

one

Jesus through Different Eyes

INTRODUCTION

Years ago when I was at school some children there used to call me “four-eyes.” Youngsters can be mean to each other, but of course you have guessed the truth: I wore glasses and still do. However, I only actually have two eyes! When I look at something through my two eyes, each eye looks from nearly the same place and offers nearly the same perspective. The small differences between each eye’s view allow my brain to perceive a three-dimensional image.

In this book I will look at Jesus through two eyes. I am an academic theologian who teaches at a theological college. Among other responsibilities, I teach a course called “Ministry and Teaching of Jesus.” The course is about Jesus as he was two thousand years ago in a small country near the eastern edge of the Roman Empire. The main source of information for the course is the New Testament, and the main discipline is historical enquiry. So this is one of the eyes with which I look at Jesus in the following chapters: as a theological historian, I consider Jesus then and there rather than here and now.

My other perspective through which I experience Jesus and with which I write is my Pentecostal Christianity. So I write from the perspective of an ardent believer in the unchanging lordship of Jesus, and dare to claim that I experience Jesus in my here and now. My understanding of these experiences is deeply informed by my reading of the Christian scriptures. One of these sacred texts, dear to Pentecostals, declares that

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb 13:8).¹ The Jesus I experience as Lord today is the same Jesus who walked the hills and valleys of Galilee “yesterday.” So, just as my physical eyes are close to each other and offer similar perspectives, I also expect to find a great deal of common ground between what each of my perspectives on Jesus tells me. Moreover, my attempt to view Jesus through both eyes in this book will, I trust, enable me to offer a “three-dimensional” depth to my presentation, in which I hope to contribute to a considered historical basis for present-day Pentecostal devotion to Jesus.²

The first of my two focuses—study of the history of Jesus—demands interaction with the huge amount of literature that has built up concerning the various so-called quests for the historical Jesus, present studies in the area, and inevitably the vast field of literature in studies of the gospels in particular and the New Testament in general, not to mention other key ancient documents from the surrounding culture and the early church. In this respect, I confess that I have only scratched the surface. Those who are experts in the field, and who are kind enough to read this short book, will no doubt find themselves wondering at times, “Why has Atkinson not referred to such-and-such an author?” Nevertheless, I hope that the angle from which I approach the subject offers a fresh and interesting engagement with the topic, sufficient to make up for some shortfalls in broader reading.

The second focus—my Pentecostal perspective and how it affects my research—will influence the contents of this book in three respects. First, it will guide my selection of aspects of Jesus’ life towards those that will be of natural interest to Pentecostals: Jesus’ experience of God by the Spirit; the enabling this brought to his own work; the supernatural elements of that work; and such matters. Second, my Pentecostal focus will affect this study because my current experience of Jesus, I suggest, can help in making an “imaginative leap” to the person and the world that the ancient evidence about Jesus portrays. Third, it will affect the choice of

1. All translations of the New Testament are my own.

2. I make no attempt in this book to define “Pentecostal.” For a discussion of difficulties in defining the term, see Robeck and Yong, “Global Pentecostalism,” e.g., “the definition of what it means to be ‘Pentecostal’ has become as elusive as a grain of sand in a desert windstorm” and “the growing complexity of the term Pentecostal and its modifiers has led a number of historians to observe that no single definition for the term may any longer be possible” (1–2).

evidence upon which I draw in researching Jesus' history. I explore these three aspects in the next section.

JESUS THROUGH PENTECOSTAL EYES

Pentecostal Interest in Jesus

It is a relatively common but often inaccurate criticism of Pentecostals that they concentrate too much on the Holy Spirit to the detriment of their interest in Jesus the divine Son.³ Pentecostal theology, for all its rich appreciation of the Spirit, is remarkably centered on Jesus. This can perhaps be seen nowhere more sharply than in the so-called foursquare and fivefold characterizations of the “full” gospel. It is a Pentecostal axiom that one should not “short change” the gospel, watering it down or breaking it up so that only part of it is offered to those in need. The world needs to hear the *full* gospel offered by God.

This good news centers on the person and ministry of Jesus Christ, and in this regard, Pentecostals have long characterized his significance in a well-known summary. According to the Pentecostal foursquare gospel, Jesus is savior, healer, baptizer in the Spirit, and soon-coming King. In the case of the fivefold expression of this full gospel, Jesus is savior, sanctifier, healer, baptizer in the Spirit, and soon-coming king.⁴ Despite this variation between foursquare and fivefold patterns, the terms are firmly embedded in the Pentecostal psyche. My own tradition is four-square, rather than fivefold.⁵ For this reason, I will focus on the four-square rubric.

Clearly, these four characterizations represent aspects of Jesus that are of particular importance for Pentecostals: they indicate what Jesus means to Pentecostals. As such, they focus my interest in this book. While there are many other aspects to what Jesus did and said during his

3. Glass offers the same response to this criticism in “Eschatology,” 135–36; see also Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 96.

4. The fivefold rubric is affirmed by Pentecostal holiness groups; see, e.g., *ibid.*, 18; Dayton, *Theological Roots*, 19–23. The foursquare characterization of the Pentecostal full gospel must be distinguished carefully from the fourfold characterization offered by pre-Pentecostal holiness movements, by which Jesus could be described as “Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, coming King” (Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 65).

5. The Elim Pentecostal Church, with which I am ordained, is technically known as the Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance.

mission two thousand years ago, I will explore those aspects that can be clustered around the four terms in question.

What is more, I will not only allow these descriptions of Jesus to guide my choice of study. I will also use these terms as an organizing principle in structuring the book. So I will have four chapters later that are devoted, one each, to these four aspects of Jesus' impact. The order of these chapters will follow standard Pentecostal expressions of the rubric, in which savior is always listed first and coming king always last. Admittedly, one finds variations on the pattern in between these two terms. One can find baptizer in the Spirit listed before healer.⁶ Also, one often reads simply of Jesus as coming king rather than the more sharply expressed soon-coming king. I do not wish to lose the classical Pentecostal fervor for the return of our Lord, and so I will have chapters titled "Savior," "Healer," "Baptizer in the Spirit," and "Soon-Coming King." My choice of order between the second and third elements is somewhat arbitrary but suits my ordering of material.

My decision to use these Pentecostal characterizations as chapter titles does carry risks, I acknowledge. I may fail to engage with truly significant aspects of Jesus' mission because the study has been "straight-jacketed" by a prior determination to, so to speak, fit Jesus into Pentecostal categories. However, it is worth emphasizing at the outset that it is not my task even to try to identify and discuss every aspect of Jesus' mission. The size of those books that do seek to do this illustrates the enormity of that task. It certainly has its place. However, this work has a more modest challenge before it: can this Pentecostal focus clarify any particular aspects of Jesus' mission?⁷ May certain emphases emerge that could otherwise lie dormant? Could some rebalancing of the picture follow?

To this task later chapters will turn. Each will begin with a presentation of relevant Pentecostal beliefs about Jesus that pertain to the subject under discussion in the chapter. In offering this presentation, I will consistently turn first to my own Elim Pentecostal denomination to source

6. E.g., in Albrecht and Howard, "Pentecostal Spirituality," 236; Thomas, *Devil, Disease and Deliverance*, 315; Vondey, *Pentecostalism*, 31. For the commoner case of healer listed before baptizer in the Spirit, see Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 228; Glass, "Eschatology," 136; Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 96; MacDonald, "Jesus Christ," 484; etc.

7. Among the omissions that my selection of topics creates is Jesus' resurrection. No chapter or section discusses this event, and in this book I assume rather than argue for the historicity of his physical resurrection from death.

this material,⁸ only looking further afield for secondary material. This is partly because Elim is an example of a “foursquare” Pentecostal grouping, and partly because, being more familiar with the context of this body of writing than I am with any other, I can read it as an “insider”—a fellow Elim thinker. This will be helpful as I examine how my own tradition articulates its beliefs. However, where material from Elim’s authors can usefully be placed in a wider context, I turn, equally naturally, to other Pentecostal voices. I will do all this by studying beliefs penned in academic and more “popular” books and articles. Beyond this, noting that much articulation of Pentecostal belief in the “pulpit and the pew,” as opposed to the academy, is oral, I will sometimes refer to the impressions I have gained during my more than thirty years of personal experience of engaging in Pentecostal worship, listening to its preaching, and hearing oral testimony.

The Imaginative Leap

I move now from my selection of material to the question concerning possible ways in which a Pentecostal perspective might help in researching the history of Jesus. It might be argued, on the contrary, that my twin focus in this book of historical study and Pentecostal perspective is invalid: history and theology should be kept apart.⁹ The “pure” study of history should not be “sullied” by an ideology, whether this be theological or otherwise—and for that matter, “pure” theology should not be sullied by “mere” history. However, when it comes to the history of Jesus this is a difficult argument to mount. In fact, I believe that in studies of the historical Jesus, history and theology necessarily do co-exist, for a verdict

8. I will use, primarily, the first five volumes of the magazine *The Elim Evangel* (1919–24) and books by George Jeffreys, Elim’s founder, for evidence of thinking in the first generation. For views from the middle decades of the twentieth century, I turn to *Pentecostal Doctrine*, edited by P. S. Brewster, and other books written by Brewster himself, E. C. W. Boulton, George Canty, Samuel Gorman, and Harry Greenway. For more recent thinking, I refer to *Pentecostal Perspectives* and *The Message*, both edited by Keith Warrington, to books by Warrington himself, and to others, particularly those by Colin Dye.

9. See, e.g., Johnson, *Real Jesus*, e.g., 80: “If the conversation is to move forward on more responsible grounds, . . . [w]e must find a way of asking whether there can be a critical scholarship that is not ‘historical critical’ in the way so often assumed. We must also ask whether there is in fact a necessary link between history and theology, or whether these are discrete modes of knowing.”

about the identity and mission of Jesus is in my view a theological one, even if the position arrived at is atheistic. Also, all those who engage in historical study, whether of Jesus or of anyone or anything else, will inevitably have some predisposing ideological perspective, whether or not it is theological, and so the study of history cannot escape the impact of ideology. While some might argue that one should conduct one's historical enquiry free from such slants, it must be conceded that anyone who is interested enough in a subject to enquire into it has already got some particular angle or perspective. Those able to stand at such a great distance that they could shield their conclusions from the influence of their pre-existing mindsets would in all likelihood not be interested enough in the subject to conduct the research in the first place. So there is no such thing as the writing of entirely impartial history. The world of research has now acknowledged the place of personal "interest," in both the sense of fascination and in the sense of bias, in causing research to happen at all.¹⁰ No Jesus-researchers should pretend that they are engaged in supposedly value-free, presupposition-free historical enquiry. It is better to recognize that the acquisition of ideas and understanding of events occurs through a "hermeneutical spiral" as one comes to the evidence with one's preset perspective, has that perspective thereby challenged and perhaps altered, and then comes again to the evidence with new ideas and perhaps this time sees it rather differently—and so on up the spiral. The question, then, is this: might a certain theological perspective actually help one's historical endeavor?

I hope to show that it can, despite potential counter-arguments that Pentecostalism of all approaches to Christianity is poorly placed in this regard. Such arguments would aver that Pentecostals are so immediate and pragmatic in their focus that their present interests in Jesus would swamp historical enquiry, disallowing historical distance and creating a significant danger of anachronism. Pentecostals, the argument would go, experience Jesus in their here and now, know full well that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and therefore confidently conclude that for all intents and purposes there is nothing ancient about Jesus that is worth knowing, unless it is directly paralleled in the here and now. If

10. This view is now quite commonly held, in contrast to views of a generation ago—e.g., that of Vermes, who claimed that his "search [for the historical Jesus] . . . has been made without—so far as I am consciously aware—any ulterior motive." Vermes also claimed "the inalienable right of the historian to pursue a course independent of beliefs" (Vermes, *Jesus and the World of Judaism*, 1–2).

I, as a Pentecostal, start asking questions about Jesus' past, I am likely all too easily to "retroject" my present assumptions about Jesus onto my picture of that past. So, to give a concrete example, if I perceive Jesus today as someone who heals people and does so in a particular way, I am all too likely to assume that Jesus operated in the same way two thousand years ago. I acknowledge this danger but believe that there is another side to the coin: this very Pentecostal experience and interpretation of the present activities of Jesus might actually somehow be *helpful* in understanding the Jesus of two thousand years ago.

What is at work here is the historian's principle of analogy. Those of us who investigate the past bring to that investigation our experiences of our present. We use analogies between present experiences and data concerning the past in seeking to understand something of that past. Without these analogies, the past would remain opaque. The question arises, however, as to what sets of present experiences offer the most helpful analogies in "unlocking" the past, for certainly these experiences affect one's perspective, which in turn affects what one sees. Thus, for example, those who are Christian believers are very likely to reach different historical conclusions concerning Jesus from those who are Jewish or Islamic believers, or from those of no religious persuasion. Beyond Christianity, there are many groups and individuals who have claimed Jesus for their cause and then no doubt sensed that this link with Jesus—this common ground—grants them an empathetic insight into his values and actions. But in this respect, Christians have what might be termed a prior claim to Jesus. The fact that Jesus lies directly behind Christianity places Christians in a good position to see Jesus. The circularity of this argument must be acknowledged: it is a historical claim that Christianity was in some sense "founded" by Jesus (rather than by, say, the apostle Paul). However, the links between Jesus and Christianity are unarguably strong. And therein lies the difference between Christian and non-Christian perspectives. All Christians probably, to a greater or lesser extent, sense at least unconsciously that their outlook on a world created, sustained, and redeemed by God helps them to see more clearly a Jesus who clearly believed the same things.

What can be said of Christians in general can also be said in a particular way of Pentecostals: someone who looks at Jesus through Pentecostal eyes thereby gains helpful insight by means of that perspective. This claim can be made because of the good historical evidence, that will emerge later in this book, that Jesus knew the powerful work of the Spirit

in and through his life, was able to perform miracles such as healings, and believed that God was using his work as part of God's great "end-time" plan to renew the earth. Pentecostals empathize with Jesus in these respects.¹¹ This commonality that we sense offers potential for some clarity of vision when enquiring into these aspects of Jesus' history.

I am not appealing to some esoteric "pneumatic hermeneutics" in making this claim.¹² I acknowledge that their worldviews equip Pentecostals with a helpful capacity for imagination when considering religious experience.¹³ However, what I am appealing to is the religious experience itself, of course interpreted by those engaging in it and by the community with which they share it. As Vanhoozer rightly observes, "the essence of Pentecostalism is the belief that the spiritual experiences of biblical characters . . . are possible for contemporary believers, too."¹⁴ While there are variations in viewpoint, which I explore in subsequent chapters, Pentecostals even believe that the spiritual experiences enjoyed by Jesus "are possible for contemporary believers," to quote Vanhoozer again. Not only that: it is a conviction typical of Pentecostals that they have *had* these experiences. My claim is that this perceived commonality of experience provides a "hermeneutical bridge" over which the imagination can go as it seeks to view Jesus' life all those years ago.

The Choice of Evidence

Pentecostal scholarship has flourished in recent years. However, there has been little engagement by Pentecostals with studies of the historical Jesus.¹⁵ For the latter studies, in the main, one must turn elsewhere—and there are many places to turn! For a start, there has been such a varied, stop-start, history to the study that observers have identified at least

11. I do not claim that only those who label themselves as Pentecostal sense empathy with these aspects of Jesus' life.

12. For brief comments about criticisms of Howard Ervin's pneumatic exegesis, see my "Pentecostal Hermeneutics," 52–53. For useful recent, if brief, response to pneumatic hermeneutics, see Vanhoozer, "Reforming Pneumatic Hermeneutics."

13. For my use of Yong's concept of pneumatological imagination and its relations to analogy, see my *Trinity after Pentecost*, 14–15.

14. Vanhoozer, "Reforming Pneumatic Hermeneutics," 20.

15. Among those who are comfortable with the label "charismatic" or "renewal," authors writing about the historical Jesus include Craig Keener, e.g., in *Historical Jesus of the Gospels*, and Graham Twelftree, e.g., in *Jesus the Miracle Worker*.

three conceptually separable “quests” for the historical Jesus.¹⁶ Also, any attempt to mine the mountain of historical Jesus scholarship quickly reveals that the range of reconstructions of Jesus is vast. The following summary list is illustrative:

Over the last several decades that compose the third quest, an impressive (some, with Crossan, would say “embarrassing”) number of such scholarly reconstructions have been proposed for consideration. Among them (in no particular order) are: an eschatological prophet, a Galilean holy man, an occultic magician, an innovative rabbi, a trance-inducing psychotherapist, a Jewish sage, a political revolutionary, an Essene conspirator, an itinerant exorcist, an historicized myth, a protoliberation theologian, a peasant artisan, a Torah-observant Pharisee, a Cynic-like philosopher, a self-conscious eschatological agent, a socioeconomic reformer, a paradoxical Messianic claimant and, finally, as one who saw himself as, in some sense, the very embodiment of Yahweh-God.¹⁷

It is natural to wonder why such a wide range of conclusions should have been reached from fundamentally the same set of ancient pieces of evidence. There are many possible reasons. For a start, the values and presuppositions of the researchers may have played their part in affecting some of these varied outcomes. One’s predisposed position will affect what questions one asks in one’s research. Something about Jesus that is fascinating to one researcher will leave another cold. One’s choice of questions will in turn affect one’s focus on certain of the evidence available, even if one agrees completely with someone of another ideology concerning what the range of admissible evidence is.

Another obvious reason for the bewildering variety of conclusions that research into the history of Jesus has developed is the great differences in method that exist. Should one stand back and gaze at the “big picture”? Or should one crane forward and scrutinize individual sayings in minute detail? Is there value in prioritizing the sayings of Jesus?—or for that matter his deeds? Should one concentrate on studying the text or

16. For useful surveys of various lengths of these scholarly quests, see: Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, chapters 4–5; Eddy and Beilby, “Quest for the Historical Jesus: Introduction”; Keener, *Historical Jesus*, chapters 1–3; Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 3–124; for a survey specifically of what he categorizes as the Third Quest, see Witherington, *Jesus Quest*, throughout.

17. Eddy and Beilby, “Quest,” 53.

studying the context? To some extent, method is determined by the very issues of the researcher's perspective that I have noted.

There is, however, one particular aspect of method that calls for more detailed consideration. It is the matter of what evidence one chooses to accept as valid. Once more, the researcher's fundamental outlook will play its part in guiding the choice of ancient sources of evidence that will be admitted to an enquiry into Jesus' life. There are those who approach the whole field with a skeptical stance as to the reliability of ancient documents for revealing the history they purport to present. In particular, there are those of no religious persuasion who suspect that documents written by religiously motivated authors have paid little attention to historical accuracy, being more concerned to use their version of history to promote their own religious propaganda. On the other hand entirely, there are Christian researchers who regard canonized scriptural documents as written by people holding fundamentally the same faith in God that the researchers do. Among these researchers are those who operate not a "hermeneutic of suspicion," but a "hermeneutic of trust." I am one of them. I agree with Richard Bauckham's words concerning the four canonical gospels: "Christian faith has trusted these texts. Christian faith has trusted that in these texts we encounter the real Jesus, and it is hard to see how Christian faith and theology can work with a radically distrusting attitude to the Gospels."¹⁸

Examples of the former category, a "hermeneutic of suspicion," abound. To give but one example, Barnabas Lindars could introduce his study of possible meanings of the phrase "Son of Man" when on Jesus' lips by regarding it as simply an assured result of modern scholarship that many of the "Son of Man" sayings in the New Testament were not uttered by Jesus at all. In particular, those sayings referring to the Son of Man coming in clouds of glory were foreign to the intentions of Jesus and were the inventions of the early church, "retrojected" onto Jesus' lips. Thus, in these early documents, the potential writing of accurate history actually became the victim of religious propaganda.¹⁹ It must be

18. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 2. Cf. Wenham's comments of "early Christian traditions" that these "Christians were fallible and prejudiced like the rest of us, but by and large they were, I believe, honest people trying to tell the truth. It is best, therefore, to treat them as such and to beware of the danger either of lightly rejecting their testimony or of subjecting them to unreasonable hypercriticism" (*Redating Matthew, Mark & Luke*, xxiv).

19. Lindars, *Jesus Son of Man*, Preface and chapter 1.

conceded that the decision to reject certain Son of Man sayings as inauthentic (in terms of actually being uttered by Jesus) has itself been made on historical grounds—it is itself the result of historical research. But it has not been made in an atmosphere of “value-free” historical research, and the presuppositions behind the research that precedes Lindars’s work are open to question.

Once certain Son of Man sayings are excluded from study when considering, as Lindars did, what Jesus meant when he called himself Son of Man, then obviously this will have its effect on the results that emerge. This is but one example of a most important element of historical Jesus research. What evidence one admits will have a remarkable impact on what results one obtains: “what you put in” affects “what you get out.”

It is thus important to consider what evidence is admitted to the enquiry by more conservative scholars who regard the New Testament as, fundamentally, a reliable source from which to glean Jesus’ history. When this is considered, what strikes one immediately, and with some force, is the almost universal decision to give little if any weight in the enquiry to *John’s Gospel*.²⁰ This is a well-established and long-standing methodological preference.²¹ However, there is taking place some considerable rehabilitation of John’s Gospel as a historical source.²² The implications of this for historical Jesus studies deserve to be extensively explored. From my own Pentecostal perspective, it is vital. To delete one New Testament gospel from consideration, if good reason exists to admit it, seems as risky as sawing one leg off a dining table and hoping it will remain stable. Thus I now turn to consider the possible value of John’s Gospel, and of other ancient sources, in providing evidence for the history of Jesus.

20. E.g., among more conservative scholars writing recently, for Dunn’s approach to John’s Gospel, see *Jesus and the Spirit*, 14, 21, 54; *Jesus Remembered*, 165–67; for Keener’s, see *Historical Jesus of the Gospels*, xxxiv, 152. Also, note Catchpole’s estimate: “The fourth gospel takes striking liberties with history” (*Jesus People*, 18). See, similarly, Sanders, *Historical Figure of Jesus*, chapter 6.

21. Dunn dates it back to the nineteenth century, in *Jesus Remembered*, 40–41.

22. See Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*, 118, 120: “It is unwise to continue to brand the Gospel of John as only a theological work devoid of historical facts”; “John cannot be dismissed as a document devoid of historical information”; also, e.g., Johnson, *Real Jesus*, 108; Beilby and Eddy, *Historical Jesus*, 45. Note, too, the founding in 2002 of the John, Jesus, and History Project, “to create a venue for serious reconsideration of the historical character of the Johannine tradition” (Thatcher, “Aspects of Historicity,” 1). Relevantly, Bauckham writes, “In the case of one of the Gospels, that of John, I conclude, very unfashionably, that an eyewitness wrote it” (*Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 6).

JESUS THROUGH ANCIENT EYES

The task soon will be to consider John and the other canonical gospels as potential sources of historical information concerning Jesus. First, however, by way of introduction, it is appropriate to indicate what other sources there are, for our four gospels are by no means the only sources of information to which we should attend. Indeed, those gospels are very probably not the oldest documents that are rich with information about Jesus. That accolade almost certainly belongs to the letters of the apostle Paul.

Paul

As Jesus wrote nothing that has lasted to this day,²³ and as all that he said and did has been recorded by others, we have to rely on those other eyes to help us see the Jesus of “yesterday.” It is likely that the earliest writing about Jesus that survives to this day is to be found in the letters of the apostle Paul, who did not however claim to be a first-hand eyewitness to Jesus’ life before the cross. Whatever else Paul may have thought about Jesus’ identity, or about the significance of Jesus’ life, teaching, death, and resurrection, we can learn from his letters the following central events of Jesus’ life and mission.

*Jesus was Jewish and thus born under Jewish law. He was born from a woman and was a descendant of King David. Superficially, he appeared no different from the weak sinful people around him. However, he was God’s Son and heir, in God’s form, who emptied himself and though rich became poor, being sent by God. As such, he lived a selfless exemplary life as a servant who did not boast. He taught that gospel preachers should receive recompense for the task, and he taught on marriage and divorce.*²⁴

23. The only reference in the gospels to Jesus writing anything is the well-known account of Jesus writing in the dust or sand when some came to him with a woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8:6–8; manuscript support for the passage is inconsistent, with some manuscripts including it in Luke’s Gospel). On the question of Jesus’ literacy see Keith, *Jesus against the Scribal Elite*.

24. This sentence assumes that “the Lord” in 1 Cor 7:10; 9:14 refers to Jesus’ teaching during his mission, rather than to prophecies given by the exalted Lord at a later point. See Fee, *First Epistle*, 291–93; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 282. (I have omitted 1 Thess 4:15, however, as it may have been a prophecy; see discussion in chapter 5, page 175). This information about Jesus’ teaching is taken from Paul’s letters. Beyond this, Luke later presented Paul as passing on an element of Jesus’ teaching about giving

On one occasion, Jesus dramatically predicted his death, using bread and wine, and indicated that this death would be for his followers, instituting a new covenant. That same night, he was betrayed. After suffering, he died, like a Passover lamb. This was by crucifixion (a Roman death), but Jews were involved in bringing about his death. After his death, he was buried. However, he was raised from the dead on the third day. He appeared thus to the twelve and to over five hundred others, including Paul. Jesus was exalted to God's right hand, above every other name, as Lord.²⁵

Compared to the details that the canonical gospels of the New Testament provide, this amount of information is tiny. However, it must be acknowledged that if we did not have these four gospels or any other sources that derive their information from them, we would not know significantly more about Jesus than what was declared by Paul.

Others

There are however, besides those gospels, voices beyond that of Paul. The great addition that these other sources would offer, for Paul made no mention of Jesus' miracles, is that Jesus did strange things that seemed to have a supernatural origin.²⁶ This information is provided in Jewish literature of a later era that, being hostile to Jesus and calling him a sorcerer or magician, does not seem to have relied on Christian testimony,²⁷ and in a passage written by the Jewish historian, Josephus. This passage is regarded as a victim of Christian interpolation, but scholars have with some confidence separated Josephus's original words from later Christian additions. Once expunged of the latter, Josephus's testimony still retains a reference to Jesus as a wonder-worker of some sort:

(Acts 20:35).

25. For the sake of narrative flow, I have not given references, but these observations can be confirmed by study of Paul's uncontested letters. If the contested letters are included, the following can be added: Jesus was brought before and spoke to Pontius Pilate (1 Tim 6:13).

26. Twelftree offers evidence that Paul knew of Jesus' miracles, even though he did not write about them. For example, Paul's reference to mountain-moving faith (1 Cor 13:2) may reflect Jesus' teaching and his own experience of miracle working behind that (e.g., Mark 11:23): see *Jesus the Miracle Worker*, 255–56. Dunn regards discerning a link between Mark 11:23 and 1 Cor 13:2 as unjustifiable (*Jesus and the Spirit*, 85).

27. See Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus*, 58–59; Johnson, *Real Jesus*, 115; Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker*, 254–55.

At this time there appeared Jesus, a wise man. . . . For he was a doer of startling deeds, a teacher of people who receive the truth with pleasure. And he gained a following both among many Jews and among many of Greek origin. . . . And when Pilate, because of an accusation made by the leading men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him previously did not cease to do so. . . . And up until this very day the tribe of Christians, named after him, has not died out.²⁸

Beyond this, there is a little further evidence of Jesus' miraculous healing ministry that is independent of the gospels and Acts. Eusebius referred to a document written in defense of Christianity by Quadratus of Athens to the Roman emperor Hadrian.²⁹ This was written in the 120s and Quadratus, presumably looking back to his much younger years, stated that some of those who had been healed by Jesus had survived to his own day. While he did not claim to have met any of them, their being still alive in his own lifetime seems to have been an important consideration as part of his defense of Christianity to the emperor.

Moving from Jesus' deeds to his teaching, more was written than what survives. For example, Eusebius and before him Irenaeus wrote about a five-volume exposition of Jesus' teaching compiled by Papias in the early second century.³⁰ It is a great frustration that this work has been lost. According to Irenaeus' and Eusebius' brief quotations of Papias and comments on his work, it seems to have contained testimony to further teaching from Jesus recalled in old age by the last surviving disciples of Jesus and passed on to Papias when he was a young man at the end of the first century.

Among early material that has survived, there is probably some teaching that is authentically from Jesus and beyond that which is canonically attested. But it is not considerable and does not add significantly to the picture of Jesus' words offered by the four gospels. The most likely candidate to contain further material that Jesus taught is *Gospel of*

28. Quoted in Johnson, *Real Jesus*, 114. The omissions reflect sections shown in italics by Johnson to indicate that they are "obvious Christian accretions." See also Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 141; Keener, *Miracles*, 25; Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus*, 55–57. For fuller discussion of the text, see Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*, 90–98. That Josephus referred to the miraculous in his phrase "doer of startling deeds" is claimed by Keener with reference to Vermes (*Historical Jesus*, 241).

29. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4:3.

30. *Ibid.*, 3:39; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5:33:4.

Thomas.³¹ However, even here there are only a few isolated phrases beyond that which directly parallels material from the canonical gospels.³² Thus Jesus might well have said, “Anyone who is near me is near the fire; anyone who is far from me is far from the kingdom.” He might also have said, “And only then shall you be glad, when you look on your sibling with love.”³³

It is clear from this section that the amount of information about Jesus supplied by reliable ancient sources beyond the canonical gospels is slim. It is to the gospels that one must turn for more. However, before I can concentrate on their testimonies to the life and teaching of Jesus, I need to consider the historical usefulness of John’s Gospel, when it is considered alongside the other three. To this matter discussion now turns.

John, Mark, Matthew, and Luke

The order of the gospels in the title of this subsection reflects the extent of overt ancient evidence that each gospel contains the sustained direct testimony of a single eyewitness. Thus John is placed first, for there is ancient evidence, both internal to the gospel and from sources external to its own text, that it is based extensively on precisely such testimony: that of the beloved disciple. Mark contains no explicit internal evidence to this effect, but there is clear ancient testimony that it contains the recollections of Simon Peter, albeit second-hand. The situation with Matthew is less than clear, but its name alone indicates an ancient notion that it

31. *Gospel of Thomas* is a collection of sayings purportedly from Jesus, with virtually no narrative. Its full text was found among the Nag Hammadi manuscripts in 1945. Some of the sayings resemble canonical examples, while others are disconcertingly different. Scholars mostly date *Thomas* later than the canonical gospels but are undecided about whether its material is secondary to them or independent. Hurtado surveys the evidence and sees it balanced. However, part of what he writes suggests *Thomas* was independent: as he rightly observes, its content indicates it originated among a group wishing to distance itself from Christians who held the canonical gospels in high regard (Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 459–62). Therefore, given its possible independence as a witness to Jesus, I refer to statements of Jesus in *Thomas* at times throughout this book.

32. There are also other early sources that contain teaching material from Jesus parallel to that in the synoptic gospels but probably not dependent on them (see, e.g., 1 *Clement* 13, 46; Polycarp, *Philippians*, 2; *Didache* 1–3; 8; 16).

33. See Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 91, where these and other possible isolated sayings are quoted in English translation. These two quotations are reproduced here with small changes to render them gender-neutral.

had something to do with Matthew Levi,³⁴ one of the twelve and therefore an eyewitness. Placing Luke last is easy, for this gospel virtually states in its introduction that it is not by an eyewitness, but the product of research into the testimony of various unnamed eyewitnesses.

In the following sections I survey these four gospels in turn, considering their proximity to eyewitness testimony.³⁵ In so doing, I hope to mount a case for not ignoring John's Gospel in historical Jesus studies.

JOHN

Internal Evidence

The claims of John 19:25–26 and 20:2–5, taken together, are stark. Someone, a disciple loved by Jesus, was near the cross when Jesus died and not much later saw the empty tomb where Jesus had been laid. Equally strong is the statement in John 19:35, presumably referring to the same person, concerning the fact that he³⁶ testified to what he saw and attested to the truth of his testimony. It is a deep irony, therefore, that the fourth gospel appears as little more than a footnote in major studies of Jesus' history.

The beloved disciple, as this label suggests, was an intimate of Jesus. He was not only present at Jesus' final meal, but reclined next to Jesus (John 13:23). He was present as a witness right up to the last recorded sighting of Jesus in the gospel (John 21:20). Furthermore, he may have been one of the disciples from the very beginning of Jesus' ministry as presented in the order of the gospel. This is based on a reasonable guess concerning two of John the Baptist's disciples mentioned in John 1:35. One of these is later named as Andrew, Simon Peter's brother (John 1:40). However, the other remains anonymous. Given the anonymity of the beloved disciple throughout the gospel, it is reasonable to gauge that this is who he was. If so, the beloved disciple not only had personal access to Jesus' words and deeds from the beginning to the end of Jesus' mission, but before that was one of John the Baptist's disciples.

34. Throughout the book, I use this compound name for the member of the twelve, despite the doubts of some that the two names refer to the same person (see below, page 27, note 72).

35. See also extensive discussion in Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*.

36. The beloved disciple was male (John 13:23, 25).

There are features internal to the gospel that suggest a good knowledge of the geography and culture of Jerusalem and Judea.³⁷ This, together with the various accounts in the gospel of Jesus' activities in Jerusalem, suggests that the beloved disciple was with Jesus repeatedly when he was ministering in Jerusalem. The paucity of accounts of Jesus' Galilean ministry in the gospel also suggests that this disciple only occasionally traveled north with Jesus to Galilee.³⁸ He may have resided in Jerusalem, where he was known by the high priest, if John 18:15–16 refers to the same disciple. If so, the extent to which the disciple knew the high priest is noteworthy: this matter was repeated with seeming emphasis, and the disciple had sufficient influence over the doorkeeper to be able to bring Peter into the courtyard. It may be relevant that the author also knew the name of one of the high priest's servants (John 18:10).

It is true to the tenor of the writing to understand that this disciple's testimony forms the basis of the material in the gospel. This is not the same thing as saying that this disciple wrote the gospel. There are in fact fairly strong reasons for concluding that he did not, or at least that he did not write the entire gospel in its final form. The most significant evidence to this effect is the message conveyed in John 21. There is reference there to a rumor that the beloved disciple would still be alive when Jesus returned, but the rumor was false (John 21:22–23). The most obvious understanding to apply to this is that when this was written, the disciple had died. There was thus need to correct the inaccurate basis on which the rumor rested. Another piece of evidence from this chapter for the thesis that the beloved disciple did not write at least this final epilogue is the wording of John 21:24: “and we know that his testimony is true.” Richard Bauckham believes that the beloved disciple did write this, and in so doing he used “the ‘we’ of authoritative testimony.” Bauckham examines Johannine literature, identifying many occasions when undoubtedly this form of expression was employed.³⁹ However, the inference that such is the case at the end of the gospel is not a strong one. If the wording had been, “we know that our testimony is true” (or indeed “he knows that his testimony is true”—cf. John 19:35), then Bauckham's case would be stronger. But the change of person from first to third within the clause argues against this. It is more plausible to suggest that the final compil-

37. See Beasley-Murray, *John*, xlv, lxxiii; Keener, *Gospel of John Volume 1*, 44.

38. John 7:3 perhaps implies that Jesus had Judean disciples who did not travel with him to Galilee, though the text may be understood in different ways.

39. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 370–81.

ers of at least this epilogue looked back to the disciple's testimony and averred its truth.

Such a conclusion does not necessarily indicate that the whole gospel was put together by these compilers, or that therefore it postdated the beloved disciple's death—the conclusion can only be applied with confidence to the epilogue. However, there is another piece of evidence that distances the final form of the whole gospel from the disciple's own words. This is the very phrase, “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” While it is not impossible that someone would refer to himself thus, it seems unlikely, for it smacks of arrogance: “Jesus loved *me!*” It is far more likely that others who knew him well would use this phrase, if he had perhaps described repeatedly what it meant for him to be loved by Jesus. It may also have been a “hagiographic” term used by later believers who held this disciple in high esteem.

The bulk of the gospel may yet well be a direct product of the testimony of the beloved disciple. Perhaps he wrote some himself; perhaps, more likely, he dictated to an amanuensis.⁴⁰ John 21:24 need no more mean that this disciple did the writing himself than that Pilate's own handwriting appeared on the sign above Jesus on the cross, on the basis of John 19:22.⁴¹ If he dictated, then perhaps when he referred to himself orally as “I,” his amanuensis, in honor of the man, wrote, “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

The picture that emerges, then, from the internal evidence of the fourth gospel is that it is the product of the direct testimony of a single eyewitness. This person was present at the “last supper,” the cross, and the empty tomb. He may have started following Jesus on the basis of the testimony of John the Baptist, whom he had possibly followed beforehand. He had died by the time the gospel was finalized, perhaps by a group around the amanuensis to whom he had dictated some of its contents, or perhaps by the group of his associates to whom he had repeatedly provided oral testimony, such that it was firm enough in their memories for them to reproduce it in writing at his instruction.

40. According to the anti-Marcionite prologue to John's Gospel, this amanuensis was Papias, about whom this chapter will have more detail below. This prologue cannot with confidence be given a very early date, however, and so this claim may be interesting but not convincing speculation. Perhaps the beloved disciple dictated to more than one amanuensis, given the statement, “we know that his testimony is true” (John 21:24)—or perhaps here a single amanuensis wrote as the representative of a whole “Johannine community.”

41. See discussion in Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 359–60.

Who was this man? From the internal evidence, as we have seen, he was an intimate of Jesus. It might be added that the beloved disciple was not only “the disciple whom Jesus loved” but also “the disciple whom Peter loved,” for they appear closely together sometimes. In all likelihood he also became the “disciple whom Mary loved,” for he took Mary into his home after the crucifixion (John 19:27). If the concentration of his narrative betrays his own setting, he was from or familiar with Jerusalem and its environs and perhaps acquainted with the high priest. The disciple is kept firmly anonymous in the gospel. This suggests he was not one of those who *were* named every so often. If he is to be identified with a named disciple, then the most likely candidate is Lazarus, on the basis of John 11:3, 35–36. However, the external evidence speaks loudly against this, as the next subsection will indicate.

External Evidence

The earliest evidence external to the document itself that helps to determine the identity of the eyewitness behind it is its title: “Gospel according to John.” The gospel titles are reckoned by various scholars to have been attached to their respective gospels at about the end of the first or beginning of the second century.⁴² Thus there is an early association with a John. This then seems to have been the name of the beloved disciple. But which John was this?

At this point, my discussion leans heavily on the excellent research and reflection reported by Bauckham in his *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*. As Bauckham shows, in Irenaeus’s late second century work *Against Heresies*, he consistently indicated that the fourth gospel was written by John the Lord’s disciple. However, Bauckham has done a superb job in indicating that scholars have leapt far too easily to the conclusion that this John whom Irenaeus often referred to was one of the twelve, the brother of James and son of Zebedee.⁴³ Irenaeus referred to this person repeatedly, but not generally as “John, the apostle of the Lord.” Rather, he

42. See *ibid.*, 302–4; France, *Matthew: Evangelist*, 50–52; Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, xxvi. All against Sanders, *Historical Figure of Jesus*, 64–66.

43. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 452–60. That Irenaeus is *assumed* to be referring to John son of Zebedee is evident in Beasley-Murray, *John*, lxvi–lxvii; Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus*, 35; Smalley, *John*, 75–76; Tasker, *John*, 17. Dodd did not assume this identification (*Founder of Christianity*, 23).

consistently designated him “John, the disciple of the Lord.”⁴⁴ Elsewhere, he did mention John the apostle, as a brother of James and as a companion of Peter as portrayed in Acts. Never did he identify John the Lord’s disciple with John the brother of James.⁴⁵ This identification is a later widely held assumption.

According to Irenaeus, John the Lord’s disciple lived into the Roman emperor Trajan’s reign, which started in January 98. Thus it would seem that he may have been only in his teens or early twenties when Jesus was ministering.⁴⁶ While the ages of Jesus’ other disciples are unknown, and not much weight should be placed on age as an indicator of seniority, one is justified in guessing that John the author of the fourth gospel was not a senior disciple during Jesus’ mission. He was perhaps a younger man or teenager for whom Jesus had a special affection but who did not feature as a senior associate of Jesus in the gospel narratives.⁴⁷

To offer more detail is to enter the realm of sheer guesswork. One is tempted to find a John mentioned in the New Testament who fits the picture that is emerging: a presumably younger man who was not one of the central characters in the New Testament’s narrative; one who lived in Jerusalem and who knew the priestly families; one who lived in a home that could take in Mary, Jesus’ mother; and one who though not one of the twelve could be present at the last supper. Perhaps surprisingly, there is such a person. Joseph Barnabas, a Levite and an owner of property that was presumably in the Jerusalem area (Acts 4:36–37), had a cousin

44. On just a very few occasions, Irenaeus called this John an apostle. For discussion of his reasons for doing so these few times, see Bauckham, *Testimony*, 71.

45. *Ibid.*, 458–9, 469. In *Against Heresies* 2:24:4, Irenaeus even overlooked John son of Zebedee in saying that Peter and James (only) accompanied Jesus when he raised a girl from the dead (cf. Mark 5:37).

46. That the beloved disciple was able to gain access to be near the cross when Jesus died (John 19:26) may be further evidence of his youth at the time. An adult male may have been more likely to be prevented from such access by soldiers. See Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 325; *Gospel of John Volume Two*, 1141. Whether Jesus from the cross was commending the beloved disciple to Mary’s care or Mary to his care, or both, is moot. Clearly, it was he who took her into his home, rather than the other way round. However, there is a long line of interpretation that takes the future caring the other way round. See Beasley-Murray, *John*, 349–50. If the beloved disciple was John Mark, then the home in question was his mother’s home as well as his (Acts 12:12).

47. It may be noteworthy that a fragment of *Secret Gospel of Mark* states: “And there was the sister of the young man whom Jesus loved” (translation quoted from Beatrice, “Gospel According to the Hebrews,” 178).

by the name of John Mark.⁴⁸ He seems to have been a younger man. His mother was still young enough to be actively holding prayer meetings in a home that was large enough to hold many intercessors (Acts 12:12). This may have been the same home in which the last supper was held, which would explain how John Mark could have been at it—as son of the host. This young man had two names, of course, but John was probably his more commonly used one, at least among Luke’s circle, as is suggested by Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37.⁴⁹ This John Mark is usually assumed to be the Mark who wrote the second gospel. Ironically, he could conceivably have been instead the John who wrote the fourth!⁵⁰ But, to repeat, this is pure guesswork. The John who was the beloved disciple and whose eyewitness testimony lies behind the fourth gospel might just as easily have been mentioned nowhere else in the New Testament at all.

If a little more speculation is permitted, one can imagine this same John, the beloved disciple, sixty years or more later. By now he was an elderly and senior figure in the churches in and around Ephesus. He could simply be referred to as “the Elder” by the much younger Papias, church leader in Hierapolis, and perhaps as simply “the Lord’s disciple” by Papias’s contemporary Polycarp, church leader in Smyrna and source of Irenaeus’s information.⁵¹ This would be an appropriate term when many of the other disciples had died. John may have been one of the last surviving disciples, if not the last, known to the churches of the vicinity. If so, his unique capacity still to offer firsthand testimony about Jesus would have been most highly prized, especially in a culture that valued direct oral testimony over written accounts.⁵² Nevertheless, one can imagine the

48. The relationship is attested at Col 4:10. Beasley-Murray discounts the possibility that the fourth gospel is by John Mark on the grounds that this man was too significant a character in the New Testament to have the anonymity of the beloved disciple (*John*, lxxiii). While this is a matter of subjective judgment, it seems to me that John Mark was not a major character but a trainee.

49. He is just called “John” at Acts 13:5, 13; in contrast, he is called “Mark” at Acts 15:39; Col 4:10.

50. “My son Mark” in 1 Pet 5:13 does not need to be identified with John Mark, despite the mention of Silvanus, another of Paul’s traveling companions in Acts, at 1 Pet 5:12; the Marks in 2 Tim 4:11 and Phlm 24 need not necessarily be identified with either.

51. The former suggestion is based on the brief quotations of Papias by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:39. The latter is more speculative, but arises from recognition of Irenaeus’ preferred epithet for John, and his repeated use of Polycarp as a significant source of his information. See Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 454–55.

52. For Papias’s view on this, see Eusebius’s quotation of his preface to his

increasing pressure for his testimony to be written as he continued to age. So, I speculate, either just before he died or just after, his testimony was committed to writing by those around him in the way I suggested earlier, and the gospel came about in its final form soon after his death.⁵³

The Resulting Picture

If the ancient evidence is at all persuasive, then John's Gospel emerges as a vital testimony to the life of Jesus. This is not to suggest that every teaching presented as from Jesus' lips contains precisely Jesus' words. Beyond well-known uncertainties over where even the author intended a direct quotation to end (e.g., John 3:15 or 3:21?; 3:30 or 3:36?⁵⁴), one must concede that sixty years or so of reflection by the beloved disciple would have meant that his portrayal of Jesus' words reflected at least to some degree the results of this reflection as well as the sayings of Jesus that gave rise to them.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, there are, in particular, two periods of Jesus' mission that one can expect to have stuck firmly in this disciple's mind.

Concerning the first of these two, illuminating discussion can be offered by considering Pentecostal love of testimony, including especially testifying to Christian conversion.⁵⁶ I can recall with some detailed accuracy what happened to me on the weekend of Friday, November 19th to Monday, November 22nd 1976. However, I have no memory at all of what I was doing or what happened to me on the previous weekend, or indeed on the following weekend. The reason I have such sharp memories of one particular set of events is that they led up to and included my Christian conversion. I can remember exactly where I was when I gave my life to Christ. I can remember what happened, and what several key elements were to the series of events over the weekend that led up to it.

By way of analogy, an analogy that I think holds some water, the beloved disciple, if John 1:35 refers to him, may well have remembered with considerable accuracy the early events in which he and his fellow

five-volume work (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:39).

53. Thus John's Gospel was perhaps completed at the turn of the second century.

54. See Beasley-Murray, *John*, lii.

55. On this balance between sayings of Jesus and Johannine reflections on them, see Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 28–29.

56. For discussion of this in a British context, see Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit*, chapter 4; for briefer discussion of this in a South American context, see Westmeier, *Protestant Pentecostalism*, 85–86.

disciples of John the Baptist met Jesus and were, so to speak, swept off their feet by him. He is likely to have remembered some precise words Jesus used during this time in a way that he may not have remembered precise words used in longer discourses and conversations mid-ministry. He is also likely to have remembered any particularly striking actions of Jesus, especially if they were not repeated later in the mission.

The other period for which remarkably accurate recollections may have been held in the disciple's mind would have been the final climax. Events surrounding the cross and the next few days and weeks would quite possibly have been emblazoned on his memory in a way that allowed for highly accurate remembrance decades later. This disciple was not likely to forget the details of watching Jesus die and of gazing into an empty tomb. Still less would he forget the final words of Jesus that related to his own person. These insights are important and will require further attention when I consider specific aspects of that mission in subsequent chapters.

MARK

After John's Gospel, the gospel offering the next greatest amount of ancient testimony that it contains sustained direct eyewitness evidence concerning Jesus is Mark. This gospel contains no explicit claim that it was written by an eyewitness. However, arguably, it does contain internal indications it is based on eyewitness testimony. Bauckham discusses this evidence at length and finds it convincing. He identifies passages with a particular grammatical construction that suggests a prior translation from first person to third person presentation, so that, for example, "We followed Jesus" in original oral testimony became "They followed Jesus" in written gospel form.⁵⁷ Beyond that, he sees indications of the identity of eyewitnesses in three respects. One of these is the presence of named characters who are not important enough to the narrative development to be named for that reason: Bauckham surmises they were named because they were themselves the source of the account concerning them. Another is the failure to name relatively important characters. In this

57. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 156–62. Similarly, Lane, *Gospel of Mark*, 11, where for example the postulated firsthand account behind Mark 1:29–30 is presented as, "We immediately left the synagogue and entered into our house, and James and John also accompanied us within. Now my wife's mother was lying sick with a fever, and in due course we spoke to him concerning her."

case, Bauckham suggests they are not named because to have done so would have been to put these people at risk in the context in which stories about them were being told. A third respect in which Bauckham finds evidence of eyewitness input relates specifically to Simon Peter, whom he notes is both the first and the last person to be mentioned in the gospel as a disciple of Jesus (Mark 1:16; 16:7, where notably Peter is singled out among the disciples).⁵⁸

These three observations are not in themselves conclusive. The first may be explicable in other ways. The second seems to suffer as one of those arguments that can be swung both ways: if people are named, they are eyewitnesses; if people are not named, they are also eyewitnesses, but with their identities protected. The third depends upon Bauckham's apparent view that Mark's Gospel was originally designed to end at 16:8. According to Evans, "scholars are almost evenly divided over the question of whether v. 8 was the original conclusion of the Gospel of Mark."⁵⁹ Despite the strength of argument on both sides, there is good reason not to be confident that Mark originally designed his gospel to end at 16:8. As Evans opines, it seems more likely that either a longer ending was intended but never written, or was written but somehow was lost.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, despite these cautions, Bauckham's observations are suggestive, especially when seen in the light of early external evidence concerning the gospel's proximity to eyewitness testimony. The consistent witness of the second century was that this Mark offered the apostle Peter's account of the mission of Jesus, and that he did so after Peter's death.⁶¹ Of these second-century statements, the earliest is from Papias in the first half of the century.⁶² Papias's work is lost but is briefly quoted by Eusebius. In the relevant quotation, Papias was himself referring to the words of "the Elder." The Elder was not identified by name. However, one must consider the likely status of someone whom Papias, himself a

58. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 47–54, 124–25, 184–94. On this third point, see also Hengel, *Saint Peter*, 41–42.

59. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 545.

60. *Ibid.*, 539.

61. Later traditions stated that Mark wrote in Peter's lifetime and that Peter was aware of this. However, both the anti-Marcionite prologue and Irenaeus indicated that Peter was dead. See Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, xxxi. This would place the date of Mark's writing with some confidence in the second half of the sixties or possibly later.

62. Despite the tendency in some scholarly circles to discount the testimony of Papias, Hengel writes: "To this point, I have never encountered a convincing argument against the information provided by Papias" (*Saint Peter*, 38 n. 119).

senior leader in the Hierapolis church, would honor with this title. In another quotation from Papias that Eusebius had just made, two elders were named—John and Aristion—who had been eyewitnesses of Jesus and had still been alive in Papias’s younger years.

It is a reasonable inference, then, that this person whom Papias honored by calling Elder was an eyewitness of Jesus. In all likelihood the Elder Papias referred to in connection with the production of Mark’s Gospel was one of these two: John or Aristion. Of them, John was the more likely candidate, as Papias called him, not Aristion, “the Elder.” If the Elder was indeed an eyewitness, he was not only able to comment on how Mark’s Gospel came about, but also on how accurate it was, if he knew its contents. With this in mind, note can be made of the Elder’s testimony: he did seem to be aware of the contents, for he declared that Mark wrote accurately the reminiscences of Peter, but *not in order*.

If the Elder was referring to the thematic structuring of the gospel, he was doing Mark a disservice. Today’s readers see a clear thematic order in Mark’s Gospel: beginning in association with John the Baptist, Jesus’ mission had an early phase in Galilee, in which he was popular with the crowds even though various people began to plot his death. After a turning point in the northern reaches of Jesus’ travels, in which Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, the journey of Jesus’ ministry headed south amid the gathering gloom of Jesus’ predictions that he was to be killed. Finally, and only then, Jesus entered Jerusalem, engaged in climactic ministry, and lost his life.

This suggests that whatever the extent in the Elder’s account of the accuracy with which Mark reproduced Peter’s recollections, Mark exhibited some creativity in developing his gospel’s climactic order. There is other evidence of Mark’s editing, or redaction. In most places it is a matter of considerable speculation what wording is owed to Mark and what to his source or sources. However, if Mark was reproducing an *oral* source, as is suggested by the Elder’s statement, then we see Mark’s own handwriting at 13:14, when he wrote, “let the *reader* consider.” Presumably, Mark saw some analogical relationship between whatever Jesus near Jerusalem had predicted and what his own readers in and around Rome were facing.⁶³ One can only guess that this had something to do with the persecution of Christians instigated by the emperor Nero.⁶⁴ In present-

63. The anti-Marcionite prologue to Mark states that it was written in Italy. An association with Peter would support the idea that Mark was written in Rome.

64. For a vivid description of this persecution and its likely causes, see Lane, *Gospel*

ing Jesus' Olivet discourse warning to flee Jerusalem, Mark was perhaps hoping his readers would take warning, if under sufficient duress, to flee Rome. This will not have been the only occasion when Mark added his own flavor to Peter's witness.⁶⁵

It is more likely then, given the probable eyewitness nature of the criticism, that the Elder's complaint was not about the thematic but the *chronological* order of Mark's Gospel. This is historically plausible. Whoever this Mark was, he seems to have been in a subordinate role to Peter and was thus probably younger. So, as Papias wrote, he may not have been an eyewitness to Jesus' ministry.⁶⁶ But he seems to have listened frequently and repeatedly to Peter's preaching and recounting of *chreiae* or anecdotes.⁶⁷ He would thereby have built up a good knowledge of Jesus' ministry if Peter included these memories in his preaching. However, it is less credible that Mark would have developed a clear understanding of the whole shape of Jesus' mission unless Peter had made a point of clarifying this. If, rather, Peter had begun reminiscing sermons with such phrases as, "Once, when Jesus was teaching in Jerusalem," Mark would have had freedom—a freedom born in ignorance—about where in his gospel to place this piece of Jesus' Jerusalem teaching.

We therefore have likely eyewitness testimony, transmitted to Papias at the end of the first century and brought to modern readers via Eusebius, that Mark's Gospel is not a good indicator of the historical order of Jesus' ministry. The Elder who told Papias this may well have had the name John, and if so may have been the author of John's Gospel. Bauckham notes how the order in which Papias listed apostles in the first extract that Eusebius quoted is the same as the order in which apostles appear in John's Gospel.⁶⁸ This may indicate that Papias gained his knowledge of the shape of Jesus' ministry from John the beloved disciple. Bauckham goes further and speculates that Papias went on, in material he wrote but

of Mark, 13–14, and the quotations there from Tacitus and Suetonius.

65. "Latinisms" in Mark have long been recognized. See, e.g., Edwards, *Gospel according to Mark*, 11; Hengel, *Saint Peter*, 40 and n. 124.

66. The well-known speculation that the young man who ran away naked at the arrest of Jesus (Mark 14:51–52) was Mark, the author of the gospel, is just that: entire speculation. The young man must remain anonymous, like the beloved disciple of the fourth gospel (who he could just as easily have been).

67. For discussion of definitions of *chreiae*, see Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 215–16: "The English term 'anecdote' seems the best equivalent" (216).

68. *Ibid.*, 20–21, 226. There is further evidence of a "Johannine feel" to Papias's writing: see *ibid.*, 28.

that has been lost, to declare that in contrast to Mark, John presented Jesus' ministry in a chronologically accurate order. Whether or not this is the case, it must be noted that there is very early testimony casting doubt on Mark's order as an indicator of chronology, and that in contrast there is a gospel in the New Testament that has a strong claim to depend directly on eyewitness testimony and that contains a quite different shape, in some respects, to Jesus' mission.⁶⁹

MATTHEW

Matthew's Gospel, like that of Mark, contains no explicit internal evidence that it was written by an eyewitness. Furthermore, scholars today have reached a fairly high degree of consensus that Matthew depends on other written sources lying behind it—not least, Mark itself.⁷⁰ However, from a very early stage, the first gospel in our canonical order was associated with the name Matthew,⁷¹ and this name was soon identified with the apostle Matthew Levi,⁷² one of the twelve and therefore a direct

69. What remains a mystery, if this reconstruction is at all accurate, is why this gospel was titled, "The Gospel According to Mark," rather than "The Gospel According to Peter." Peter was a foundation apostle; Mark was not. Peter was an eyewitness; Mark was not. Admittedly, Mark contributed a thematic order, and a degree of editing, that had the effect of bringing his view of the contents to the surface. This still does not seem to justify attributing the gospel to him.

70. Occasionally, voices surface arguing that Matthew wrote his gospel first and that Mark used it in the composition of his own (e.g., Wenham, *Redating Matthew, Mark & Luke*). However, the overall evidence for Matthew's use of Mark, rather than vice versa, seems overwhelming. Arguments one way and another can be studied in works of New Testament introduction.

71. The earliest evidence comes from the title itself and, once again, from Papias, writing in the first half of the second century (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:39).

72. Bauckham does not believe that references to "Matthew" (e.g., Mark 3:18) and to "Levi" (e.g., Mark 2:14) are references to the same person. He readily admits that many people in the culture of the New Testament had two names. He suggests that this often occurred when their primary name was confusingly common. They would then be given a secondary, less common, name in order to distinguish them from others with the same common primary name (*Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 78–84). Because both Matthew and Levi were very common names, Bauckham rules out the possibility of someone gaining both names, for one would not overcome the ambiguity of the other (*ibid.*, 108–12). However, as tight as Bauckham's reasoning is, it does not seem to rule out the possibility of someone gaining two common names, for reasons other than those he considers. For example, Jesus gave Simon the nickname Peter, even though Peter is included in Bauckham's list of eighty commonest names out of

sustained eyewitness of Jesus' whole mission.⁷³ This presents anyone who wants to take the ancient witness seriously with something of a puzzle: how could a gospel come about that seems to have come from an eyewitness but that depends for much of its content and order on another already existing gospel?

One possible explanation would be as follows: Matthew Levi knew that Peter's testimony, and thereby his authority, lay behind Mark's Gospel. He thus deferred to Peter's authority concerning the order and overall contents of the gospel, simply adding his own further material where appropriate.⁷⁴ However, this is unlikely if Mark was not in chronological order, which order Matthew Levi would surely have altered, given his first-hand memories. Also, there is a further piece of evidence that speaks against this idea, and is likely to speak particularly to Pentecostals, with their love of personal testimony of conversion and other blessings. It is the near identical account of the calling of Matthew Levi in the two gospels. In the following comparison, identical Greek wording is shown, in English translation, in italics. Mark 2:14 reads, "*and passing on, he saw Levi of Alpheus sitting at the toll-office, and he says to him, 'Follow me.' And having risen, he followed him.*" Matthew 9:9 reads: "*and passing on from there, Jesus saw a person sitting at the toll-office, called Matthew, and he says to him, 'Follow me.' And having risen, he followed him.*" This degree of verbal coincidence could be due to lightness of editing of a written source. It could on the other hand be due to there being a fixed form of words of oral testimony circulating among Christians, which was put into writing by both authors. Either way, that Matthew Levi should choose to record *his own personal testimony* of being called by Jesus using either Mark's words or those of fixed oral tradition is unlikely. Judging from this point as well, the final form of Matthew's Gospel does not seem to have come from the pen of Matthew Levi.⁷⁵

Another explanation can be sought. It is bound to be tentative, resting as much on speculation as on evidence. One possible line of argument begins with the presence in Matthew's Gospel of five blocks of unbroken

447 (Simon is the commonest— *ibid.*, 85–88).

73. Tertullian identified the author Matthew as an apostle, and Origen identified him as a former toll-collector. See France, *Matthew: Evangelist*, 60–61.

74. Such is the force of a brief comment by France in *Matthew*, 33 n. 5.

75. This means that Matthew's Gospel may well not have been written in Matthew Levi's lifetime. It postdates Mark and therefore is likely to have been compiled somewhere in the seventies or possibly later.

teaching material. This piece of internal evidence resonates with part of the external evidence available to us, which is that Papias referred to Matthew writing the *logia* of the Lord in Hebrew dialect (or possibly style). Much scholarly ink has been spilt over Papias's meaning invested here in the term *logia*. Its usual meaning, however, is clear. It refers to sayings. Perhaps Matthew Levi wrote a collection of sayings of Jesus.⁷⁶ He may have written this first in Hebrew or Aramaic, and may thereafter have written them also in Greek for a wider audience.⁷⁷

The connection this has with the five discrete blocks of teaching material in Matthew's Gospel should be clear: these may be Matthew Levi's collection of Jesus' sayings, as mentioned by Papias. The number five is not without significance. Papias' own exposition of the Lord's *logia* was a five-volume work. He could have been modeling this on the collection that he had to hand, from Matthew Levi, of a collection of the Lord's sayings in five sections. In fact, the habit of writing in five volumes was widespread. *1 Enoch* can be construed as a collection of five books.⁷⁸ *2 Maccabees 2:23*, written before the New Testament, refers to a five-volume work by Jason of Cyrene. Later in the second century, Irenaeus would write *Against Heresies* in five volumes. These examples have probably taken their example from earlier Israelite collections of writing. The Pentateuch and the five books of the Psalms are the most obvious examples.

Someone, an anonymous later editor or redactor, perhaps took Matthew Levi's blocks of teaching material and Mark's Gospel and combined them, along with other material that was available and pertinent. This Matthean editor was just that: an editor. He (in likelihood a male) was not afraid to alter written sources in incorporating them into his work. This is obvious in his handling of the Markan material, which he consistently abbreviated. Thus it may well be the case that he also abbreviated Matthew Levi's five sayings sections.⁷⁹ It can also be seen that he edited

76. So too Hengel, *Saint Peter*, 13 n. 38. Hengel allows himself the speculation that Peter, "as head of the Twelve, might have commissioned Matthew, who had writing skills, with the task of collecting the *logia* of Jesus."

77. There is widespread agreement that the Greek of the final version of Matthew's Gospel is not "translation Greek."

78. Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Volume 1*, 7.

79. It is possible that it was the Matthean editor, rather than Matthew Levi, who divided Jesus' teaching material into five sections. However, it is more likely to have been the latter, for Matthew Levi's motivation was most likely to show his teacher Jesus whose teaching he was recording as the new Moses, who brought a new word from

the material he had received from Matthew Levi's pen in other ways. For example, he seems to have drawn in, from Mark 13:14, "let the reader consider" (Matt 24:15) into the middle of the fifth of the five discourses as we have them in the gospel.⁸⁰

This influence of Markan material over Matthew Levi's content in the creation of the final edition we call Matthew's Gospel suggests that the five blocks of Jesus' teaching material may not have been written down by Matthew Levi in the same order as they appear in Matthew's Gospel. For example, the discourse that was delivered by Jesus in and near Jerusalem may find itself last in Matthew's Gospel (either chapters 23–25 or 24–25, depending on where the discourse started)⁸¹ not because it was last in Matthew Levi's collection, but under the influence of Mark's order over the editing process. In other words, the editor may have been convinced by his reading of Mark that Jesus gave this teaching late in his ministry, even if in fact Jesus gave it on an earlier visit to Jerusalem or on various occasions.

I repeat that this reconstruction of the sources and shape of Matthew's Gospel is largely speculative. Nevertheless, it seems plausible. If accurate, it would explain why the complete gospel came to be associated with Matthew and to receive his name. It did not gain the name of the editor, for the testimony that it newly incorporated came largely from Matthew Levi.⁸² That it surpassed Mark in early importance is not surprising, for it would have been regarded by its readers as considerably more complete than Mark.⁸³ That it should have been placed first in early

God. He would thus be likely to have replicated the fivefold pattern that he knew in the Pentateuch.

80. As France observes (*Gospel of Matthew*, 911 n. 50), in Matt 24:15 the reader can be the reader of Daniel, unlike in Mark 13:14. Thus the Matthean editor has perhaps circumvented the need for an analogical relationship between Jesus' prediction and his readers' experience in the way that Mark may have understood.

81. For an exposition that sees Matthew's fifth discourse starting at Matthew 24, see France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 9; for one that sees the discourse beginning at Matthew 23, see Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus*, 22.

82. Against Guthrie, who wrote how unsatisfactory was idea of the "transference of Matthew's name from a source to the whole" (*New Testament Introduction*, 52), Davies and Allison state that it "was common enough for a document to carry the name of the author of one of its sources" (*Matthew*, xi).

83. For the early popularity of Matthew, see Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus*, 24, 26; France, *Matthew: Evangelist*, 14; Keith, *Jesus against the Scribal Elite*, 54.

lists of the four gospels⁸⁴ is also not surprising, for it would have been known, while the history of its compilation was still available to memories, to contain five blocks of material that were written before Mark's Gospel was put to writing.⁸⁵ What Matthew Levi's five blocks of teaching material might have had to do with a postulated document that scholars call "Q," I will discuss in the next section on Luke.

From this brief consideration of Matthew's Gospel, several conclusions can be drawn that are relevant to the focus of this book. The first is that if the speculative reconstruction offered above is even moderately plausible, then none of the internal evidence that Matthew's Gospel in its final form is secondary to Mark's Gospel needs to cast doubt on the veracity of Papias's account of its origin. The second conclusion, which is anyway reached by the vast majority of scholars working from somewhat different premises, is that Matthew's Gospel offers no evidence independent of Mark for the order in which the events of Jesus' mission occurred: if Mark's departed from chronology, Matthew's followed suit. The third, in similar vein, is that the order of the five teaching blocks in Matthew's Gospel is no guide to the order in which Jesus offered his teaching. Indeed, there is no reason even to start with this idea, for the blocks are clearly arranged internally by way of themes.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, one can add that the Markan order may have had some impact on the ordering of the blocks in Matthew's Gospel, so that their resultant order is no guide to the order in which Matthew Levi might have presented them. A fourth relevant conclusion is that the record of the Olivet discourse in Matthew's Gospel, along with significant similar material in Matthew 10, need not be regarded as an edited version of material in Mark 13, but can be viewed as an independent Matthean recollection of this teaching and its contexts, even if this was then edited with an eye to Mark 13 (as at Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14). Verbal identity between the two gospels need

84. France, *Matthew: Evangelist*, 13.

85. This postulated order of writing rests on the witness of Papias and of Irenaeus. Irenaeus may have been dependent on Papias, but he knew Polycarp, who also learnt as a young man from the Lord's disciple John. Thus Irenaeus' testimony on these matters may have been independent of Papias, though not of course of John.

86. It "is relatively easy to discern in each of these [discourse] sections a coherence of theme which suggests deliberate composition around a particular aspect of Jesus' teaching . . . study of Matthew's five discourses gives good grounds for concluding that they are not so much transcripts of actual sermons as anthologies of the remembered sayings of Jesus organized around some of the central themes of his ministry" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 8).

not be seen as evidence of scribal dependence, but may be due to fixed terminology in oral use.⁸⁷

LUKE

Luke is placed last in this discussion of the four canonical gospels for the reason that it contains the least ancient evidence of containing sustained direct eyewitness testimony from a single source. While John's Gospel claims to be written directly by or on behalf of an intimate disciple, Mark's by ancient account contains Peter's testimony, and Matthew's Gospel perhaps preserves sections of the writing of Matthew Levi, Luke's offers no such claim, internally or externally, to the sustained eyewitness testimony of one apostle or disciple.

On the other hand, Luke's Gospel by that account does not need to be relegated to a "second division" among the gospels. Luke's introduction to his gospel (Luke 1:1–4) was careful and detailed: he was aware of eyewitness testimony⁸⁸ and its place in the genesis of his gospel. Furthermore, he had actively sought out information from, presumably, quite a wide range of sources (for he referred to "many" having already drawn up accounts of Jesus).⁸⁹ We must be careful, however, not to reach conclusions from the evidence that it does not sustain. Luke did not clarify that he had personally spoken to eyewitnesses, for his "us" (Luke 1:2) may or may not have included him. Nor did he indicate that the previous accounts he was aware of were the direct products of the eyewitnesses. Both

87. On the possible fixed nature of oral tradition in this context, see Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 209. However, note with Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 259–63, that the word "tradition" may be misleading here: one may be reading direct eyewitness testimony from Simon Peter and Matthew Levi in Mark and Matthew's Gospels respectively. This recognition does not invalidate the possibility of their using identical wording in their accounts.

88. "Eyewitnesses' . . . has misleading associations for modern readers. For us, the word has forensic links: an eyewitness is characteristically a witness who was present *at the time when an accident or a crime took place*, very often a passer-by whose connection with the incident is accidental. The Greek word is hardly ever used in this way, and a better translation might be, 'those with personal/first-hand experience: those who know the facts at first hand.'" "The [eyewitness] is one who knows what s/he is talking about from personal experience" (Alexander, *Preface to Luke's Gospel*, 120, 124, italics original).

89. On the likely meaning here of "many," and on the nature of these previous accounts, see *ibid.*, 114–15.

of these may be true. However, Luke's introduction falls short of making these precise claims.

Beyond his introduction, Luke provided no details of what use he had made of his sources, or indeed whether they were written, oral, or both. However, his gospel betrays significant dependence on that of Mark.⁹⁰ In fact, he followed Mark's narrative order quite conservatively, reproducing Mark's order of individual passages almost entirely. This alone suggests literary dependence fairly strongly. Furthermore, there are occasionally strong similarities in wording. Though these are largely confined, unsurprisingly, to the sayings of Jesus, they also occur in narrative. Thus for example both Luke 8:43 and Mark 5:25 have "and a woman being with a flow of blood" (the wording is identical in Greek; contrast Matt 9:20). Quite often, even when precise wording differs, little incidental similarities in content suggest that Mark and Luke were perhaps not simply drawing from common oral tradition. One example of many is Luke 22:47 = Mark 14:43, both of which refer to the fact that those who arrested Jesus approached him "while he was speaking" (again, the wording is identical in Greek). Such an incidental detail seems unlikely to have been remembered by independent witnesses of the event. While it may be the case that relatively crystallized oral tradition could explain this concurrence, it seems that literary dependence is at least as reasonable an explanation, and probably a better one.

On the other hand, there are constant, usually minor, variations in wording between Mark and Luke. It must be repeated that the sayings of Jesus are much more crystallized than are the narratives of his actions and of the actions of those around him. Where there are these variations in wording, it is often difficult to imagine any theological motive for them. Sometimes, Luke may have been improving Mark's style, and sometimes he may simply have been finding a more succinct way of expressing what Mark had written. However, the variations often seem random. The psychological explanation of the effect of partial memory seems plausible: Luke did not perhaps have access to Mark in a way that meant he could copy word-for-word. He had heard Mark read often enough, and repeatedly enough, to know both the order in which Mark recounted events and the general wording Mark used. The greater similarity of Jesus' sayings in the two gospels must be explained by their being honored in a way that meant they were known accurately. This in turn suggests that some

90. Thus Luke must postdate Mark. This places it probably in or after the seventies.

of the shorter ones at least may be the precise words of Jesus. Also, they were just as likely to be remembered word-for-word in the world of oral tradition surrounding Luke as he composed his gospel. One must not forget, too, that Luke wrote of “many” having already produced accounts. So one can assume that he had various sources of sayings and actions of Jesus to choose from or combine.

Luke did not use Mark 6:45—8:26 or 9:41—10:10 at all. Did he for some reason not have access to this material? (The Matthean editor used much from these sections.) Other sections of Mark that Luke omitted were equivalent in some respects to some of his unique material, and it is perhaps for this reason that he left these parts out. For example, Mark 1:14–20 is functionally equivalent to Luke 5:1–11, as is Mark 14:3–9 to Luke 7:36–50.⁹¹ Mark 6:1–6 is roughly equivalent to Luke 4:14–30.

Luke included four fairly sizeable blocks of non-Markan material. Two occur before the start and after the end of his Markan sections, and are unique to him (Luke 1:1—2:52; 24:8–53). The other two intersperse his Markan sections (6:17—7:50; 9:51—18:14).⁹² In these latter two blocks, as is well known, Luke’s material coincides sometimes to a considerable degree with the content of Matthew’s Gospel (as too in Luke 3 and 4). Thus has arisen the theory of a document, or at least a body of oral teaching, known as “Q,” on which both the Matthean editor and Luke depended. However, the evidence from their use of this common material is that Q did not exist as a coherent document. The relative ordering of material common to Luke’s and Matthew’s Gospels is sometimes so different that a more likely explanation is that Luke drew from a pool of oral tradition that had much in common with Matthew Levi’s five teaching blocks speculatively proposed above. If Q had existed in written form, one would have expected Luke’s and Matthew’s Gospels to agree much more substantially on the order of their reproduction of its passages. Also, one might expect Luke to have kept Q material together in blocks, separate from his unique material. The fact that he interspersed the two freely further suggests that Q did not exist in such a way that Luke was drawn to distinguish it from his unique material (by keeping it blocked together, as he kept his Markan material together in blocks).

It is instructive to compare two largely identical passages in Luke’s and Matthew’s Gospels that do not appear in Mark and that cannot have

91. For further brief discussion, see page 92 n. 48.

92. This section contains one or two identical texts, such as Luke 16:18 = Mark 10:11.

come from Matthew Levi's five books of Jesus' sayings. These are John the Baptist's preaching (Matt 3:7-10; Luke 3:7-9) and Jesus' testing in the wilderness (Matt 4:3-10; Luke 4:3-12). They both largely involve reported speech and are therefore usefully comparable, even though one is significantly longer than the other. There is a striking contrast between the two. On the one hand, the preaching of John the Baptist is reported in almost identical words in the two gospels. This suggests strongly that a condensation of John's preaching predated the creation of either gospel. Furthermore, it suggests, rather more tentatively, that this brief summary—of what John presumably preached on many occasions and in different words—had been written down. Both gospel authors then had access to copies of this written material. This can only be a tentative conclusion. A plausible counter-suggestion is that this brief synopsis of John's preaching had become crystallized through oral repetition, and that it was this well-known crystallized oral form that both Luke and Matthew's Gospels drew on.⁹³

On the other hand entirely, the reports of Jesus' temptations, though clearly reporting the same event in largely the same way, use remarkably differing wording. Only short word-chains appear in common (e.g., "If you are the Son of God . . ." "the pinnacle of the temple"). Inconsequential differences are common (e.g., one stone [Luke 4:3] or plural stones [Matt 4:3]?). Even the arrangements of the Old Testament quotations are quite different from each other. This is all on top of the obvious fact that the three temptations are listed in a different order from each other. The conclusion that can clearly be drawn from this evidence is that while both accounts draw on a common tradition or report of what happened, they do not both draw directly from a written document that they reproduce largely intact. Either one, or more likely both, do not have access to a written document at all, one may surmise. A written source for these specific temptation accounts may never previously have existed.

These two passages illustrate the range of sources that gospel writers had available to them. In some cases, they had other complete or nearly complete gospels, as illustrated by Luke's use of Mark. In other cases, they may have had shorter written accounts of events or teaching, as in the use by the Matthean redactor, I suggest, of five books of Matthew Levi's recollections of Jesus' sayings. In still other cases, much shorter written reports of events, parables, and so forth may have existed, as possibly in

93. Dunn's account of how oral tradition worked is convincing (*Jesus Remembered*, 192-249; *New Perspective*, Appendix, 79-125; "Remembering Jesus," 207-16).

the case of John the Baptist's preaching. And surrounding all of these was a milieu of orally repeated accounts of the actions and teaching of Jesus that were bound to be fondly remembered and found to be greatly inspiring and challenging within the churches that the gospel authors knew.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have considered some of the viewpoints from which Jesus has been studied. My own Pentecostal viewpoint carries with it an expectation that all four gospels canonized by the early church will have useful contributions to make to a historical study of Jesus. Many current scholarly viewpoints, in contrast, focus on just three of these gospels and largely ignore the fourth. I have sought to build a case for giving careful consideration to this fourth, Johannine, viewpoint. Indeed, I have gone so far as to claim that John, more than the other three "synoptic"⁹⁴ gospels, stands out as containing direct first-hand eyewitness testimony. I have suggested that this personal element implies knowledge of detail particularly of those things that occurred at the beginning of John's acquaintance with Jesus, as well as in Jesus' final days on earth. I have, furthermore, shown early evidence that John may thereby have offered an account of the order of episodes in Jesus' life that was not available to Mark or the other two synoptic writers who followed him.⁹⁵

So far, I have concentrated my attention in this chapter on the perspectives from which one can consider Jesus' public activity. I close the chapter by setting out briefly the picture of Jesus that emerges when he is seen through the four "eyes" of the canonical gospels. While there are significant differences between the gospels, and most especially between John on the one hand and the three synoptic gospels on the other, there is also much common ground. It is a useful exercise to trace those details

94. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as "synoptic" in view of the commonality of perspective that they share when compared to John.

95. Throughout subsequent chapters, where ideas occur in Mark and are followed in Matthew, or Luke, or both, I will typically only give the Markan reference. However, if the same idea emerges in John, the reference in the fourth gospel will be given too, recognizing the relative independence of this witness. When referring to "Q" material, I will usually only give the reference in Matthew, especially if this occurs in one of the five teaching blocks in that gospel. I will also where appropriate make cross-references to *Gospel of Thomas*.

of Jesus' life and mission about which all four gospels concur,⁹⁶ as it can form an agreed framework.⁹⁷ Thus, beyond the obvious "book ends" of John the Baptist's ministry on the one hand and the crucifixion and resurrection on the other, three particular scenes from Jesus' life suddenly stand out: the clearing of the temple, the feeding of the five thousand, and the "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem. All these episodes gain my attention in subsequent chapters. The following summary of Jesus' mission from all four gospels is written in my own words, apart from two Old Testament quotations. No references are given to the texts, for the sake of narrative flow. In the case of Mark's Gospel, I have included material only up to Mark 16:8, the end of the undisputed Markan material. The resultant details of the life and mission of Jesus to which all four gospels testify in clear agreement may seem disagreeably slim, and abrupt in their conclusion,⁹⁸ but this is what they are:

The ministry of Jesus began in association with that of John. John had disciples and baptized people in water. He was also a prophet, the "voice calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord! Make a straight path for him!'" He declared that someone was coming after him, whose sandals he was not worthy to touch. While he, John, baptized with water, this coming one would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

96. I have not included Jesus being anointed by a woman (Matt 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; Luke 7:36–50; John 12:1–8) because while Matthew's, Mark's, and John's accounts clearly refer to the same event, there is insufficient evidence that Luke's does.

97. In seeking to see Jesus by means of all four perspectives, I am in effect employing a form of the criterion of multiple attestation: that which is attested across their perspectives offers firmest evidence from which to build up a picture of Jesus' history (as often employed, however, this criterion also takes note of multiple forms, as well as multiple sources). The distillation of material upon which all four gospels agree as a basis for studying the historical Jesus will be regarded by many as a naïve and misguided version of the criterion. The reasoning behind this criticism is that there are three significant independent witnesses, not four. These are Mark, "Q," and John. These should be compared with each other—but John is so late and "theologized" as to offer negligible historical evidence. Thus only Mark and "Q" are left. However, John's contribution cannot be lightly discounted, as I have discussed earlier in the chapter. Furthermore, while the gospels of Matthew and Luke are dependent on Mark, it must be recognized that they chose to include material from Mark in their gospels. Therefore they regarded this material as sufficiently reliable and important to be worth replicating. That they included what they did thus adds their voices to Mark's as ancient evidence for the significance of what they recorded.

98. This is especially so concerning the resurrection; I was tempted to include the longer ending of Mark.

Jesus' own public mission took place partly in Galilee and partly in Jerusalem. He taught a great deal and was known as "Teacher." He taught that people were to trust God and love each other. He called God "Father" and himself the "Son of Man." Also with respect to himself, he declared that a prophet was not honored in home territory.⁹⁹ Indeed, he was regarded by some as demonically empowered, but claimed himself to be divinely empowered. He declared that in some sense at least the end was near, and he predicted both his death and his resurrection. He called for response from his listeners, emphasizing the importance of experiencing real life. He urged people to feed on him as life's true bread. Paradoxically, to gain life it was necessary to lose it. He said, "Whoever hangs on to their own life will forfeit it, but whoever counts their own life as nothing will keep hold of it." So to follow Jesus' example was to be a servant, and fruitfulness would follow the rootedness of the word in a life. When criticized about what could not be done on Sabbaths, Jesus challenged his hearers to consider what was acceptable to do on these days. Furthermore, he taught about God's Spirit, indicating that in times of persecution, the Spirit would provide the necessary words to speak.

Jesus gathered a group of followers. Some of these were known as the twelve. Jesus' disciples included Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, Mary Magdalene, Philip, Thomas, and the sons of Zebedee. Jesus' followers were particularly privy to his teaching and some of them at least were sent by him to take part in his "harvest" work.

Jesus performed many miraculous healings, and some of these healings occurred on Sabbaths. On occasion Jesus even raised the dead. However, not all of his miracles involved healing. One in particular met physical hunger rather than sickness. Jesus was on this occasion followed by a great crowd of people to a remote part of Galilee. When it became clear that the crowd would need to eat, Jesus engaged with his disciples in a conversation concerning how this need could be met. It transpired as a result of this conversation that all the resources they could offer were five loaves and two fish. Jesus got all the people to sit down and then he took the loaves and gave thanks for them. Thereafter, the loaves and the fish were distributed to the crowd, which numbered five thousand men. Everyone had enough to eat. In fact, twelve baskets were filled with the food that was left over.

Jesus performed another outstanding sign that was not miraculous. This one occurred in Jerusalem, in its temple courts. This time, Jesus

99. Also in *Gospel of Thomas* 31 (see Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 661n213).

performed a dramatic and provocative act, driving out from the temple area those who engaged in commerce there. In doing this, he spoke of the temple as God's house.

Towards the end of his mission, as a Passover feast neared, Jesus entered Jerusalem for what was to be the last time. Strikingly, Jesus came into the city riding on a young donkey. A crowd of people attended him, shouting "Blessed is the one coming in the name of the Lord!" While in Jerusalem, Jesus had a final meal with his followers. At this meal, he predicted that one of them dining there would betray him to the authorities. He also predicted that Peter would deny knowing him. Peter, Jesus said, would do so three times that very night—and he did. After the meal, Jesus engaged in an extended time of prayer.

The betrayer was Judas Iscariot. He led an arresting party to where Jesus was at the time, just outside Jerusalem. Jesus was arrested (during which incident a companion of Jesus struck a servant of the high priest with a sword, cutting off his ear) and taken for trial. This trial involved questioning from both Jewish authorities and the Roman governor, Pilate. Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" and Jesus assented to being a king. Even at this stage, Jesus might have been released, but instead a prisoner called Barabbas was released, for in the case of Jesus there were shouts of "Crucify!" So Jesus was beaten and led away to be killed.

For this, he was taken to a place called Golgotha—the Place of the Skull. He was one of three who were crucified there, with the others on either side of him. There was a written statement concerning Jesus that read, "The King of the Jews." As he was dying, his clothes were distributed by casting lots and he was offered wine vinegar to drink. He died there on the cross, and after his death, a man called Joseph from Arimathea took his body, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb.

In the semi-darkness of the first day of the next week, some of Jesus' followers went to the tomb, among them Mary Magdalene who soon afterwards was spoken to by an angel. They found that the stone covering the tomb's entrance had been rolled away and that the body of Jesus was not there.