

Studies
in
the New Testament
and Gnosticism



by

George W. MacRae, S.J.

Selected & edited by

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George Winsor MacRae, S.J.

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George Winsor MacRae (1928-1985)

“If greatness in biblical scholarship is defined in terms of service to the scholarly community, George MacRae was the greatest in our generation.” Thus did Helmut Koester eulogize his Harvard colleague. Born on July 27, 1928, in Lynn, Massachusetts, George Winsor MacRae attended St. John’s Preparatory School in Danvers and Boston College before entering the Society of Jesus in 1948. His course of studies there took him to Louvain for philosophy, to Johns Hopkins for a M.A. in Semitics, to Weston School of Theology for theology and, after his ordination in 1960, to Cambridge University for his Ph.D. in New Testament. He took up his teaching career in 1966 as Professor at Weston School of Theology, where he remained until his appointment in 1973 as the first tenured Stillman Professor of Roman Catholic Theological Studies at Harvard University. It was in the course of his ministering the Word to his fellow-ministers of the Word, that he died on September 6, 1985, “at an age neither biblical/ nor glossed by any text.”

Though teaching the Word was at the center of his life, his many gifts and varied talents equipped him for a vast range of tasks in the service of the academic community: executive secretary of the Society of Biblical Literature from 1973 to 1976, associate editor of the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, *New Testament Studies*, *Hermeneia*, the Revised Standard Version revision committee, etc. His association with *New Testament Abstracts* began in 1957 as managing editor (1957-1960), and continued as coeditor (1967-1972), and then as associate editor (1972-1985).

He was in constant demand as a lecturer, and his topics covered the theology and exegesis of the New Testament as well as the particular field of his specialization, the Nag

Hammadi documents. Many of these documents he not only edited and translated but also assisted others in editing and translating. Teaching, preaching, counseling, consulting, writing, editing, and organizing meetings were tasks he did superbly well and with grace. All those that were fortunate enough to work with him found in him the same ready courtesy and an unfailing source of encouragement and good humor.

The present collection of George MacRae's articles does not represent the whole man, any more than they represent all that he did. Practically every item on his bibliography was undertaken in response to a request to deal with some topic of concern, to make a contribution to some scholarly gathering, or to honor a fellow-scholar. Since many of the articles are not easy to find, this volume tries to make available a sample of their author's range of interests and technical skills. Reading them and the other items on the bibliography will reveal his fascination with the development and adaptation of religious traditions. This life-long interest fitted him admirably for occupying the Stillman Chair at Harvard University, even as his interest in ecumenism found perfect expression in his teaching at the Harvard Divinity School. His own family's Catholic-Presbyterian background, as well as his studies both here and abroad imbued him with a humble respect for other religious traditions, a willingness to consider and reconcile opposites, and a firm loyalty to the faith he professed and lived. It was this faith that inspired his ministry to all who serve the Word, whether as scholars, as ministers of religion, or as inquirers after those things that "make for peace." "George MacRae," wrote the prominent scholar Jacob Neusner, "was a model of what scholars should be. He was learned, but imaginative. He not only knew a great deal, but he shared what he knew."

Editing George MacRae's papers has been a bittersweet experience: bitter because of the sense of loss that all who knew him felt and continue to feel at his premature passing from their midst; yet sweet because it afforded us the chance to listen anew to the accents of that most eloquent of men.

We are especially grateful to the Reverend Robert E. Manning, S.J., Provincial of the New England Province of the Society of Jesus, for the permission to prepare this collection; to the original publishers of the articles, for their permission to reprint the essays; and to Michael Glazier, for his willingness to publish the volume. It will, perchance, serve, not only as some small memorial to the many that knew him, but also as an introduction to others of a great scholar and an untiring minister of the Word.

June 1987

Daniel J. Harrington, S.J.
Stanley B. Marrow, S.J.



ABBREVIATIONS

AnBib	Analecta Biblica
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CG	Corpus Gnosticum
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>HR</i>	<i>History of Religions</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IDBSup	Supplement to <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JTC</i>	<i>Journal of Theology and the Church</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
<i>NT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RevSR</i>	<i>Revue des Sciences Religieuses</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version

<i>RScPhTh</i>	<i>Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques</i>
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
TWNT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>VD</i>	<i>Verbum Domini</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum, Supplements
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZThK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Part One
Interpretation

The Fourth Gospel and Religionsgeschichte*

The publication of Raymond E. Brown's Anchor Bible commentary on the Fourth Gospel marks a significant point in the contemporary history of Johannine scholarship, for it was the first major commentary in the English language for some years and it must rank as one of the most complete and most useful.¹ In the subsequent four-year period the pace of publication on John has been markedly accelerated. But of new commentaries in English, such as the posthumous work of J.N. Sanders² or the Pelican commentary of John Marsh,³ only the translation of R. Schnackenburg's first volume will rival Brown's in any respect.⁴ Anyone who keeps his own supplement to E. Malatesta's excellent modern bibliography,⁵ however, must be aware of the flood of new

* First published in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (1970) 13-24.

¹Vol. I: *The Gospel according to John (i-xii)* (Garden City, 1966); Vol. II: 1970.

²*A Commentary on the Gospel according to St John*, ed. B.A. Mastin (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London, 1968).

³*The Gospel of St John* (Harmondsworth, 1968).

⁴*The Gospel according to St John*, tr. K. Smyth (Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament; New York, 1968).

⁵*St. John's Gospel 1920-1965* (AnBib 32; Rome, 1967). 3120 titles are listed for that period alone.

monographs and articles on John. With rare exceptions such as the challenging work of Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*,⁶ or the historical study of J.L. Martyn,⁷ this most recent literature does not attempt to question the overall intention or thematic of the Fourth Gospel, but rather to center on exegesis of individual passages, special themes, word studies, elements of the elusive Johannine background, and the like.

In the pages that follow I should like to by-pass exegetical detail—not neglecting it, I hope, but presuming upon it—in order to raise some very general questions and suggest a line along which answers may lie. Most students of the Fourth Gospel are prepared to take a position within the multiple options of the classic “Johannine problem.” My aim here is to test against critical reactions a general view of the intention of the Fourth Evangelist that is not one of the usual options, though a number of recent authors have approached it from several sides. In doing so, I shall be more or less consciously in dialogue, and often in disagreement, with Käsemann’s book, without making the debate explicit at every turn. But first, I would like to set forth some of the problematic data that I wish to consider in unfolding a position.

The Background of John

To begin with, there is the major question of the background of the Fourth Gospel. Since the discovery of the Qumrân scrolls there has been a widespread shift toward a Palestinian-Jewish background, and this trend is an important part of what J.A.T. Robinson called the “new look” on the Fourth Gospel.⁸ It is embodied in its most balanced and

⁶Tr. G. Krodel (Philadelphia, 1968).

⁷*History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York, 1968).

⁸In 1957 at the Oxford Congress; see his *Twelve New Testament Studies* (Studies in Biblical Theology 34; London, 1962) 94.

judicious form in Brown's commentary, and it has recently been popularized in A.M. Hunter's survey of the present position of Johannine studies.⁹ But this renewed emphasis is by no means shared by all interpreters of John, some of whom argue that other factors must still be considered. For one thing, Qumrân itself has contributed greatly to the gradual break-down of neat and clear distinctions between Hellenistic and Palestinian Judaism, so that it is increasingly difficult to assign a locus to the Johannine traditions or their development. More important, many of the most striking elements of Johannine symbolism and literary technique are simply not paralleled in Qumrân literature but in other more unmistakably Hellenistic types, Jewish and pagan both.

We list here only a few examples, recent and classic, of alternative backgrounds. In a very thorough analysis of the Prologue, A. Feuillet points out to good advantage the influence of the Jewish wisdom literature, especially in its strongly Hellenistic later forms, on the Fourth Evangelist's theology.¹⁰ C.H. Dodd had looked especially to the pagan gnosis known as Hermetism for parallels not only in language but in religious experience.¹¹ Bultmann's monumental commentary saw the Johannine background in a more or less unorthodox baptist sect of the East, perhaps Syria, to which the Mandaean literature furnishes our most direct access.¹² The reaction against his use of Mandaean sources has been vigorous, not least because of the anachronism

⁹*According to John* (London, 1968).

¹⁰*Le prologue du quatrième évangile: Étude de la théologie johannique* (Bruges, 1968) esp. 236-244. See also Brown, Anchor commentary, cxxii-cxxv; F.-M. Braun, *Jean le théologien. II: Les grandes traditions d'Israël, l'accord des Écritures d'après le quatrième évangile* (Paris, 1964).

¹¹*The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1953) esp. 10-53. I do not imply that Dodd interprets John solely from the Hellenistic side; see his discussion of rabbinic Judaism, 74-96.

¹²*Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Meyer Kommentar; Göttingen, 1941, 1968). See also "Die Bedeutung der neuerschlossenen mandäischen und manichäischen Quellen für das Verständnis des Johannesevangeliums," *ZNW* 24 (1925) 100-146, reprinted in *Exegetica* (Tübingen, 1967) 55-104.

involved. But here one should acknowledge a major and important change in Mandaean scholarship, sparked principally by the greatly enlarged fund of original sources made available by Lady Drower: the trend is again to date Mandaeanism very early, perhaps even into pre-Christian times.¹³ A careful comparative study on the one hand of the Nag Hammadi Gnostic texts, soon to become available in their entirety, and on the other of the Mandaean materials may yet have much to teach us about origins of Mandaeanism. For another example of divergent Johannine background, finally, Käsemann, without appealing to Mandaeanism, places the Fourth Gospel on the road that leads from the enthusiasts of Corinth to the Christian Gnostics of the second century.¹⁴

And so on. I have not yet read anyone who argues that John's background was Indian or Far Eastern, but I should not be greatly surprised to do so. The least one can conclude is that it is a remarkable biblical book indeed that is capable of eliciting such a variety of theories about its milieu or origin. But can one pose the question in a slightly different manner: since the age of the Fourth Gospel was the age of Roman Hellenism, characterized in many respects by a kind of religious universalism or syncretism, is it not possible that the Fourth Evangelist may have tried deliberately to incorporate a diversity of backgrounds into the one gospel message precisely to emphasize the universality of Jesus?

Sources and Redaction

By way of exploring that possibility further, we must first note two other general areas of the Johannine problematic, the question of sources and redaction. The source question became a lively issue only with Bultmann's commentary,

¹³See most recently K. Rudolph, "Problems of a History of the Development of the Mandaean Religion," *HR* 8 (1969) 210-235; E.M. Yamauchi, "The Present Status of Mandaean Studies," *JNES* 25 (1966) 88-96.

¹⁴*The Testament of Jesus*, e.g., 75.

although he himself credited A. Faure¹⁵ with the first plausible case for a signs-source. Generally speaking, few scholars would follow Bultmann in postulating a revelation-discourse source, especially after the meticulous analysis of D.M. Smith, Jr.¹⁶ But the existence of a signs-source has withstood the test of analysis, so much so that its nature, extent and theology are now the subject of much contemporary investigation. For example, R.T. Fortna's Union Theological Seminary dissertation, *The Gospel of Signs*, tries to go beyond Bultmann in arguing that the passion narrative is a part of this narrative source.¹⁷ In addition, a number of scholars, such as H. Koester, are investigating the theological implications of the signs-source.¹⁸ I am not concerned here with the source itself but with the widely accepted position that in using such a source, which probably presented Jesus as a miracle-worker, a *theios anēr*,¹⁹ the Fourth Evangelist was critical of the miracles tradition and its *Tendenz*. In his Rome dissertation L. Erdozain correctly notes John's ambiguous attitude to miracles but seeks a solution in different types of faith evoked by the Johannine Jesus.²⁰ Käsemann also deals with this problem but I think wrongly accuses John of heightening the miraculous for Christological purposes.²¹ Far from heightening the miraculous, John almost consistently minimizes the actual miraculous activity of Jesus, even though he sometimes heightens

¹⁵"Die alttestamentliche Zitate im vierten Evangelium und die Quellenscheidungs-hypothese," *ZNW* 21 (1922) 99-121; see Bultmann, *Meyer Kommentar*, 78.

¹⁶*The Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel* (New Haven, 1965).

¹⁷SNTSMS 11 (Cambridge, 1969).

¹⁸See, e.g., "One Jesus and Four Primitive Gospels," *HTR* 61 (1968) 203-247, esp. 230-234. See also the forthcoming work of Koester and J.M. Robinson, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1970), several chapters of which deal with this issue.

¹⁹See H.D. Betz, "Jesus as Divine Man," *Jesus and the Historian*, Colwell volume, ed. F.T. Trotter (Philadelphia, 1968) 114-133.

²⁰*La función del signo en la fe según el cuarto evangelio* (Analecta Biblica 33; Rome, 1968).

²¹*The Testament of Jesus*, 21-22.

the miracle stories to give emphasis to their symbolic content. It is not enough to say that John did not approve of faith in Jesus based on signs, for then one would have to answer the question why he did not simply suppress the evidence. Why did he use the signs-source at all? Let us suspend an answer for a moment and observe simply that the Evangelist's intention in using the source must have been more subtle than mere acceptance or rejection of its implications.

Another source, not yet mentioned, underlies John, but it is both more difficult to describe and potentially more important for understanding the Gospel. That is the "source" which accounts for the gospel form of the work. I accept the widespread consensus of contemporary scholarship since P. Gardner-Smith²² that John is not directly dependent on any of the Synoptics. But while giving full weight to the creativity of the Fourth Gospel vis-à-vis the established tradition, many scholars are now recognizing more and more clearly that John knew well the structure of the traditional gospel and even specific groupings of traditional material such as, for example, Jn 6 and the loaves cycles underlying Mk 6-8. Brown's commentary, again, is particularly rich in highlighting Synoptic or pre-synoptic traditions, structural as well as topical, in John.²³ And conversely, it is a major weakness of Käsemann's interpretation of John that he fails to come to grips with the question of why John chose to write a *gospel*, that is to adopt a literary form that is cast from the traditional gospel mold. But again, the Evangelist uses this synoptic-type "source," whatever its exact nature may have been, in a critical manner, for he both reveals and disguises his dependence on tradition. The triple prediction of the Passion, for example, structurally vital to the latter

²²*Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge, 1938). See also J. Blinzler's *Forschungsbericht, Johannes und die Synoptiker* (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 5; Stuttgart, 1965) which, however, argues that John used at least Mark.

²³Anchor commentary, Introduction xlv-xlvii and *passim* in the commentary itself.

half of Mark, is present in John in the triple *hypsothēnai* saying (3:14; 8:28; 12:32) which is one of the unifying symbols of the Johannine narrative.²⁴ Similarly, the Caesarea Philippi confession of Peter, the focal point of the Marcan development, appears in the option of the disciples voiced by Peter in Jn 6:68, though in this instance it has lost its structural significance.²⁵

John's critical attitude toward his sources suggests again a concern on his part to incorporate as much as possible of the traditional even while creating his own gospel "style." I take this concern to be an implicit assertion of the universality of Jesus, who meets the religious aspirations of both the traditional and the innovative. But the critique of the miracles tradition invites us to take a step further, for here the Evangelist is suggesting, not merely that Jesus is the miracle-working divine man of Hellenistic Jewish and pagan tradition, but that he transcends the very category of divine man in his unique relationship to the Father. But let me return to this element of transcendence later.

The question of multiple redaction in the Fourth Gospel has seemed inevitable to commentators, again since the genial work of Bultmann, whose "ecclesiastical redactor" has survived, despite some well-grounded criticism, in the work of both Brown and Schnackenburg, though neither of them would attribute the same motives to the redactor(s) that Bultmann does.²⁶ The importance of the issue should not be minimized, but it is a truism that the primary exegetical task is to deal with the Gospel as we have it, as indeed it has been transmitted in the long Christian tradition since the earliest textually recoverable times. It is one thing to attempt to distinguish the viewpoint of the "Evangelist" from that of the "final redactor"; it is another to inquire into the intention of the Gospel as we have it. I should wish here to by-pass the

²⁴See, e.g., Jn 18:32. On the relation to the predictions of the Passion, see Brown, *ibid.*, 146.

²⁵Again see Brown, *ibid.*, 301-303.

²⁶*Ibid.*, xxxiv-xxxix; Schnackenburg, Herder Commentary, 59-74.

redactional question without denying either its validity or its importance. But it is possible to pose in quite a different manner some of the questions which redactional analysis raises. In doing so, I am implicitly affirming that the ultimate intention of the redactor was not to alter the course of Johannine theology but to reinforce that aspect of it to which this paper seeks to call attention.

As an example, let us consider some of the eschatological statements of the Fourth Gospel, which are often adduced as the most obvious instance of redactional activity (apart from the addition of ch. 21). Here I mean simply the presence of futurist or apocalyptic eschatological statements in the midst of an otherwise uniform realized-eschatological perspective. Few, I think, could agree with Käsemann that “the distinction, gained from cosmology and anthropology, between realized and futurist eschatology in the Gospel of John can be maintained only with difficulty,” even though Käsemann’s attempt to interpret John’s eschatology exclusively in Christological terms is admirable.²⁷ The ease with which subsequent Christianity accepted both types of eschatological utterance as genuine does not minimize the real conflict between these types, as modern NT theologians have long testified. Let us grant at the outset—if indeed there could be any question—that the eschatological perspective native to the Evangelist himself is that of realized or inaugurated eschatology, which, as Käsemann points out,²⁸ is not entirely without its futurist dimension. But there are in the Fourth Gospel other statements that are set within an almost classical apocalyptic futurist mold, e.g. 5:28-29. The most important observation to make about the statements of the latter type, which of course are the exception, is that they appear almost exclusively in contexts where they parallel statements of the realized-eschatological type: e.g., 5:25-29//5:21-24; 6:40c. 54b//6:40b. 54a; 6:44// 6:51; 11:25b//11:26.

²⁷*The Testament of Jesus*, 16.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 70-71.

Now, of course this juxtaposition could simply mean that the later redactor, in an effort to make this marginal gospel palatable to the Church, inserted such traditionally futurist statements at the most crudely appropriate points. (One may note in passing that no one seems to have felt any comparable scruple with regard to Colossians and Ephesians over against the major Pauline epistles.) But could not such a juxtaposition also be a way of saying: whatever your eschatological perspective, future-oriented or present-oriented, Jesus is the reality and fulfillment of your hopes? That is to suppose that the Evangelist—or the redactor if you will—was mainly concerned with asserting the universality of Jesus in the context of a growing divergence of eschatological viewpoints in the second- or third-generation Church. How else can one read 11:25-26, where the “I-am” saying so links the two eschatological perspectives that the intruding hand of a subsequent redactor is almost impossible to detect except on the supposition that no author would try to join both types of eschatological statement? “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.”²⁹ But even the categories of life and death are eventually recognized to be inadequate in the Fourth Gospel as a means of grasping the meaning of Jesus, for they too are more or less abandoned as the Gospel reaches its climax and conclusion.

This further hint at the element of transcendence leads us to another area of debate in Johannine studies, the question of the structure of the Gospel. But before turning to it, I wish to indicate summarily another way in which the Evangelist seeks to express the universality of Jesus, namely by heaping up Christological titles. To concentrate on just one passage, we may observe how the titles provide a theme of continuity throughout Jn 1:19-51, which derives its literary structure

²⁹I am following the brilliant analysis of these verses by Dodd, *The Interpretation*, 364-365; for an only slightly different perspective see Bultmann, *Meyer Kommentar*, 307-308.

from the symmetrical arrangement of successive scenes. The section on John the Baptist (19-34) serves to deny that the titles (Messiah, Elijah, the prophet) are properly applied to him; his role is that of witness. The section on Jesus and his first disciples (35-51) introduces Jesus successively as Lamb of God, rabbi, messiah, the prophet announced by Moses, Son of God, and—outside the structural framework—Son of Man. In other parts of the Gospel this heaping up of titles is continued (Logos, Lord, Savior). The intention of this characteristic of John is again to incorporate deliberately into the understanding of Jesus whatever Christological labels are current in the Church, even though the particular Christological model of the Evangelist himself does not correspond adequately to any of them except possibly Son of God. It is precisely this deliberate intention to express the universality of Jesus, and implicitly to assert that the reality of Jesus transcends any such labeling, which explains the addition of the unconnected Son-of-Man saying in Jn 1:51. The Evangelist—not the redactor, according to Bultmann³⁰—adds this isolated saying to the carefully-structured opening scenes of the Gospel to make his list of titles more complete. How appropriate the saying is at this point in the Gospel is not my point here,³¹ nor is it the principal point for the Evangelist either.³²

The Structure of John

We turn next to the structure of the Gospel in search of another argument for the author's deliberate assimilation of a variety of forms of religious understanding. The problem of ascertaining in detail the structural plan of the Gospel

³⁰Meyer Kommentar, 68, 74.

³¹For an extended discussion of this question, see Brown, Anchor commentary, 88-91.

³²In quite a different manner and on the basis of Jn 1:12-13 read against the wisdom background of the Prologue, Feuillet, *Le prologue*, also emphasizes the universality of Jesus and the response of faith; see, e.g., 17-18, 81-95.

fascinates many students of it. In the most recent literature I have noted in particular the work of Jan Willemse, who claims to detect an interlocking symmetrical pattern in the Gospel,³³ and of David Deeks, who sees the Gospel as structured in four main parts with chiasmic order.³⁴ What both these studies neglect is the major break in John between ch. 12 and ch. 13, and I cannot regard any structural analysis as adequate which fails to recognize the importance of this natural division between what Dodd calls the "Book of Signs" and the "Book of Glory."³⁵ The existence of this natural division needs no demonstration, but several implications of it are important for understanding the Gospel as a whole.

First, it should be observed that the division within John corresponds closely in intention and significance to the main division in the Marcan Gospel either before or after the confession at Caesarea Philippi (8:27-30).³⁶ From that point on in Mark Jesus' activity focuses mainly on the instruction of the disciples and the implications of the Passion narrative for discipleship. The latter part of the Gospel is esoteric—within the circle of the disciples—as the earlier part is exoteric, in the framework of the Evangelist's interpretation of the life of Jesus, and it is well known how many of the characteristics of Marcan style are modified from this point onward. This matter of structure is an important way in which John takes over the concept of the traditional gospel structure without actually following Mark in any literary way. From Jn 13:1 onward, Jesus deals exclusively with his own disciples, abandoning even the language and symbolism that were the essence of his public revelation. Just as Mark

³³*Het vierde evangelie. Een onderzoek naar zijn structuur* (Hilversum, 1965).

³⁴"The Structure of the Fourth Gospel," *NTS* 15 (1968-69) 107-129.

³⁵See Dodd, *The Interpretation*, 289; Brown, Anchor commentary, cxxxviii. The same criticism made of Willemse and Deeks would apply to the structure supposed by H. Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*, tr. J. Bowden (New York, 1969) 347.

³⁶In particular see I. de la Potterie, "De compositione evangelii Marci," *VD* 44 (1966) 135-141.

from 8:31 onward is oriented to the Passion, so Jn 13 ff. may be regarded as an interpretation of the Passion narrative.³⁷ But the contrast between the two sections in John is much more emphatic than that in Mark. John's independence from Mark, however, is attested by the fact that Mk 8:31—10:45 is structured around the predictions of the Passion, whereas the Johannine equivalents of these are all in the first major division of the Gospel.

What is most outstanding about Jn 12 is the severe negative judgment it makes on the success of Jesus' ministry of sign and symbol in Galilee and Jerusalem both. It is not an exaggeration to say that the public life of Jesus ends in John on a note of failure. Jn 12:37-43 emphatically asserts the failure of the public revelation, explicitly mentioning the signs, and whether or not 12:44-50 is a redactional interpolation, it too conveys an ominous judgment on what precedes (especially v. 48). In view of the fact that Jn 1-12 alone contains the miracles or signs and the multiplicity of basic human religious symbols—bread, wine, water, word, life, light, shepherd, etc.—one can only conclude that the Evangelist is asserting that although Jesus revealed himself in such a variety of modes, none of these adequately conveyed the basis of faith. Only the disciples “understand,” but as the very important verses 2:22 and 12:16 assert unequivocally, they only understand because they have reflected backward, as is the theological movement of all the Gospels, from the Passion-death-resurrection experience.

Beginning in 13:1, the revelation to the disciples, that is to those who in fact, from the Evangelist's perspective, have understood and believed, takes on a new language and abandons the old. I do not suggest that one can detect any stylistic difference; the distinction of sources or hands (except for ch. 21) by these means has long since been discredited by E. Ruckstuhl³⁸ and others. But the language of

³⁷Dodd, *The Interpretation*, 290-291.

³⁸*Die literarische Einheit des Johannesevangeliums* (Freiburg, 1951). But for a critique of Ruckstuhl and a new application of the method, see Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs*, 203-218.

sign and symbol changes markedly. Instead of the great images, some of them introduced in the Prologue, which form the stuff of the Book of Signs: Logos, eternal life (but note 17:3), light, living water, bread of life, shepherd, Jewish feasts (except Passover, which was deeply embedded in the Passion tradition), the second part of the Gospel introduces the idea of love (not quite for the first time, of course; see 3:16) and dwells on it in discourse and in action. It is notable that when any of the old symbols recur, for example 19:26, 34, they do so in a context where they derive new force from their association with the Passion of Jesus. Käsemann may be correct in observing, as others have done, that the idea of love in the Fourth Gospel is scarcely adequate by the standards set by the rest of the NT,³⁹ but it is nonetheless the principal theme in the Book of Glory and the specific Johannine insight into the meaning of the Passion as the heart of the gospel message. And love is John's reaching out for a way to express the mode in which the event of Jesus Christ dying and rising not only fulfills the highest aspirations of man's varied religious longing, whether Jewish or Greek or even Gnostic, but transcends the symbolization of all of these to afford man a glimpse of the transcendence of God in the person of Jesus.

This is in many ways the opposite of Käsemann's interpretation of John, though he comes very close at several points to asserting my thesis. For example:

"... the truth can never be imprisoned or objectified in any earthly object as such, not even in the earthly Jesus, whom, with the intention of objectifying, we call the historical Jesus. His dignity is to be Logos and his claim is that by means of all Logoi one can come to the Logos himself."⁴⁰

John's "doctrine provokes interpretation and kerygmatic unfolding instead of freezing and absolutizing it. John employed many means to point this out. He pictured

³⁹*The Testament of Jesus*, 59.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 43.

Jesus in Hellenistic categories as miracle-worker, as savior of the world and as pre-existent heavenly being. But in the Hellenistic world there were many miracle-workers, sons of God, and Jesus is something more than they. John also made use of the Jewish categories of prophet, teacher and Messiah, but these do not adequately disclose his cosmic significance. The symbols of water, bread, light, truth, life, shepherd and door are best suited, because every man has need of them and perishes without them.”⁴¹

The difference in perspective between Käsemann and myself is that in my view John is not content merely with drawing on this multiplicity of basic human symbols, but he draws on a wealth of religious categories as he, a child of the Hellenistic world with at least some knowledge of Palestinian Jewish traditions, knows them. But in all cases but one he wishes to assert not only that Jesus is all in all, but that he transcends all and thus affords us, in the death and resurrection of the Son as the supreme act of love, an avenue to what divinity really is. It is my assertion that John deliberately uses whatever religious backgrounds he knows, though I remain convinced that his own is primarily in the wisdom tradition. He deliberately incorporates sources as disparate as the signs-source with a *theios anēr* Christology and the Passion-narrative gospel, but he also subsumes all except the theme of love in action under the condemnation of their failure to reveal adequately what God is.

The point is not that the Evangelist does this well, nor that he does it with the conceptual clarity the modern *Religionsgeschichtler* might aspire to. But the diversity of materials and backgrounds he uses may not only be in the eye of the beholder but in the eye of the Evangelist too. He wishes to imply that as long as one tries to grasp Jesus as a Jew or a Greek or a Gnostic or a traditional Christian would, he both succeeds and fails, for Jesus is the fulfillment of all these

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 54. See also E. Fascher, “Platon und Johannes in ihren Verhältnis zu Sokrates und Christus,” *Das Altertum* 14 (1968) 83; E. Schweizer, *Ego Eimi* (FRLANT 56; Göttingen, 1939) 167.