THE LIFE OF JESUS:
A SURVEY OF THE AVAILABLE MATERIAL
(5) THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

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To the searcher for materials for the Life of Jesus the
Fourth Gospel is either no problem at all or the most
baffling of all. We may say, for example, 'The question is
decided. The Gospel of John is inferior to the Synoptics as
a historical source just in proportion as it is more strongly
dominated than they by theological and apologetic interests';
or, in the words of one of the acutest and most learned New
Testament scholars of our time, 'John may contain a few rem-
nants of true tradition, but in the main it is fiction'.

If we take this line we may easily come to the conclusion
that the Fourth Gospel should be left on one side and that our
attempts to write the Life of Jesus should, in general, ignore
it. Alternatively we may decide to see what can be elicited
from this document and attempt to assess its value. We are
at once confronted by a series of puzzles, most of which still
await a convincing solution. The questions touch every side
of literary and historical criticism—date and place, authorship,
sources, original language, relation to the other Gospels, and
so on. To all these matters an immense amount of labour
and learning has been dedicated—so much so that a bare survey
of what has been done would easily occupy a whole series of
Rylands Lectures. For excellent accounts of the progress of
research on the problems we can refer to the works of Principal
W. F. Howard and, more recently, Professor P. H. Menoud.
I must be content with the more modest task of indicating some

1 A. Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, 1911, 87.
3 The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation.
4 L’Évangile de Jean d’après les recherches récentes (Neuchâtel and Paris, 1943).
questions that seem to be worth asking and some lines of research that may produce useful results. I have no ready-made solution of the ‘Johannine Problem’, only some paths on which we may travel hopefully, though without guarantees that they will not turn out to be blind alleys.

We have first to consider the external attestation of the Gospel, and we begin with the statement in the Muratorian Canon, which may be taken to give the views accepted in Rome at the end of the second century.¹ It is as follows:—

The fourth of the Gospels is that of John, one of the Disciples. He, when his fellow-disciples and bishops were urging him, said, ‘Fast with me for three days beginning to-day, and let us report to each other what is revealed to each’. On that very night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the Apostles, that John should write the whole story in his own name with the authentication of them all.

And, therefore, even though the opening narratives are different in the individual Gospel books, nevertheless it makes no difference to the faith of believers, since by the one directing Spirit in all (four jointly) all (essentials) are set forth concerning the Nativity, the Passion, the Resurrection, the Intercourse with his Disciples, and his twofold Advent, the first in despised humility, which has taken place, the second in splendid kingly power, which is still to come.

What wonder, then, that John so deliberately gives prominence to these particulars in his Epistles, saying of himself, ‘What we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears, and our hands have handled, these things we have written to you’. For thus he claims to be not only an eyewitness and hearer but also the writer of an orderly account of all the wonderful doings of the Lord.

Elsewhere in the Muratorianum John is mentioned as the author of two Epistles² and the Apocalypse. It would seem

¹ I follow the text as edited by Zahn, Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons, ii. 139, with reference also to Lagrange, Histoire Ancienne du Canon du Nouveau Testament, 66-78, and Évangile selon S. Jean, ⁴ ixii. ff.

² On this see my article in Journal of Theological Studies, April 1947.
that the writer believed the Apocalypse to be earlier in date than the Pauline Epistles since he speaks of Paul's having followed the order of his predecessor John in writing by name to seven Churches only.

The first paragraph on the Fourth Gospel presents us with a picture of the Evangelist as a member, and perhaps the leading member, of a group of 'Disciples' and 'Bishops'. As the whole emphasis of the passage is on the claim that the Gospel gives first-hand information about the Ministry, we should probably take 'Disciples' to mean followers of Jesus during the Ministry. It may be supposed that 'Bishops' means members of the group having definite ecclesiastical responsibilities at the relevant time. It would not follow that all former Disciples were now Bishops or that all the Bishops concerned were former Disciples, though doubtless it is implied that a number were both Disciples and Bishops. The request of these men that John should write a gospel is at once confirmed by a Divine revelation. John is to write the book and they are to authenticate it. The second paragraph tackles the well-known problem created by the discrepancies between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics and points out that, however much the Gospels may differ about details, they combine to give the essentials of the Faith. The third paragraph, without saying it in so many words, suggests that John's order of events is to be preferred to the Synoptic, where they conflict. His personal relations with the Master may be presumed to give him the right to be heard both on the central matters of the kerygma and on the detailed course of events in the Ministry.

The passage as a whole gives one the impression that it is a defence of the Fourth Gospel against those who were attacking it. It is not difficult to guess who they were. In Rome it was one Gaius who, at the end of the second century or the beginning of the third, denied the authenticity of the Gospel in the course of his campaign against Montanism. One of

1 The prominent part assigned to Andrew in this matter is on all fours with his prominence in the Fourth Gospel itself as compared with his position in the Synoptics. See Moffatt, *Intro.* 564.

the objections urged by the critics of John was his disagreement with the Synoptics, a point which is taken up and answered in our text. And it is noteworthy that the main opposition to Gaius came from Hippolytus, who is now widely regarded as the author of the Muratorianum.  

The Anti-Marcionite Prologues also deal with the Fourth Gospel. The concluding paragraph of the Prologue to Luke states that the evangelist subsequently wrote the Acts of the Apostles. It continues: ‘Afterwards John the Apostle’ [the Greek adds ‘one of the Twelve’] ‘wrote the Apocalypse in the island of Patmos, and after that the Gospel’ [the Latin adds ‘in Asia’]. The John-Prologue proper is as follows:—

The Gospel of John was published and given to the Churches by John still present in the body, as Papias, entitled Hierapolitanus, the beloved disciple of John related in the Five Exegetical Books; indeed he (Papias) took down the Gospel, John dictating accurately. But the heretic Marcion, when he had been condemned by him (Papias) because he held opposed views, was expelled. He (Marcion) indeed had brought documents or letters to him (Papias) from the brethren who were in Pontus.

This Prologue, taken along with the closing sentence of the Luke-Prologue, maintains the Apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel. The work was completed and published during the lifetime of John. The emphatic adhuc in corpore constituto is pointless unless there were those who claimed that John was already dead before the publication of the Gospel attributed to him. The Prologue appeals to the writings of Papias, and mentions the Church of which he was Bishop, no doubt as evidence of his reliability as a witness. It remains odd that Eusebius, who quotes Papias on Gospel origins and had access to the Five Exegetical Books, does not mention any of the matters recorded in this Prologue. In any case it is most unlikely that the story of the dictation to Papias appeared in the Exegeses, or that it is true. The story about Marcion may well be Asian tradition; and it may be surmised that the whole

1 Altaner, Patrologie, 83.
Prologue gives traditions of Asian origin, and that the reference to the Exegeses is no more than a guess, and a wrong one.

From Alexandria the earliest testimony is that of Clement, who is said to be reporting the tradition of 'the original elders' (τῶν ἀνέκαθεν πρεσβυτέρων). According to this 'John was the last (to write), conscious that the matters of fact (τὰ σωματικά) had been set forth in the (other) Gospels, and, urged on by the disciples, under divine inspiration he produced a spiritual Gospel.'

Who the 'original elders' were we can only guess. Their tradition may be the old tradition of the Alexandrian Church, or it may come from farther afield. The interesting thing is the agreement between Clement's tradition and that of the Muratorianum on the point that the composition of the Gospel was undertaken in response to an appeal from disciples. The problem remains: whose disciples? The account in Clement would suggest that it was the Evangelist's own disciples who asked for a written Gospel. In the Muratorianum, on the other hand, the wording definitely favours the idea that it is disciples of the Lord who are meant.

Irenaeus, as quoted by Eusebius, tells us of the composition of the first three Gospels, and then continues:

Afterwards John, the disciple of the Lord, the same who leant back on his breast—he too set forth the Gospel, while residing at Ephesus in Asia.

Eusebius later quotes from the letter of Irenaeus to Florinus a passage in which the Bishop of Lyons describes his boyhood in 'Lower Asia', and how he saw and heard Polycarp the venerable Bishop of Smyrna, and in particular how Polycarp 'would tell of his intercourse with John and with the others who had seen the Lord, how he would relate from memory their words; and what the things were which he had heard from them concerning the Lord, his mighty works and his teaching,

1 Given by Eusebius, H.E. vi. 14. 7.
4 H.E. v. 20.
Polycarp, as having received them from the eyewitnesses of the Life of the Word, would declare altogether in accordance with the Scriptures'. It is clear from these passages that Irenaeus in his later life identified the John, of whom he had heard Polycarp speak in his boyhood, with the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, and the disciple whom Jesus loved. The question is whether his memory is reliable, whether, in fact, the John of whom Polycarp spoke was the Apostle or another Christian leader who happened to have the same name.

The question becomes more acute when we consider the early quotations from and allusions to the Fourth Gospel.¹ The most striking fact is their scarcity, and that in places where we should have expected to find them. Polycarp ² of Smyrna, who, according to Irenaeus, was a disciple of John, has nothing that can fairly be described as a quotation from the Fourth Gospel, and the one possible allusion does not carry conviction. Ignatius of Antioch, who wrote a letter to the Ephesians, failed to mention John in it, though if Irenaeus is right the work of John was both more recent and more prolonged at Ephesus than that of Paul, to whom he does refer. Moreover, while the letters of Ignatius are full of ideas of a Johannine cast there is nothing to show that he knew the Fourth Gospel. Mr. Sanders sums up a careful and detailed discussion by saying:³

'Nothing in these passages proves conclusively that Ignatius knew or used the Fourth Gospel as we have it, but it seems clear that there is a fairly close affinity between his theology and language and those of the Fourth Gospel. . . . But as against these points of similarity, there are significant differences, as for instance in the treatment of the Holy Spirit. There is enough agreement to make it probable that behind them both lies a common tradition of theological thought and language, perhaps even that Ignatius was acquainted with some written summary of

¹ These have recently been the subject of a fresh and illuminating study by J. N. Sanders (1943).
our Lord's teaching used by the author of the Gospel (if any such work existed). But one cannot say with any certainty that Ignatius knew our Fourth Gospel.

We move on into the middle of the second century. Polycarp (martyred A.D. 156), who according to Irenaeus was a disciple of John, does not mention him; and, while his letter to the Philippians has one passage which looks like a quotation from 1 John, there is nothing to show that he was acquainted with the Gospel.

Justin (martyred about A.D. 165), born in Palestine, was converted to Christianity probably about A.D. 130 and, it may be, at Ephesus, the reputed home of the Fourth Gospel. Wherever his conversion took place we have the authority of Eusebius for saying that he was settled at Ephesus in the thirties of the second century. His works show considerable affinity with Johannine thought; but there are far-reaching differences. Moreover, while Justin has frequent recourse to the Synoptic tradition, his references to the Fourth Gospel are few, slight, and not of a sort to suggest direct quotation.

As Mr. Sanders justly says, this 'relative scarcity of quotations from the Fourth Gospel is the more surprising as Justin misses many obvious opportunities of quoting or alluding to the Fourth Gospel in support of his conclusions, which in that case can hardly be derived from the Gospel.'

The perplexing and important fact that emerges is that quotations are absent in those places where we should most confidently look for them if the Fourth Gospel was composed in Ephesus about A.D. 100 by John the Apostle. No theory about the Gospel that fails to give an explanation of the phenomena presented by the writings of Ignatius, Polycarp, and Justin has much chance of survival.

2 See, for example, Liützmann, Geschichte der Alten Kirche, ii. 182-6; Sanders, op. cit. 31 f.
3 The nearest thing to a quotation is perhaps I Apol. lxi. 4: καὶ γὰρ ὁ Χριστός εἶπεν. Ὄτι μὴ ἀναγεννηθῆτε οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃς εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, which may be a mixed reminiscence of John iii. 3 and 5. Other cases are less impressive.
We have clear evidence of the existence of the Gospel from other sources. The Valentinian Gnostic Heracleon, who flourished about A.D. 145-180, wrote a commentary on it, of which fragments survive. There is also good reason to think that the earliest form of Montanist teaching, including the oracles of Montanus himself, was dependent on the Fourth Gospel. The rise of Montanism belongs to the third quarter of the second century. But perhaps the most interesting development in recent times is the way in which palaeography has come to take a hand in the dating of the Gospel. I refer, of course, to the two papyrus fragments published shortly before the war. The one, P. Egerton 2, preserved in the British Museum, is a fragment of an apocryphal gospel, the author of which almost certainly made use of John. The writing of this fragment is dated on palaeographical grounds about the middle of the second century (A.D. 140-160). The composition of the Apocryphal Gospel is therefore earlier: the Editors of the fragment considered that it might be thirty years earlier (c. A.D. 110-130). The composition of the Fourth Gospel would then be earlier still.

The second papyrus fragment, P. Ryl. Gk. 457, is one of the chief treasures of this Library. It contains verses of John xviii and is assigned by palaeographers to the first half of the second century. That is to say, if we can trust the judgement of the experts—and there is no good reason why we should not—P. Ryl. Gk. 457, and probably a good many of its palaeographical kinsfolk, was in existence during the lifetimes of Polycarp and Justin. If Justin does not quote from John it is not because there were no copies of the Gospel available.

5 I leave the case of Polycarp on one side as the question of the date of his correspondence with the Philippians is still in debate.
The results of a study of the external evidence are thus somewhat disappointing. It seems clear that the Gospel was in existence in the first half of the second century, how early in that period we cannot say with any certainty. It is probable that it was associated with the name of John, and certain that towards the end of the century Church opinion had settled down to the view that this John was to be identified with John the Apostle.¹

I turn now to the internal evidence. Here there is a good deal of well-trodden ground, which I do not propose to go over again, as I have no fresh observations to make. I confine myself to those matters where there seems to be possibility of progress in our investigations. I take first the question of the literary unity of the Gospel. This was made the subject of a thorough and methodical study by Eduard Schweizer in a book published in 1939.¹ Schweizer began with a carefully selected set of characteristic marks of the Johannine style and then went

¹ This identification would at once break down if it could be shown that John the Apostle died a martyr’s death at some time before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The evidence for this is not of a very convincing kind; and I do not propose to go over it again here. I will make only two remarks. (1) What is often taken to be the strongest argument for the supposed martyrdom of John is the prophecy in Mk. x. 39; and it cannot be used to any purpose without committing a glaring petitio principii. For it is either a true prophecy (so R. H. Charles, Revelation, i. p. xlv, n. 2) or a vaticinium ex eventu (so many who use it to prove the early death of John). In either case the answer to the question ‘How do we know that John was martyred?’ is ‘From Mk. x. 39 (a true prophecy or a prophecy after the event, as the case may be)’. ‘Then how do we know that Mk. x. 39 is a true prophecy (or a vaticinium ex eventu)?’ ‘Because John was in fact martyred.’ The argument is a perfect circle. The only escape from the circle is by producing independent evidence for the martyrdom of John. But if that can be done, the evidence of Mk. x. 39 at once becomes superfluous. There is no escape from the conclusion that the argument from Mk. x. 39 is either circular or unnecessary. (2) Although I think the evidence for an early martyrdom of the Apostle to be of very little value, I have no better opinion of the evidence for his prolonged residence, or indeed any residence at all, at Ephesus. That there was someone called John at Ephesus and that he played an influential part in the life of the Church in Asia, seems more than likely. That this person was the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, I do not believe.

¹ E. Schweizer, Ego Eimi, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht, 1939 (Forschungen zur Religion u. Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, N.F., 38 Heft). The important part of the work for our present purpose is pp. 82-112.
on to examine their distribution in the Gospel. The results of the study can be set out in four propositions:

1. The style is in essentials one throughout the book. This stylistic unity lies not in an earlier document but in the final composition.

2. The author probably used traditional material which may have been in written form. But he has made it so much his own stylistically that it cannot be analysed out.

3. The Gospel as a whole is a unity on which the author has imposed his style and spirit.

4. These conclusions are only well-grounded working hypotheses, not settled and certain results.¹

There are two other observations of Schweizer's which should be noted. First we have the areas of the Gospel where the stylistic characteristics are absent or scarce. These are the wedding at Cana (ii. 1-10); the cleansing of the Temple (ii. 13-19); the latter part of the conversation with the Samaritan woman and the stay in Galilee (iv. 16-53); the anointing at Bethany (xii. 1-8); the Triumphal Entry (xii. 12-15); and the Pericope de Adultera (vii. 53-viii. 11). The last of these is already rejected on textual grounds and the main interest of the stylistic test is that it confirms the decision of the textual critic. It will be noticed that almost all this material is narrative and that much of it has parallels in the Synoptics. The second point is the opinion expressed by Schweizer on page 107 that the Evangelist most probably used sources and that he may have had a collection of narratives and/or one of speeches. 'As the style of 1 John agrees with the elevated style of the speeches in the Gospel (and essentially with this alone) we should probably prefer to assume a source for the narratives, unless we are prepared to postulate a Discourse-source for the First Epistle as well as the Gospel.'

Schweizer's method has been carried further by P. H. Menoud ² and E. Ruckstuhl.³ The position seems now to be that we must think of the Gospel as bearing the impress throughout of a single mind expressing itself in a uniform Greek style.

This, of course, does not exclude the possibility that there may be interpolations (the Pericope de Adultera is the most notorious) and displacements. It is also allowed that the Evangelist probably made use of sources. If he did, it becomes extremely unlikely that he was the eyewitness Apostle.

To the question of sources one answer has been strongly urged in recent years, that of a single Aramaic document, of which the existing Greek Gospel is a translation. This hypothesis was put forward with many supporting arguments by C. F. Burney in 1922 in his book The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel. The case was further fortified in The Poetry of Our Lord (1925), in which Burney argued that much of the teaching of Jesus was delivered in the forms of Semitic poetry, producing examples from the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel. When Burney’s first work was published it was observed that his evidences of Aramaism in John were not evenly distributed throughout the Gospel. They are found in the following blocks:

- They are absent from:
  - i. 35-ii. 12; ii. 23-25; iv. 27-30, 39-54; vi. 1-21; vii. 1-13, 25-31; ix. 1-7; x. 19-21, 40-42; xi. 45-46, 54-57; xii. 1-19; xiii. 31-38; xiv. 5-7, 22-24; xvi. 16-24; xviii. 12-18, 25-27, 38-40; xix. 17-30, 38-42; xx. 1-xxi. 25.

It is observed that a large proportion of the non-Aramaising sections are narrative and that many have parallels in the Synoptic Gospels. Further we find that the vast majority of the

1 The case for an Aramaic original is also argued by C. C. Torrey in "The Aramaic Origin of the Gospel of John" (Harvard Theol. Rev. xvi. (1923), 305-44; The Four Gospels, a New Translation; and Our Translated Gospels.

2 It is to be noted that if Chs. v. and vi. are transposed, iv. 39-54 and vi. 1-21 form a single block of material without Aramaism.

3 In order to avoid any arbitrariness the units into which I divide the Gospel for the purpose of reckoning presence or absence of Aramaisms are the paragraphs of Westcott and Hort’s text. A block here may include several paragraphs of Westcott and Hort; but no paragraph is divided between blocks.
passages which Burney adduces as evidence of Semitic poetic form in John come from the sections in which Aramaisms are recorded.

At this point we must take into account another element in the problem; that of the relations between the Gospel and the First Epistle. The Epistle was examined by the Manchester University Hellenistic Seminar, and it was found that the Aramaisms discovered by Burney in the Gospel were absent from the Epistle. A further point to be noted is the fact that whereas quotations from the Old Testament are found in the Gospel, the Epistle shows none. Again, while the Gospel and the Epistle share many ideas and have many words and phrases in common, there is a not inconsiderable difference in their vocabulary. For example the following terms are frequently used in the Gospel, but not at all in the Epistle: οὐδὲς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, δόξα, δοξάζεων. The curious thing is that of the twenty Old Testament quotations in the Gospel no fewer than sixteen occur in sections marked by the presence of Aramaisms; of the thirteen cases of οὐδὲς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, twelve are in such passages, as are eighteen of the nineteen examples of δόξα and twenty of the twenty-three cases of δοξάζεων. That is to say, some of the most striking differences between the Gospel and

For the sake of completeness I give the results of an examination of the long list of words found in the Gospel but not in the Epistle and brought forward by Professor Dodd as part of the case for separate authorship (RYLANDS BULLETIN, xxi. (1937), 139 f.). After each word or group of words I give the number of occurrences in the Aramaising sections of the Gospel and then, separated by an oblique stroke, the number of occurrences in non-Aramaising sections:

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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Aramaising</th>
<th>Non-Aramaising</th>
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<td>συζέων and σωσίρια</td>
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<td>γραφή, γράμματα, γράφειν (of the Scriptures)</td>
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<td>δοξάζεων 20/3</td>
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<td>καταβαίνεις 12/6, αὖν, ἀναβαίνεις 5/3, ψυγίων 5/0, θέλημα 11/0, εξούσια 8/0, πέμπεις 28/4, ῥήμα 11/1, φιλείν, φιλος 13 6, τημάν 6 0, ζητεῖν 24 10, καρπός 10/0, δοκεῖν 6/2, ἴδιος 12 3.</td>
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These figures seem to me to be highly significant. They greatly strengthen the case for regarding this division into Aramaising and non-Aramaising sections as fundamentally sound. I should add that I have left out of account one word in Dodd's list, κύριος. A very large proportion of the examples in the Gospel are the vocative κύριε in dialogue, for which there would, of course, be no need in the Epistle.

21
the Epistle turn out on closer examination to be differences between the Aramaising half of the Gospel and the Epistle; and it is open to us to entertain the hypothesis that the Epistle is the work of a writer composing freely and the Gospel the work of the same writer with his style to some extent controlled by the material which he has to incorporate into his book. I venture to think that this is a possibility that deserves more detailed consideration than I am able to give to it here.

I have alluded to the fact that in a considerable number of cases the absence of Aramaisms and the presence of Synoptic parallels coincide. The whole question of the relation of John to the Synoptics has been reopened by the short but very important book by P. Gardner-Smith entitled *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (1938). Here it is argued (and the argument, based as it is on detailed examination of all the parallelisms between John and the Synoptics, appears to be cogent) that ‘when all the facts are taken into consideration it becomes difficult to believe that the author of the Fourth Gospel was familiar with those Gospels which are generally thought to have been written and given to the Church before he undertook his task’. It follows that the Fourth Gospel may be regarded ‘as an independent authority for the life of Jesus, or at least for the traditions current in the Christian Church in the second half of the first century’. Similarities of a striking nature between Luke and John may be due to their common employment of the same developed traditions at certain points of the story. This also is a matter that deserves fuller consideration and investigation in the light of the points already brought forward in this paper.

In this connection there are a number of topics that call for discussion. Here it must suffice to indicate them in a general way.

First there is the question of the disagreements between John and the Synoptics. They are well known, so well known that there is no need to repeat them all once more. All that I want to emphasise is that it is no longer possible to say ‘If the Fourth Gospel contradicts the Synoptics, so much the worse for the Fourth Gospel’. Each case must be considered purely

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on its merits. If this is done in the case of the cleansing of the Temple, which John places near the beginning of the Ministry, and Mark near the end, we shall probably reject the desperate solution of two cleansings; and, when that is done, and we have to choose between John and Mark, I suppose that most scholars would give their votes in favour of Mark. On the other hand, when it comes to the question of the nature of the Last Supper, and the dating of the Crucifixion, a very strong case can be made for the view that John's dating is right. But if John is right on a matter of capital importance such as this is, he has eo ipso established an indisputable claim to a full and unprejudiced hearing on every other point; and his evidence must be seriously considered as possible independent confirmation, where it agrees with the Synoptic tradition, and as a possible alternative where it does not.

But if the Fourth Gospel contains an independent strain of tradition concerning the public career of our Lord, we are bound to enquire into its provenance. On this question we are not without indications: I mention a few which seem to me to be relevant and significant.

First I should put the growing conviction that the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle of John are fundamentally Hebraic rather than Hellenic in character. To take a single and crucial example, the Johannine Logos doctrine: whatever branches may have been grafted in from the contemporary thought of the Graeco-Roman world, it is, I think, indisputable that the roots of the doctrine are in the Old Testament and that its main stem is the d'bar Yahweh, the creative and revealing Word of God, by which the heavens and the earth were made and the prophets inspired. What is true of large matters is also true of points of detail. In an article on 'The Argument from Prophecy', I have argued that the use of the brazen serpent (Num. xxi. 9) as a type of the crucifixion goes back to the preaching of the Palestinian Christians, and that this argument,


along with a similar one derived from the story of Moses’ hands being held up during the battle between Israel and the Amalekites was replied to by R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus (fl. c. A.D. 90). The conclusion reached in that article was as follows: ‘Since Eliezer is a first-century Palestinian Rabbi, it seems clear that we have to do in John iii. 14 and Mishnah R.H. iii. 8 with Palestinian Christian proofs and Palestinian Jewish rebuttals. So, whatever we may think about the authorship, date, and place of writing of the Fourth Gospel, here is one more piece of evidence of its dependence on Palestinian materials.’

Secondly, we have to consider a number of pieces of evidence pointed out by Professor Dodd in his admirable commentary on the Johannine Epistles. As, unlike Dodd, I think the Gospel and First Epistle to be the work of one man I have no qualms about using this evidence here. He notes (1) the similarity between the Confession of Faith in 1 John ii. 22 and iv. 15 and the terms of Peter’s Confession in Matt. xvi. 16 (p. 57); (2) the collocation of the ideas of sonship of God and vision of God in 1 John iii. 1 f. and Matt. v. 8 f.; (3) hatred and murder linked in 1 John iii. 12-15 and Matt. v. 21 f.; (4) the idea of the easy yoke in 1 John v. 3b and Matt. xi. 30 (pp. 69 ff.). It is to be emphasised that all these links are between 1 John and Matthew, the (?) Antiochene Gospel, and, within the Gospel, to passages or turns of expression that are peculiar to it, and assignable to the M. strain of the Synoptic tradition.

Thirdly, I think we can point to another link between the Johannine literature and Syria. I have discussed this at length in an article appearing in the April issue of the Journal of Theological Studies. Briefly the point is that in the Acts of the Apostles we are shown a variety of modes of entry into the Christian Church, the main difference being on the question whether reception of the Holy Spirit precedes or follows baptism. This difference corresponds to a difference of liturgical usage between the Syrian Church and the rest of Christendom. In the Syrian Church the order of events in Christian initiation is unction (or chrismation—what is later called confirmation), baptism, admission to first communion; elsewhere the order is baptism,

1 C. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles (Moffatt Commentary), 1946.
unction, first communion. It is argued that in 1 John v. 7 f. the three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, are a reference to the three stages of initiation—in the Syrian order. If this is so, we have another signpost pointing towards Antioch.

Fourthly, we have the remarkable affinity of theological ideas between the Johannine literature and the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, coupled with the equally striking absence from Ignatius of anything that can be confidently claimed as a quotation from the Fourth Gospel.

Fifthly, there is the remarkably Johannine-sounding passage, Matt. xi. 25-27 = Lk. x. 21-22, whose credentials as an integral part of Q are quite unimpeachable. There are independent grounds for thinking that Q was a document, perhaps the earliest document, of the Antiochene Church.

Sixthly, there is the fact that the oldest, and in some ways the most striking, support for the Johannine dating of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion comes from the first Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians,¹ a letter written at Ephesus by a missionary whose home base was Antioch.

All these lines of argument converge on a single conclusion: that we should seriously consider Sanday’s suggestion ² that there was ‘an anticipatory stage of Johannine teaching, localised somewhere in Syria, before the Apostle reached his final home in Ephesus’. Probably we should now state the hypothesis in somewhat different terms. Very tentatively I should suggest that we have to reckon with a body of tradition of which the original home is Jerusalem, and for which the primary authority is an anonymous disciple of Jesus, not necessarily to be identified with John, the son of Zebedee, or any other of the Apostles. This tradition consisted of both matters of fact and teachings. It found its way, in the first instance to Antioch, where it left its mark on documents which we have reason to connect with that centre, on the liturgical usage of the Syrian Church, and on the teaching both of the missionaries who went out from Antioch (e.g. St. Paul) and of those who subsequently had the leadership of the Antiochene community itself (Ignatius).

¹ The passages in question are 1 Cor. v. 7 f.; xv. 20.
² The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel, p. 199.
From Antioch it moved to Ephesus; and it is at Ephesus that the final literary formulation was achieved in the Gospel and Epistles attributed to John. How much of this long road was travelled in person by the original custodian of the tradition; how much he (or his disciples) added on the way as the result of meditation on what was given, or of contact with other religious and philosophical ideas;—these are questions to which no cut-and-dried answer is possible. What is important is that we should be prepared to reconsider our whole attitude to the Fourth Gospel and to reckon seriously with the fact that it contains some material, perhaps more than we yet realise, whose value for historical purposes is as high as anything in the Synoptics. The detailed examination of the Gospel in search of such material will be a difficult and delicate task; but there is no longer any need to assume beforehand that it will be wasted labour.

The upshot of the whole discussion conducted in this series of Rylands Lectures may be stated somewhat as follows. We are confronted in the first place by a Person and a Life of such magnitude and power as to create a movement that has lasted for two thousand years and appears still to have unlimited resources for the renewal of its life and the reinvigoration of its activity. One of the principal early by-products of this new movement was a series of streams of tradition about the Founder-Person and his public career. These streams of tradition have their original sources in Galilee and Jerusalem (including Judaea and Peraea), the scenes of the Ministry; and in the course of their flow they form, as it were, small lakes of standing tradition at various centres of Christian Church life. The first of these of which we have any clear trace was formed probably at Antioch about A.D. 50. This we call Q. It may be associated with the Apostle Matthew. At Antioch also we can locate a body of ‘Johannine’ tradition and (perhaps between

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1 I think we should look on Ephesus not simply as a place where Paul did missionary work and therefore to be put in the same class as Athens, Corinth, Philippi, and Thessalonica; but rather as a second missionary base or advanced headquarters and so to be classed with Antioch. If Paul’s plans had matured in the way he wished, there would have been a third base at Rome, from which he would have pushed on to Spain.
60 and 70) another which supplied the material peculiar to Matthew (M). This M tradition along with Q, was used to produce the revised and enlarged edition of Mark which we know as the Gospel of Matthew, and may regard as the Antiochene Gospel. The earliest form of the Antiochene tradition reappears at Ephesus in Paul's letters: it may be that he brought it there in the first instance. Later on we find the Johannine tradition of Antioch taking literary form at Ephesus in the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles, and at Antioch in the letters of Ignatius. Another reservoir of tradition was formed, we may suppose, at Caesarea; and it is a plausible suggestion that it was from this that Luke drew that part of his material that we call L. This in combination with Q may well have formed the first, and catechetical, draft of Luke's Gospel (Proto-Luke), which later (A.D. 70-75), by the addition of extracts from Mark, was to become the first part of a public apologia for the new religion. In Rome another body of tradition issued from the teaching of Peter and took literary form in the Gospel of Mark about A.D. 58.

In the result we have five streams of tradition:

1. the 'Logia'-tradition (Q), which we can extract from Matthew and Luke, and reconstruct with fair confidence in the form in which it probably had about A.D. 50 at Antioch;
2. the Petrine tradition embedded in Mark and giving us what was taught at Rome about A.D. 58;
3. The L tradition which we may regard as Caesarean and date about A.D. 55-60;
4. the M tradition, incorporated into Matthew in the form in which it was current in Antioch about A.D. 70;
5. the 'Johannine' tradition, now accessible to us only in the form in which it assumes in the Fourth Gospel at the end of the first century or in the early decades of the second, but not without clear traces of an earlier phase of its history at Antioch.

These traditions sometimes confirm, sometimes supplement, sometimes contradict each other. None can be treated as infallible; none can be neglected. Each has its own contribution to make to the story, a contribution which only painstaking and intelligent study can discover.