, recalling, by implication, what the exalted Jesus continued to do and teach by the agency of the Holy Spirit. This twofold presentation of the works and words of the earthly and the exalted Jesus, supported also by the logic underlying Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts 2, may have provided John with the impetus to structure his Gospel in two major parts, containing, respectively, the Book of Signs and the Book of Exaltation, chapters 1–12 and 13–20, respectively.

This twofold structure enabled John both to respect the original historical setting of Jesus' ministry, in particular the primary thrust of his mission to the Jews, and at the same time to move beyond the pre-crucifixion period by affirming the universal scope of Jesus' mission, including the Gentiles, subsequent to Jesus' exaltation. While it can, of course, not be conclusively proven that John had read Luke and Acts prior to conceiving of his Gospel, as part of the cumulative case presented in this essay this conclusion seems eminently plausible and reasonable and would account exceedingly well for John's overall literary plan, providing a likely point of departure from which John could have developed his two-part presentation of the messianic ministry of Jesus to both Jews and Gentiles at a time when the Gentile mission had long been launched.

##### *Transposition #2: From the Virgin Birth to Jesus' Eternal Pre-Existence*

Luke, as well as Matthew, commences their respective Gospels with genealogies of Jesus as well as accounts of the virgin birth of Jesus (Luke 1–3; cf. Matthew 1–3). In this, emphasis is placed on Jesus' human earthly lineage through Adam (in the case of Luke) as well as Abraham and David (a major emphasis in Matthew). In their infancy narratives, both Luke and Matthew place special emphasis on the virgin birth of Christ (Luke 1:34–

35; Matt. 1:18–25). This is used to support the notion that Jesus is the holy Son of God (Luke 1:35) in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that "the virgin shall conceive and bear a son" called "Immanuel," "God with us" (Matt. 1:22–23; cf. Isa. 7:14).

While there may be a hint of the virgin birth of Jesus in the Pharisees' slur, "We were not born of sexual immorality" (John 8:41, possibly implying that Jesus was), John chooses a markedly different path in opening his Gospel. Rather than dwelling on Jesus' earthly lineage and supernatural conception in Mary's womb, the fourth evangelist links Jesus with God the Creator who existed from eternity past and claims that Jesus, "the Word," was instrumental in the creation of the world (John 1:1–3). This Word, John subsequently notes, was made flesh and took up temporary residence (*skenoō*) on this earth in Jesus (John 1:14). Jesus, in turn, was "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14), that is, was the climactic expression of God's covenant faithfulness.

It would exceed the available evidence to suggest that John here sought to correct Luke's (or Matthew's) presentation of Jesus' human genealogy and virgin birth. Yet it is clear that John's rooting of Jesus' origins in his eternal pre-existence with God even prior to creation deepens and transcends Luke's and Matthew's presentations. It is certainly possible that John wrote his Gospel independently of Luke and/or Matthew, but it is in my judgment at least equally possible that John transposed Luke's (and perhaps even Matthew's) account of Jesus' divine-human origins into a different key. If so, the trajectory in the canonical Gospel would be from the first Gospel (assuming Markan priority) with no genealogy or birth narrative to Luke and Matthew including both a genealogy and a birth narrative (though in different order) and finally to John who in this matter transcends the Gospels preceding him just as Luke and Matthew transcend Mark.

*Transposition #3: From the Socio-Economic Dimension of Jesus' Ministry in Luke-Acts to John's Singular Focus on People's Individual Eternal Destiny*

In the Synoptics, especially in Luke, but also to a lesser extent in Mark and Matthew, considerable attention is devoted to the socio-economic dimension of Jesus' ministry. Jesus is presented as a friend of tax-collectors and sinners who reached out to the disenfranchised in society and reversed the present social stratification by denouncing the rich and presenting a sense of one's poverty as the necessary precondition for realizing one's need for salvation. According to the Synoptics, Jesus' is an anti-establishment message that subverts existing power structures.

In John's Gospel, on the other hand, one looks in vain for teaching regarding the socio-economic or political dimension of Jesus' ministry. It appears that the fourth evangelist eliminated any such references in order to focus exclusively on the spiritual dimension of Jesus' coming which is conveyed consistently in terms of the giving of life. As Adolf Schlatter noted long ago, there is no mention of tax-collectors and sinners.<sup>52</sup> Neither is reference made to the poor or to the dangers of wealth, the sole exception being Judas the betrayer, who professes concern for the poor but is promptly rebuffed by Jesus (John 12:4–7). Jesus' words to Pilate aptly illustrate John's lack of interest in political or socio-economic matters: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

By bypassing and essentially eliminating the Synoptic message concerning wealth and poverty, John is not necessarily indicating his disapproval or disregard for such matters of belief; yet he must have judged that retaining this emphasis would have inevitably detracted from his singular focus on people's eternal destiny in the context of what C. F. D. Moule called his "individualism" or Rudolf Bultmann termed his "dualism of decision."<sup>53</sup> In this emphasis on the primacy of people's eternal destiny, John sends a powerful message, I believe, to all those who over the centuries have unduly stressed the importance of the redistribution of people's income or defined Christian mission exclusively in terms of social action while proportionately giving insufficient consideration to gospel proclamation or evangelism.

*Transposition #4: From the Pattern of the Early Church's Mission in the Book of Acts to John's Presentation of the Pattern of Jesus' Earthly Mission*

As a highly strategic and synthetic thinker, to say nothing of his manifest interest in mission, the fourth evangelist, writing decades after the successful launch of the Gentile mission, may well have been concerned to show that the pattern of the early church's mission – from Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria and to the Gentiles – had been present already in the mission of Jesus. This suggests John's likely familiarity with the Book of Acts where this pattern is specified at the outset (Acts 1:8) and made the literary blueprint of the author's entire presentation. It also serves to legitimize the pattern of the church's mission as being grounded in the mission of Jesus himself.

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<sup>52</sup> Adolf Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes: Wie er spricht, denkt und glaubt. Ein Kommentar zum 4. Evangelium* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1948), 48–49.

<sup>53</sup> C. F. D. Moule, "The Individualism of the Fourth Gospel," *NovT* 5 (1962): 171–90; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; trans. Kendrick Grobel; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951, 1955), 2.21.

Thus in chapters 3 and 4 of his Gospel, John chose to include a sequence of narratives that show Jesus engaged in outreach to a series of representative characters: a Jew, Nicodemus, the "Teacher of Israel" (John 3:1–12; see also the reference to further activity in the region of Judea at large; John 3:22), a Samaritan woman and the people in her village (John 4:1–42), and the royal official (most likely a Gentile; John 4:43–54). Not only does John demonstrate that the pattern of Jesus' mission anticipated the pattern of the early church's missionary activity, but by showing Jesus' mission to extend beyond Israel also to Samaritans and Gentiles, John stresses the universal scope of Jesus' mission while respecting and retaining its salvation-historical constraints.

## 5. Conclusion: The Johannine Pattern of Transposition

In the past, the study of the relationship between John and the Synoptics has frequently been hindered by scholars asking the wrong questions, at least to my mind, and employing inadequate methods. In particular, the rejection of the eyewitness nature of the Gospels (including John) has led to the prevalence of literary paradigms or discussions merely in terms of common "traditions." As we have seen, when John's literary dependence on the Synoptics could not be established in light of the available evidence, the pendulum swung to the other extreme, that is, John's independence from the Synoptics. In due course, it became clear, at least to some of us, that the notion of Johannine independence from the Synoptic Gospels, likewise, at least in a radical form, failed to do full justice to the relationship between these two corpora. Various efforts at mediating positions were only partially successful in addressing the issues involved.

In this context, Richard Bauckham's recent work *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* has opened up a fruitful new avenue in the field of Gospels studies.<sup>54</sup> Not that the idea of John's Gospel constituting eyewitness testimony was entirely new, but Bauckham provided massive ancient evidence to buttress his case, which lent the theory an unprecedented degree of plausibility. It remains, however, to draw the necessary implications from Bauckham's work for the relationship between John and the Synoptics (without, of course, claiming that Bauckham would necessarily agree with the argument made in this essay). If the author of John's Gospel was an eyewitness, a solution that is considerably less complicated than many other theories on the subject lies close at hand: John may have been *both* an eyewitness *and* knew the Synoptics. As an eyewitness, he was free to draw on his

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<sup>54</sup> See the discussion of Bauckham's contribution in Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, Chap. 1, section 2.1.3.1.3.

own memory of events in Jesus' ministry (a possible example being the Farewell Discourse). As one familiar with one or several of the Synoptic Gospels, he reflected on their deeper theological significance while writing his own unique account, in some cases transposing Mark and possibly also Luke.

I hasten to add that if readers accept my "transposition" scenario as plausible, even probable, they should keep in mind that John most likely did many other things besides transpose Mark and possibly Luke-Acts as well. If every one of them were discussed in this paper, I suppose that I would certainly have exceeded the word limit for this essay set by the editors!<sup>55</sup> I, for one, believe that he likely drew on eyewitness recollection, which would account for the inclusion of many of the pericope not featured in the Synoptic Gospels at all, plus possibly draw on a variety of other oral and/or written sources.

That said, if the above-sketched scenario is even approximately on target, neither literary dependence nor Johannine independence adequately describes the relationship between John and the Synoptics, nor does the proposal of "interlocking traditions" sufficiently address all the pertinent issues. Literary dependence theories fall short because John and the Synoptics are too different to render such a hypothesis plausible. Independence, as mentioned, is historically implausible if John wrote a generation after the Synoptics. What is more, such a theory also does not give sufficient consideration to the possibility that John transposed various aspects of the theology of Mark, and possibly also Luke, in the way I have attempted to describe above. The notion of interlocking traditions helps alleviate the charge of historical discrepancies between John and the Synoptics but does so on the premise that these are, at least in part, undesigned coincidences.<sup>56</sup>

In contrast, I have suggested that John's transposition of various aspects of Mark and possibly Luke was both conscious and deliberate. If John was, in fact, an apostolic eyewitness, I submit he would have had the confidence, and the historical distance, not to follow Mark or any of the other canonical Gospels slavishly. At the same time, there would have been no need for John to operate in a vacuum. He could have taken various aspects of the theology of Mark and possibly Luke and transformed these in the ways described above, producing an original work that is yet not entirely novel but builds on the work of his predecessors and did so with great

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<sup>55</sup> Readers versed in Johannine idiom will have no trouble recognizing here the not-so-veiled allusion to the final verse of John's Gospel, 21:25.

<sup>56</sup> To borrow a term from F. F. Bruce, "Is the Paul of Acts the Real Paul?," *BJRL* 58 (1976): 282–305 (describing the relationship between the Paul of Acts and the Paul depicted in the apostle's own letters).

theological sophistication and creative imagination. Rigid source or redaction-critical models cannot sufficiently capture this process, nor is it adequate to describe John's procedure merely on the basis of common underlying traditions. Even pointing to the presence of "interlocking traditions" only takes matters so far. A model of conscious Johannine transposition of Mark and possibly Luke seems to explain best the available evidence.

At the end of the day, this kind of *Transpositionstheorie* combines the strengths and avoids the weaknesses of both dependence and independence models. It affirms Johannine dependence in the sense that it acknowledges that John knew one or several of the Synoptic Gospels and in this sense "used" them (yet without making their pattern the pattern of his presentation). It also acknowledges Johannine independence in the sense that John forged his own path in writing his Gospel, yet without taking this notion to the extreme of maintaining that John was unaware of the existence or literary plan of Mark and possibly Luke-Acts. Rightly understood, then, John was *both* dependent *and* independent of the Synoptics. A theory of conscious Johannine transposition of Mark and possibly Luke capitalizes on the legitimate aspects of the various other available models while advancing a mediating position that is bolder than the mere affirmation of common or interlocking traditions.<sup>57</sup>

Indeed, the strategic decisions made by John in relation to Mark and possibly Luke are bold. They represent a conscious and theologically sophisticated effort to interpret for the reader the significance of Jesus' coming and ministry in a way that builds on and is compatible with the Markan (Lucan) portrait yet advances beyond it and thus is able to deepen the reader's understanding of Jesus' mission in a variety of significant and highly illuminating ways. Not only was John in all probability an apostolic eyewitness (though little in this presentation rests on this fact), the above sketch suggests that he was in all likelihood aware of Mark's and possibly Luke's presentation.

In fact, it is hard to imagine John's Gospel apart from the theological fabric woven in Mark's Gospel which, I suggest, looms large and remains discernible in the way in which John chose to interpret, develop, and deepen it. On a larger canonical level, therefore, once prepared by the Markan (and possibly Lucan) witness, the reader is readied to climb the Johannine peak. But what *is* the Johannine pattern of transposition? Is it possible to discern from the above-stated twenty or so transpositions a

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<sup>57</sup> It is also superior to Paul N. Anderson's highly complex and conjectural theory of "interfluentiality" between various aspects of Johannine and Synoptic tradition. See his *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus: Modern Foundations Reconsidered* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006).

method by which John creatively reworked Mark's and perhaps Luke's material? Several strands of evidence may be noted in this regard.

First, and most foundationally and pervasively, John seeks *to unearth and explore the deeper theological significance of events recorded in Mark*. This includes the miracles, which John transposes into messianic signs; the parables, which John transposes into real-life "parables" and symbolic discourses; the cross as a place of honor and exaltation rather than shame and humiliation; and Mark's future eschatology, which John, while not supplanting entirely, recalibrates by focusing on the present realized impact of Jesus' coming.

Second, at times John seems concerned *to show the roots of early church doctrine or practice in Jesus' own teaching and practice*. Possible examples of this include Jesus' references to eating his flesh and drinking his blood in the "Bread of Life Discourse" in an effort to elucidate the early church's observance of the Lord's Supper or the pattern of Jesus' mission from Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria and the Gentiles anticipating the pattern of the early church's mission.

Third, there seem to have been *certain considerations relating to literary structure* as well, such as removing, and moving, the account of the Temple cleansing to make room for the account of the raising of Lazarus, or imitating the pattern of Luke-Acts by conceiving of the story of Jesus in two "volumes," the "Book of Signs" and the "Book of Exaltation." Other examples of this may include featuring both Peter's and Martha's confessions at strategic junctures in John's narrative and in giving prominent attention also to the Markan reference to Jewish obduracy by citing Isaiah.

Fourth, other transpositions may, at least in part, be related to *the particular historical setting of John's Gospel vis-à-vis the Gospel of Mark*. Most importantly, this may have been a factor in replacing Mark's prominent reference to the kingdom of God with references to eternal life. Writing within a decade or two after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple during the Jewish War, a period characterized by intense Roman persecution of the church, John may have sought to further distance Jesus and his followers from any political dimension while accentuating the eternal aspects of Jesus' mission.

Can an independence-dependence proposal possibly have merit? In a field where illegitimate dichotomies and reactionary theses have too often controlled scholarly assessments of a given issue, perhaps such a proposal is just what is needed and should be given serious consideration. What is more, even though there is, I believe, sufficient reason to believe that John's Gospel is historically reliable – a matter largely bracketed out from the present essay in an effort to focus squarely on the matter of John's

theological transposition of Mark and possibly Luke – the literary and theological phenomenon of transposition argued here can be established largely apart from the question of the historicity of the material.<sup>58</sup>

If the preceding investigation has been on target, I believe, the evidence suggests that whether as an eyewitness or as an extensive redactor of Jesus tradition, whatever his source, the author or authors of John's Gospel, whatever he or she or they may have been, skillfully and deliberately transposed Mark and possibly Luke. In this, the author or authors of the Gospel acted *independently*, in the sense that he (or she, or they) had additional sources (whether eyewitness recollection or otherwise) and wrote their own Gospel. At the same time, the fourth evangelist acted *dependently* in that he shows to my mind conclusive evidence of knowing Mark's Gospel and possibly also Luke-Acts. Enter, the transposition theory.

Finally, how does the thesis proposed in this essay square with the views of Professor Hengel, the honoree of this volume? While Hengel never addressed John's relationship with the Synoptics explicitly in sufficient detail, I believe the transposition theory advocated here is largely congruent with his work. First, Hengel dated Mark prior to the destruction of the Temple. Second, Hengel held to Markan priority and believed that Mark served as one of the sources for the later Gospels. Third, Hengel viewed Mark and Luke as distinct theological witnesses. Fourth, Hengel held that John wrote last and differed considerably from the other Gospels. Since the transposition theory argued here is independent of one's view of authorship (a matter on which Hengel and I disagree), I believe this theory operates largely within the general framework established by Professor Hengel and fills an important lacuna in his impressive scholarly work.

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<sup>58</sup> On the matter of John's historical reliability, see esp. Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2002); idem, "The Historical Reliability of John: Rushing in Where Angels Fear to Tread?," in *Jesus and Johannine Tradition* (ed. Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 71–82. See also Leon Morris, *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969); and Andreas J. Köstenberger, "John," in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, Vol. 2: *John–Acts* (ed. Clinton E. Arnold; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 1–216.

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