

## *Preface and Acknowledgments*

**T**his book is written for students of the Fourth Gospel—students on several levels. For those coming to the text for the first time, it is designed to pick up on things one notices in a first reading or two, but also the sorts of things one is forced to confront as familiarity grows. In that sense, it is also written for more seasoned students of the Fourth Gospel who have been seeking to understand and address its perplexing riddles for some time. Therefore, I am not content simply to list an overview of scholarly opinion without evaluating different approaches and arguing a thesis that poses a serviceable way forward. Rather, in this book I introduce a new set of paradigms in accessible ways, hoping to create conversations as well as report them.<sup>1</sup> Of course, very little in scholarship is new, although new configurations of compelling approaches sometimes come across as innovations.

No book is written in a vacuum, and I am greatly appreciative of the larger “Johannine Community” of scholars internationally, to whose work I am deeply indebted and for whose support I am deeply grateful. In particular, I am grateful to other scholars who have addressed the Johannine riddles before this work: in Britain to C. K. Barrett, Barnabas Lindars, and John Ashton, whose commentaries and other works on John provide helpful windows into the understanding and interpretation of the Fourth Gospel; in Germany, to Rudolf Bultmann, Rudolf Schnackenburg, and Martin Hengel, whose commentaries and other works engage the Johannine riddles and questions with unsurpassed intensity and acuity; in America, to Raymond Brown, Robert Kysar, and Alan Culpepper, whose commentaries and other works provide windows into the Johannine situation and its literary developments in genuinely serviceable ways. I build on the good work of

others as well, but this book is a way of saying thank you to so many to whom my inquiry is deeply indebted.

I must also express my gratitude to the over five hundred colleagues from around the world who have attended or shown interest in the John, Jesus, and History Project at the annual meetings of the national Society of Biblical Literature, which I serve as a founding co-chair. The project is now in its ninth year, and in oral and written form, I think it is fair to say this is the most sustained and extensive collective investigation into the historical riddles of the Fourth Gospel in recent years, which may even have implications for the historical quest for Jesus in future years. To my fellow members on the steering committee, Tom Thatcher, Jaime Clark-Soles, Felix Just, SJ, Mary Coloe, PBVM, Alan Culpepper, Moody Smith, Catrin Williams, and Craig Koester, a big thank you is personally extended.

I also want to say thanks to the students we serve as teachers; it is often students' questions that force the scholar to dig deeper or to come at an issue again from a fresh angle. To my students at George Fox University (since 1989), at Yale Divinity School (1998–1999), and at the University of Mainz (2010) where I finished this book, I express my gratitude for the privilege of seeking the truth together along the lines of biblical inquiry. Students are often our best teachers! During my stay at Mainz, I had the opportunity to speak at several other universities, and the openness among students and colleagues alike to a new set of paradigms was most encouraging!

I must say a big thanks to Ruben Zimmermann, my gracious host at Mainz through the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst, and to Jan van der Watt at Nijmegen, Friedrich Avemarie at Marburg, and Folker Siegert at Münster, whose hospitality was greatly appreciated. Especially memorable was my visit to Marburg, where the students had been working all semester on various approaches to the Johannine riddles, culminating with Bultmann's paradigm and my engagements with it. To be able to have an informed and evaluative analysis of alternative ways of addressing the Johannine riddles by means of a Bi-Optic Hypothesis was a rare privilege indeed!

As I was conducting a bit of library sleuthing in the Mainz library a few days before my departure, I stumbled upon nearly thirty of Rudolf Bultmann's own books on John that had been donated to the Mainz library in 1950—the last year or two that Ernst Käsemann taught at Mainz. My guess is that he had something to do with their being given to Mainz just prior to Professor Bultmann's retirement in 1951. As I browsed through his books on John, I was impressed with how closely Bultmann had read the secondary literature of his day, as well as the biblical text! Many pages had underlining and notes in the margins—sometimes punctuating the page with a question mark or an exclamation point. At times, the master from Marburg would correct a grammatical error or a text citation (he was reading *very*

closely), and he sometimes augmented a point with his own details. At other times, he would register his strong disagreement by writing in the margin, “*Falsch!*” What struck me is that he was also engaging the works of others, who had also been addressing the Johannine riddles before him, and in that sense, his work reflects a masterful synthesis of the intensive work that had been done a half-century or so before he produced his voluminous commentary in 1941. Because that’s what other interpreters have also done, the present work is in good company.

This book builds upon my own books, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel* (Anderson 1996) and *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus* (Anderson 2006), as well as other works listed in the bibliography and appendix. My various theories and analytical treatments can be found elsewhere in further detail, but I want to acknowledge the use of several charts and outlines in the second book especially.<sup>2</sup>

In describing the “riddles” of the Fourth Gospel, however, let me first clarify that I am not describing what Tom Thatcher refers to as the provocative teachings of “Jesus the riddler,” although such an analysis might also apply to John’s Jesus (Thatcher 2006). Nor am I addressing Johannine rhetorical devices, which may include riddles, double entendres, parabolic speech, and other literary devices (see especially David Wead 1970). Those features are important, but they are not the central subject of this book. Rather, my focus is on the perplexing literary, historical, and theological issues one runs into when taking the Gospel of John seriously. In that sense this book follows on the closing words of D. Moody Smith’s foreword to *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, first published in 1996: “By putting old and important issues in a fresh perspective and attempting to apply new methods, Anderson stimulates us to reappraise our own solutions to the Johannine riddles. In doing so, he will have also set an agenda for his own career, if he undertakes to address all the counterquestions his proposals will doubtless engender” (Anderson 1996, x).

So, once again Moody Smith was right! Addressing the Johannine riddles has become something of a lifetime endeavor, and this book reflects a sustained effort to make sense of John’s theological, historical, and literary perplexities within a larger new approach based upon the dialogical autonomy of the Fourth Gospel. In appreciation for his friendship and good work over the years as “the dean of American Johannine scholarship,” this volume is dedicated to D. Moody Smith. Thanks, Moody, for your contributions and inspiration; let’s keep thinking about those Johannine questions and counterquestions, and how to address them well.