

R. ALAN CULPEPPER

# Designs for the Church in the Gospel of John

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament*

465

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**Mohr Siebeck**

# Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

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R. Alan Culpepper

# Designs for the Church in the Gospel of John

Collected Essays  
1980–2020

Mohr Siebeck

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# Abbreviations

## *General*

anon.	anonymous
Aufl.	Auflage
Ch(s).	chapter(s)
comp.	compiled
FS	Festschrift
HB	Hebrew Bible
LXX	Septuagint
n.	note
n. F.	neue Folge
rpt.	reprint
s. v.	<i>sub verbo</i> , under the word

## *Modern Sources*

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AcBib	Academia Biblica
ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
ACNT	Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament
AcT	<i>Acta Theologica</i>
AcTSup	Acta Theologica Supplementum
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AmJT	<i>American Journal of Theology</i>
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
AR	<i>Archiv für Religionswissenschaft</i>
ASV	American Standard Version
AThR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
AThRSup	Anglican Theological Review Supplement Series

BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3 <sup>rd</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000 (Danker-Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich)
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BEvT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
BFCT	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
<i>BibLeb</i>	<i>Bibel und Leben</i>
Bill.	See Str-B
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
<i>BK</i>	<i>Bibel und Kirche</i>
<i>BL</i>	<i>Bibel und Liturgie</i>
BMSEC	Baylor-Mohr Siebeck Studies in Early Christianity
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>BRev</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BT</i>	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
BTB	Biblical Theology Bulletin
BU	Biblische Untersuchungen
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CCARJ	<i>Central Conference of American Rabbis Journal</i>
<i>ChrCen</i>	<i>Christian Century</i>
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
ConBNT	Coniectanea Neotestamentica or Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament Series
CRBR	<i>Critical Review of Books in Religion</i>
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium. Edited by Jean Baptiste Chabot et al. Paris, 1903.
<i>CurBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
<i>Di</i>	<i>Dialog</i>
<i>DRev</i>	<i>Downside Review</i>
EANEC	Explorations in Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
ECL	Early Christianity and Its Literature
EJL	Early Judaism and Its Literature

EKKNT	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ESV	English Standard Version
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FB	Forschung zur Bibel
FC	Fathers of the Church
FCNTECW	Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings
<i>FilINT</i>	<i>Filologia Neotestamentaria</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten and Neuen Testaments
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship
GNT	Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HBS	Herders biblische Studien
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
<i>HeyJ</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
<i>HibJ</i>	<i>Hibbert Journal</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries
HTCNT	Herders Theological Commentary on the New Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HvTSt</i>	<i>HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies</i>
<i>IBS</i>	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>IDB</i>	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> . Edited by George A. Buttrick. 4 vols. New York: Abingdon, 1962.
<i>IDBSup</i>	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume</i> . Edited by Keith Crim. Nashville: Abingdon, 1976.
<i>IDS</i>	<i>In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> . Revised edition. Edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979–1988.
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JE</i>	<i>The Jewish Encyclopedia</i> . Edited by Isidore Singer. 12 vols. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1901–09.
<i>JES</i>	<i>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JMS	Johannine Monograph Series
<i>JSHJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSNTSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar)

KJV	King James Version
LB	<i>Linguistica Biblica</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
LTJ	<i>Lutheran Theological Journal</i>
LUT	Luther Bible (1984)
<i>Mnemosyne</i>	<i>Mnemosyne: A Journal of Classical Studies</i>
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
<i>MScRel</i>	<i>Mélanges de science religieuse</i>
MTZ	<i>Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
NA	Nestle-Aland. <i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> . Edited by Barbara and Kurt Aland and Carlo M. Martini. 27 <sup>th</sup> ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993; 28 <sup>th</sup> ed., 2012.
NAB	New American Bible
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NCB	New Century Bible
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NET	New English Translation
NIBCNT	New International Biblical Commentary on the New Testament
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIDB</i>	<i>The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> . Edited by Katharine Doob Sakenfeld. 5 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 2006–2009.
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NLB	Neue Luther Bible
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
<i>NPNF</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , Series 1
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NTA</i>	<i>New Testament Abstracts</i>
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTL	The New Testament Library
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar
<i>OTP</i>	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by James H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985
PG	Patrologia Graeca [= <i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus</i> : Series Graeca]. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1886.
PL	Patrologia Latina [= <i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus</i> : Series Latina]. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. 217 vols. Paris, 1844–1864.
<i>PMLAA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
<i>PRSt</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
PTMS	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series

RAC	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> . Edited by Theodor Klauser et al. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1950-
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RBL	<i>Review of Biblical Literature</i>
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
RE	<i>Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche</i>
RelSRev	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
ResQ	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
RevExp	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
RevistB	<i>Revista bíblica</i>
RevScRel	<i>Revue des sciences religieuses</i>
RHPR	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses</i>
RivB	<i>Rivista biblica italiana</i>
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
RSR	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RThom	<i>Revue thomiste</i>
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testaments
SBAB	Stuttgarter biblische Aufsatzbände
SBFLA	<i>Studii Biblici Franciscani Liber Annus</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLStBL	Society of Biblical Literature Studies in Biblical Literature
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SC	Sources Chrésiennes
Scr	<i>Scripture</i>
ScrB	<i>Scripture Bulletin</i>
SE I	<i>Studia Evangelica I, II</i> (= TU 73 [1959], 87 [1964])
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTSU	Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World
SP	Sacra Pagina
SPAW	<i>Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften</i>
SR	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
ST	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
StBibLit	Studies in Biblical Literature (Lang)
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
Str-B	Strack, Herman L., and Paul Billerbeck. <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Mishnah</i> . 6 vols. Munich: Beck, 1922–1961
SVTQ	<i>St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>
SymS	Symposium Series
TBei	<i>Theologische Beiträge</i>
TBT	<i>The Bible Today</i>

TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76.
TGI	<i>Theologie und Glaube</i>
Them	<i>Themelios</i>
Theo	<i>Theologika</i>
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
TJ	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TRu	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
UBSHS	United Bible Societies Handbook Series
VD	<i>Verbum Domini</i>
VerbEcc	<i>Verbum et ecclesia</i>
VetChrist	<i>Vetera Christianorum</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZRGG	<i>Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>
ZWT	<i>Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie</i>

### Ancient Sources

#### Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

Apoc. Adam	Apocalypse of Adam
2 Bar.	2 Baruch
1 En.	1 Enoch
2 En.	2 Enoch
Jos. Asen.	Joseph and Aseneth
Jub.	Jubilees
Let. Aris.	Letter of Aristeas
Mart. Ascen. Isa.	Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah
Pr. Jac.	Prayer of Jacob
Ps. Philo	Pseudo-Philo
Pss. Sol.	Psalms of Solomon
Sib. Or.	Sibylline Oracles
T. 12 Patr.	Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs
T. Asher	Testament of Asher

T. Gad	Testament of Gad
T. Jud.	Testament of Judah
T. Levi	Testament of Levi
T. Naph.	Testament of Naphtali
T. Reu.	Testament of Reuben
T. Ab.	Testament of Abraham
T. Adam	Testament of Adam
T. Job	Testament of Job
T. Sol.	Testament of Solomon

*Dead Sea Scrolls*

1QH	Hymn Scroll
1QM	War Scroll
1QpHab	Peshier Habakkuk
1QS	Manual of Discipline
1QSb	Manual of Discipline (appendix b)
3Q15	Copper Scroll
4Q252	Commentary on Genesis A
4Q385	Pseudo-Ezekiel
4Q521	On Resurrection
4QpIs <sup>a</sup>	Peshier Isaiah <sup>a</sup>
CD	Damascus Document

*Rabbinic Texts*

ARN	Avot de R. Nathan
b.	Babylonian Talmud
B. Bat.	Baba Batra
B. K.	See B. Qam.
B. M.	See B. Mes.
B. Mes.	Baba Metzi'a
B. Qam.	Baba Qamma
Ber.	Berakhot
Deut. Rab.	Deuteronomy Rabbah
Exod. R.	See Exod. Rab.
Exod. Rab.	Exodus Rabbah
Gen R.	See Gen. Rab.
Gen. Rab.	Genesis Rabbah
Ket.	See Ketub.
Ketub.	Ketubbot
Kidd.	See Qidd.
m.	Mishnah
Midr.	Midrash
Pes.	Pesahim
Pesiq. Rabb.	Pesiqta Rabbati
Qidd.	Qiddushin
R. Sh.	See Roš Haš.



Roš Haš.	Rosh Hasanah
Ruth R.	Ruth Rabbah
Šabb.	Shabbat
Sanh.	Sanhedrin
T.	Tosefta
Yeb.	See Yebam.
Yebam.	Yebamot

### *Apostolic Fathers*

Did.	Didache
Diogn.	Diognetus
Herm. Vis.	Shepherd of Hermas, Vision(s)
Ign. Eph.	Ignatius, <i>To the Ephesians</i>
Ign. Phld.	Ignatius, <i>To the Philadelphians</i>
Ign. Smyrn.	Ignatius, <i>To the Smyrneans</i>
Mart. Pol.	Martyrdom of Polycarp

### *Nag Hammadi Codices*

Dial. Sav.	Dialogue of the Savior
------------	------------------------

### *New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*

Ap. Jas.	Apocryphon of James
Gos. Heb.	Gospel of the Hebrews
Gos. Thom.	Gospel of Thomas

### *Papyri*

POxy1	Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1
POxy654	Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 654
POxy655	Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 655
P Oxy840	Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 840

### *Greek and Latin Works*

Augustine	
Serm.	<i>Sermons</i>
Tract. Ev. Jo.	<i>Tractates on the Gospel of John</i>
Aulus Gellius	
Noct. Att.	<i>Attic Nights</i>
Chariton	
Chaer.	<i>Chaereas and Callirhoe</i>
Chrysostom	
Hom. Jo.	<i>Homilies in John</i>

## Clement of Alexandria

*Ecl.*                 *Extracts from the Prophets*

*Paed.*               *Paedagogus*

## Cyril of Alexandria

*In Jo. lib.*         *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*

## Dionysius of Halicarnassus

*Ant. rom.*         *Roman Antiquities*

*Thuc.*              *On Thucydides*

## Eusebius

*Hist. eccl.*         *Ecclesiastical History*

## Homer

*Od.*                 *Odyssey*

## Irenaeus

*Haer.*               *Against Heresies*

## Josephus

*Ant.*                *Antiquities of the Jews*

## Justin

*Apol.*               *Apology*

*Dial.*               *Dialogue with Trypho*

## Lucian

*Ver. hist.*         *A True Story*

## Minucius Felix

*Oct.*                *Octavius*

## Origen

*Comm. Jo.*         *Commentary on the Gospel of John*

*Comm. Matt.*     *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*

*Hom. Jer.*         *Homilies on Jeremiah*

*Hom. Lev.*        *Homilies on Leviticus*

## Philo

*Agr.*                *On Agriculture*

*Cher.*               *On the Cherubim*

*Confusion*        *On the Confusion of Tongues*

*Leg.*                *Allegorical Interpretation*

*Mos.*                *On the Life of Moses*

*Plant.*             *On Planting*

*QE*                 *Questions and Answers on Exodus*

*QG*                 *Questions and Answers on Genesis*

*Sobriety*          *On Sobriety*

*Spec. Laws*      *On the Special Laws*

## Pindar

*Ol.*                 *Olympian Odes*

Plato	
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apology</i>
<i>Gorg.</i>	<i>Gorgias</i>
Pliny	
<i>Nat.</i>	<i>Natural History</i>
Plutarch	
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antonius</i>
<i>Mor.</i>	<i>Moralia</i>
Seneca	
<i>Nat.</i>	<i>Natural Questions</i>
Tertullian	
<i>An.</i>	<i>The Soul</i>
<i>Bapt.</i>	<i>On Baptism</i>
<i>Marc.</i>	<i>Against Marcion</i>
<i>Pud.</i>	<i>Modesty</i>
<i>Res.</i>	<i>The Resurrection of the Flesh</i>
Theodore of Mopsuestia	
<i>Com. Jo.</i>	<i>Commentary on John</i>
Xenophon	
<i>Cyr.</i>	<i>Cyropaedia</i>
<i>Mem.</i>	<i>Memorabilia</i>

## Acknowledgments

Gordon Kaufman claims, with good reason, that there are three things whose origin we cannot explain: the universe, life, and ideas.<sup>1</sup> While I have no scientific credentials, I can give first-hand, anecdotal testimony regarding the third of these mysteries. Ideas, our capacity for creativity, I believe, come in large measure from our interaction with others, and in this regard, I have been uncommonly blessed. The ideas I have published over the past forty-five years reflect the teaching, example, collaboration, and give and take of education, teaching, reading, and conversation throughout the course of my life. It would therefore be impossible to trace out every suggestion, encouragement, correction, and intellectual debt that has shaped the pages of this volume.

My parents both had a liberal arts education. My mother took courses in Bible and theology before women could enroll in a theological degree program at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where my father studied Greek with Hershey Davis shortly after A. T. Robertson's death. Later, he read the New Testament in Greek twelve times and worked through Robertson's "Big Grammar" three times, once taking each entry in the scripture index and looking up every reference, from Matthew through Revelation, while they were prisoners of war in the Philippines (1941–1945).<sup>2</sup> Eventually, he earned a Th.D. in Theology and continued to read his Greek New Testament for a few minutes every day. I have often wished he had been able to pass on his knowledge of Greek genetically!

As an undergraduate at Baylor University, I was introduced to biblical studies by Bob Patterson and Ray Summers. My theological training at Southern allowed me to waive introductory courses and concentrate in New Testament and Greek, including my first courses in the Gospel of John and the writings of Rudolf Bultmann (William E. Hull); Jewish and Hellenistic Backgrounds and Paul (Harold S. Songer); and 1 Corinthians, Revelation, and Textual Criticism (Frank Stagg). At Duke, the riches continued with seminars from Orval Wintermute, Roland Murphy, Eric Meyers, James Charlesworth, James Price, Franklin Young, W. D. Davies, and Moody Smith. Moody later nominated me for membership in SNTS, and remained a mentor and friend until his death. Friendships with

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon D. Kaufman, *In the Beginning ... Creativity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 76, 81.

<sup>2</sup> See R. Alan Culpepper, "Eternity as a Sunrise": *The Life of Hugo H. Culpepper* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2002).

fellow graduate students from that era, especially David Rhoads and Beverly Gaventa, have continued across the years.

For the first seventeen years of my teaching career, I was challenged by my colleagues in the weekly meetings of the New Testament department graduate colloquium. During this period, my colleagues included George Beasley-Murray, James Blevins, David Garland, Bill Hull, Peter Rhea Jones, Roger Omanson, Harold Songer, and Frank Staggs, with extended visits by Eduard Schweizer and endowed lectures by many of the luminaries in New Testament scholarship. I owe my cadre of graduate students during those years and at Baylor a special tribute. At Baylor my work was enriched especially by Mikeal Parsons and Naymond Keathley, and at the McAfee School of Theology by Paul Duke, Peter Rhea Jones, and Tom Slater.

The Society of Biblical Literature and the Society for New Testament Studies broadened my perspectives and introduced me to circles of scholarship that have continued to stimulate new ideas, diverse perspectives, and opportunities for international travel, study, and collaboration. The Literary Aspects of the Gospels and Acts Group, and extended conversations with David Rhoads and Frank Kermode, introduced me to narrative criticism. Friendships formed in the international “Johanneische Schule” enriched both scholarship and life. The Johannine Seminar of the SNTS and the Johannine Literature and the John, Jesus, and History sections of the SBL provided venues for stimulating conversations. My indebtedness to senior colleagues, especially Raymond E. Brown, J. Louis Martyn, and to friends, especially Paul Anderson, Clifton Black, Gene Boring, Bob Kysar, Frank Moloney, Gail O’Day, John Painter, Fernando Segovia, Jan van der Watt, and Urban von Wahlde, is amply documented in the footnotes of these essays, but my gratitude for their friendship defies expression. The invitation to participate in the Christian Leaders Initiative sponsored by the American Jewish Committee and the Shalom Hartman Institute opened a range of new perspectives, friendships, and opportunities for collaboration, for which I am especially grateful to Noam Marans, Donniel Hartman, Noam Zion, and Peter Pettit. Since its first biennial meeting in 2013, the Colloquium Ioanneum has provided sustained discussions with leading Johannine scholars from around the world, and the Colloquium was the original the venue for some of the more recent essays in this volume. To each I express my gratitude and appreciation for vigorous discussion, encouragement, and genuine friendship: Jörg Frey, Christos Karakolis, Craig Koester, Bill Loader, George Parsenios, Adele Reinhartz, Udo Schnelle, Michael Theobald, Marianne Thompson, François Tolmie, Jan van der Watt, Catrin Williams, Ruben Zimmermann, and Jean Zumstein.

Special thanks go to Jörg Frey, Elena Müller, and Tobias Stäbler for the invitation to collect and publish these essays in the WUNT series and for their guidance and wise counsel in the process. The libraries at the Southern Baptist

Theological Seminary, Baylor University, Mercer University, and the Pitts Theological Library at Emory University have all provided wonderful assistance, without which I would not have had access to essential research material.

None of this would have been possible, of course, without the love and support of my wife, Jacque, who supported me while I was a student and typed my dissertation and countless other manuscripts, including keying in again some of the essays in this volume that we produced before our first computer. Jacque typed dissertations and checked dissertations for form and style at Southern. She taught at every level from middle school through the graduate school in Education and completed the Ph.D. in Education at the University of Georgia. She cared for our children and later our parents while I worked, endured my travel to conferences, and shared the stresses of my years in academic administration. The list could go on, but in the end words do not suffice, and it is her love, enriched through over a half a century of shared life, that I celebrate most.

R. Alan Culpepper  
December 2020

Hartwell, Georgia



## List of First Publications

We gratefully acknowledge the permission to reprint previously published material in this volume. The following include the sources of that permission.

1. "Pursuing the Elusive." Pages 109–21 in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies*. Edited by Tom Thatcher. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007. Revised from the original publication.
2. "John: Life Setting, Narrative Style, and Basic Themes." Originally published as: "John." Pages 203–28 in *The Books of the Bible, vol. 2: The Apocrypha and the New Testament*. Edited by Bernhard W. Anderson. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1989.
3. "Inclusivism and Exclusivism in the Fourth Gospel." Pages 85–108 in *Word, Theology and Community in John*. Edited by John Painter, R. Alan Culpepper, and Fernando F. Segovia. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2002.
4. "The Gospel of John as a Threat to Jewish-Christian Relations." Pages 21–43 in *Overcoming Fear between Jews and Christians*, ed. James H. Charlesworth. New York: Crossroad, 1993.
5. "Anti-Judaism in the Fourth Gospel as a Problem for Christian Interpreters." Pages 68–91 in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel: Papers of the Leuven Colloquium, 2000*. Edited by R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt, and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville. Assen, The Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 2001.
6. "Jesus Sayings in the Johannine Discourses: A Proposal." Pages 353–82 in *Jesus, John, and History: Aspects of Historicity*, vol. 3. Edited by Paul Anderson. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2016.
7. "Matthew and John: Reflections of Early Christianity in Relation to Judaism." Pages 189–219 in *John and Judaism: A Contested Relationship in Context*. Edited by R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson. RBS 87. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017.
8. "The Relationship between the Gospel of John and 1 John." Pages 95–119 in *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*.



- Edited by R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2014.
9. "The Plot of John's Story of Jesus." Pages 188–99 in *Gospel Interpretation: Narrative-Critical & Social-Scientific Approaches*. Edited by Jack Dean Kingsbury. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997. Rpt. of: *Interpretation* 49 (1995): 347–58.
  10. "Cognition in John: The Johannine Signs as Recognition Scenes." *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 35, 3 (2008): 251–60.
  11. "The Weave of the Tapestry: Character and Theme in John." Pages 18–35 in *Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John*. Edited by Christopher W. Skinner. LNTS 461. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
  12. "Nicodemus: The Travail of New Birth." Pages 249–59 in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel*. Edited by Steven A. Hunt, D. François Tolmie, and Ruben Zimmermann. WUNT 314. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013.
  13. "Reading Johannine Irony." Pages 193–207 in *Exploring the Gospel of John*. Edited by R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996.
  14. "The Pivot of John's Prologue." *New Testament Studies* 27 (1980): 1–31.
  15. "The Prologue as Theological Prolegomenon to the Gospel of John." Pages 3–26 in *The Prologue of the Gospel of John: Literary, Theological, and Philosophical Contexts. Papers Read at the Colloquium Ioanneum 2013*. Edited by Jan G. van der Watt, R. Alan Culpepper, and Udo Schnelle. WUNT 359. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016.
  16. "Creation Ethics of the Gospel of John." Pages 67–90 in *Johannine Ethics: The Moral World of the Gospel and Epistles of John*. Edited by Sherri Brown and Christopher W. Skinner. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017.
  17. "John 2:20, 'Forty-Six Years': Revisiting J.A. T. Robinson's Chronology of Jesus' Ministry." Pages 142–54 in *Jesus Research: The Gospel of John in Historical Inquiry*. Edited by James H. Charlesworth and Jolyon G. R. Pruzinski. London: T&T Clark, 2019.
  18. "John 4:35–38: Harvest Proverbs in the Context of John's Mission Theology." Pages 199–218 in *Expressions of the Johannine Kerygma in John 2:23–5:18*. Edited by R. Alan Culpepper and Jörg Frey. WUNT 423. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019.
  19. "John 5:1–18: A Sample of Narrative-Critical Commentary." Pages 193–207 in *The Gospel of John as Literature*. Edited by Mark W. G. Stibbe. NTTS 17.

- Leiden: Brill, 1993. Originally published in French: “Un exemple de commentaire fondé sur la critique narrative: Jean 5,1–18.” Pages 135–51 in *La communauté johannique et son histoire*. Edited by J.-D. Kaestli, J.-M. Poffet, and J. Zumstein. Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1990.
20. “John 10:1–18: The Ethics of the Shepherd.” Pages 139–62 in *Biblical Ethics and Application*. Edited by Ruben Zimmermann and Stephan Joubert. WUNT 384. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017.
  21. “Quotation as Commentary: The Good News of a King on a Donkey (John 12:12–15).” Pages 139–54 in *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels, Volume 4: The Gospel of John*. Edited by Thomas Hatina. LNTS 613. London: T&T Clark, 2020.
  22. “The Johannine *hypodeigma*: A Reading of John 13.” *Semeia* 53 (1991): 133–52.
  23. “The Quest for the Church in the Gospel of John.” *Int* 63 (2009): 341–54.
  24. “Symbolism and History in John’s Account of Jesus’ Death.” Pages 39–54 in *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism: The Past, Present and Futures of the Fourth Gospel as Literature*. Edited by Tom Thatcher and Stephen D. Moore. RBS 55. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008.
  25. “Designs for the Church in the Johannine Passion Narrative: John 19:16b–30.” Originally published as “The Theology of the Johannine Passion Narrative: John 19:16b–30.” *Neotestamentica* 31, 1 (1997): 21–37.
  26. “Designs for the Church in John 20,19–23.” Pages 501–18 in *Studies in the Gospel of John and Its Christology: Festschrift Gilbert van Belle*. Edited by Joseph Verheyden et al. BETL 265. Leuven: Peeters, 2014.
  27. “Designs for the Church in the Imagery of John 21:1–14.” Pages 369–402 in *Imagery in the Gospel of John: Terms, Forms, Themes and Theology of Figurative Language*. Edited by Jörg Frey, Jan G. van der Watt, and Ruben Zimmermann. WUNT 200. Tübingen: Mohr, 2006.
  28. “Why the Great Catch of Fish? Ecclesial Imagery in John 21.” Forthcoming, Mohr Siebeck
  29. “Peter as Exemplary Disciple in John 21:15–19.” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 37 (2010): 165–78.
  30. “John 21:24–25: The Johannine *Sphragis*.” Pages 349–64 in *John, Jesus, and History: Aspects of Historicity*, vol. 2. Edited by Paul Anderson. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2009.

31. "The Problem of Evil in the Gospel of John." Pages 59–72 in *Interpretation and the Claims of the Text: Resourcing New Testament Theology*. Edited by Jason A. Whitlark et al. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014.
32. "Realized Eschatology in the Experience of the Johannine Community." Pages 253–76 in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*. Edited by Craig R. Koester and Reimund Bieringer. WUNT 222. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.
33. "Jesus the Judge (John 5:21–30): The Theme of Judgment in the Gospel of John." Pages 59–86 in *Signs and Discourses in John 5 and 6: Historical, Literary, and Theological Readings from the Colloquium Ioanneum 2019 in Eisenach*. Edited by Jörg Frey and Craig R. Koester. WUNT 463 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021).
34. "Afterword." Published in Italian: "Postfazione dell'Autore all'edizione italiana." Pages 327–35 in *Anatomia del Quarto Vangelo: Studio di critica narrativa*. Translated into Italian by Eugenia Cafferata. Milan: Editione Glossa, 2016.

Part I

## Introduction



# 1. Pursuing of the Elusive: Reflections on Five Decades of Interpreting the Gospel of John<sup>1</sup>

One morning, while I was writing this essay for its original publication, I ran several miles of the Longleaf Trace outside of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, a beautiful asphalt path through the woods of southern Mississippi. The path is straight and flat, mileage is noted every half a mile, rest stations at regular intervals offer restrooms and water, and various species of trees are labeled along the way. It is a beautiful place for runners, walkers, and cyclists. In contrast, the path of my experience in studying the Gospel of John has been marked by sharp turns, surprising new vistas, and constant uncertainty about what I was seeing. In short, studying John has been an expedition into still uncertain territory rather than a jog over a measured course.

The trek started in my first semester of Master of Divinity studies (1967), when I took an elective on John from William E. Hull and read the first volume of Raymond E. Brown's commentary. The cocktail of an engaging professor delivering beautifully prepared lectures, a masterful commentary surveying Johannine scholarship and astutely engaging John's setting, literary artistry, and theology, and the intriguing challenges of this "spiritual" (Clement of Alexandria), "maverick" (Robert Kysar) gospel proved to be irresistibly seductive. I began a lifelong love affair with the Fourth Gospel, which continued with graduate seminars on John from Hull, James Price, and Moody Smith and a dissertation on John.

## 1. *The 1970s: Laying a Foundation*

Early on, I decided that I might never write a full-scale commentary on John (after Bultmann, Barrett, Brown, and Schnackenburg, another commentary on John hardly seemed to be needed – though many fine commentaries on John

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this essay were first published as "Pursuing the Elusive," in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies*, ed. Tom Thatcher (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 109–21. © 2007. Reprinted by permission of the publisher; all rights reserved. The essay has been revised extensively to serve as an introduction for this volume.

have been published over the last forty years). Instead, I would work on various topics in Johannine studies. As a graduate student at Duke University working with Moody Smith, W.D. Davies, and James H. Charlesworth and taking a minor in Classics, the natural place to start was with John's background.

I was intrigued with the historical setting of the Gospel, recent work by J. Louis Martyn<sup>2</sup> and Wayne Meeks,<sup>3</sup> and scattered allusions to "the Johannine school" in the literature on John, the Epistles, and Revelation. I discovered that the term had a long history in the debates over the authorship of the Gospel, and that it had served as a mediating position between defenders of apostolic authorship and critics who maintained that the Gospel was written at a later date, and not by the apostle John. Years later, I discovered that the term can be traced to David Friedrich Strauss: The Fourth Evangelist was "a venerator of John, issuing perhaps from one of his schools."<sup>4</sup> The Gospel, he maintained, was written not by John but by someone in his circle.

The theory of a Johannine school also explained the similarities and differences among the five New Testament writings attributed to the Apostle. The similarities in language, style, and thought among the Gospel, Epistles, and Apocalypse can be explained by their common ties to the Johannine school, although the similarities between the Apocalypse and the other writings are not as strong as the similarities shared by the Gospel and Epistles. The differences can be accounted for on the basis of different authors and editors who contributed to the composition of these various documents.

It was a useful and plausible theory, but can the internal probabilities be supported by the external evidence of comparative studies of schools in antiquity? My supervisory committee gave me more than enough rope to hang myself, and I launched into a study of the Pythagorean school (Pythagoras), the Academy (Plato), the Lyceum (Aristotle), the Garden (Epicurus), the Stoa (Zeno), Qumran (the Teacher of Righteousness), the school of Hillel, the school of Philo, and the "school" of Jesus, trying to understand the role and common characteristics of these diverse, ancient school traditions. Nine features common to these ancient schools emerged:

- (1) they were groups of disciples which usually emphasized *φιλία* and *κοινωνία*;
- (2) they gathered around and traced their origins to a founder whom they regarded as an exemplary wise, or good man;
- (3) they valued the teachings of their founder and the traditions about him;
- (4) members of the schools were disciples or students of the founder;

<sup>2</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

<sup>3</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *JBL* 91 (1972): 44–72.

<sup>4</sup> David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson and trans. George Eliot, Lives of Jesus Series (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 330.

- (5) teaching, learning, studying, and writing were common activities;
- (6) most schools observed communal meals, often in memory of their founders;
- (7) they had rules or practices regarding admission, retention of membership, and advancement within the membership;
- (8) they often maintained some degree of distance or withdrawal from the rest of society; and
- (9) they developed organizational means of insuring their perpetuity.<sup>5</sup>

Not all these characteristics are exclusive to schools, but these schools shared a commitment to carry forward the work, teaching, or traditions of their founders. Within the Johannine tradition, it seemed possible to distinguish the influence of the founder, referred to by the community as the Beloved Disciple, the early history of the community that separated from the synagogue, and the later history of the community when its debate turned inward – concerned with keeping the traditions, ethics, and organization – in the three letters written by the Elder.

In retrospect, the dissertation would have been stronger if it had been organized around issues rather than schools and examined the roles of the founders, boundary issues, the rhetoric of inter- and intra-school debates, initiation rituals, meals and community life, and the production of written materials and their uses, but at the time I had to bite off one piece at a time and did not know enough to take this more synthetic approach. The dissertation would also have been stronger if it had investigated the legacy and record of the Johannine school in the second century in more depth – a topic to which I returned later. Nevertheless, the theory of a Johannine school still seems to me to be the best explanation for the origin of the Johannine writings. It was indeed, as Brown said, the “community of the Beloved Disciple,”<sup>6</sup> but at the core of this community there was a group of associates who preserved and extended his teachings, guided a network of related churches, taught, preached, debated, and committed their tradition to writing – the Johannine school.

Course preparation, teaching, committee work, speaking in churches, and young children left little time for writing between 1975 and 1980. “The Pivot of John’s Prologue” (ch. 14 in this volume) was a transitional piece, dabbling in literary structure but still concerned with the Johannine community. It argued for a chiasmic structure that turned on the phrase “he gave them authority to become the children of God” (John 1:12b), which I took to be an important authorization and self-identification for the Johannine community. The latter part of the essay traces the significance of the concept of “children of God” in Jewish literature, the Pauline epistles, and in the Johannine writings.

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<sup>5</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, *The Johannine School*, SBLDS 26 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975), 258–59.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist, 1979).



## 2. The 1980s: The Turn toward Narrative Criticism

Two forces shaped my plans for a sabbatical project for 1980–81. Raymond E. Brown's *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (1979) constructed the history of the Johannine community in such detail that it blocked, at least for the moment, any further work along this line. One could only respond to Brown and suggest alternative interpretations – for example regarding the role of the Samaritans, the entry of a Prophet-like-Moses Christology into the community, attributing the departure from the synagogue to the community's Christology, and Brown's argument for placing the Johannine tradition in the mainstream of the early Christianity. A second factor opened a new line of inquiry. The Parables Group, the Mark Group, and the new Literary Aspects of the Gospels and Acts Group of the SBL were beginning to engage the work of secular literary criticism and bring a new arsenal of concepts and perspectives to bear on the interpretation of the gospels. Johannine scholarship had lagged behind the Synoptics in the development of source, form, and redaction criticism, so it seemed to be an opportunity to “catch the wave” of a new approach to gospel studies and examine the Gospel of John as a coherent literary composition before returning to questions of its sources, composition history, and community setting.

Frank Kermode of King's College, Cambridge, guided my research and read an early draft of *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*.<sup>7</sup> My objective was to explore the narrative texture of the Gospel of John, the functions of its literary elements, and their effects on the reader. Wayne Booth,<sup>8</sup> Seymour Chatman,<sup>9</sup> Gérard Genette,<sup>10</sup> and Wolfgang Iser<sup>11</sup> were my primary guides to literary theory. Successive chapters explored the role of the narrator, including the narrator's point of view, the sequencing of exposition, the relationship between telling and showing, and the crafting of authority and verisimilitude; the Gospel's handling of narrative time (duration, order, and repetition); the basic elements of John's plot (the conflict between the responses of belief and unbelief, and its episodic character); John's characters and their function as representations of various responses to Jesus; John's use of implicit commentary through its misunderstandings, irony, and symbolism; and the construction of John's implied reader.

<sup>7</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

<sup>8</sup> Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

<sup>9</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978).

<sup>10</sup> Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980).

<sup>11</sup> Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).

*Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* continues to receive both praise and criticism.<sup>12</sup> Some reflections at this distance are in order.<sup>13</sup> First, the work was exploratory and experimental. There were no guides to follow. It was an intellectual exercise in suspending the historical issues long enough to raise questions about the literary design of the Gospel. My aim was never to replace historical criticism – only to open a new line of study, which David Rhoads, I, and other members of the Literary Aspects of the Gospels Group began calling “narrative criticism” to distinguish it from older forms of “literary criticism.” As the preface indicates, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* explores how the author(s) constructed various elements of the narrative, whether they recognized those elements as such or not. The modern critic can be aided in understanding the “anatomy” of a text by analyzing elements that are inherent in every narrative text (as well as those peculiar to John) without assuming the author(s) were aware of these patterns. While it would be anachronistic to retroject modern narrative theory onto an ancient author, it is not anachronistic to use modern concepts in the analysis of the elements of an ancient narrative.

In *The Print's First Kiss*, Jeffrey Staley builds on *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* but also criticizes it at points, especially for not maintaining a clear distinction between the narrator and the implied author.<sup>14</sup> Others charged that *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* betrays an underlying historical interest when it argues that the way in which the Gospel constructs the implied reader can be used to shed light on its intended or first readers. In retrospect, I should have argued the point more carefully. The implied reader is a literary construct that may or may not resemble the intended or actual first readers. Modern fiction can con-

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen D. Moore, *Poststructuralism and the New Testament: Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 80, is critical of *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* for reading the Gospel as a narrative unity: “in its preoccupation with narrative coherence ... current literary criticism of the Gospels shows itself to be trapped in a hall of mirrors.” D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1991), 63, is concerned about the implications of narrative criticism for the truth claims of the Gospel and therefore questions “the unqualified transfer of categories developed in the poetics of the *novel* to Gospel literature.” Mark W. G. Stibbe, *John* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 10, is excessively positive: “Recent research on the Fourth Gospel has, in a sense, been footnotes to Culpepper.” Surprisingly, David Bartlett, “Interpreting and Preaching the Gospel of John,” *Int* 60 (2006): 58, misses the importance of close literary analysis for preaching: “Culpepper and Staley imagine an implied reader who looks a good deal like an undergraduate literature major, sitting before the text, pen and paper in hand, taking notes on the intricate interweaving of the symbolic structures and the ironic recapitulations in *Madame Bovary*. It is an interesting and often illuminating exercise, but it is not clear just how it relates to the question of how the text might evoke faith, either in the first century or the twenty-first.”

<sup>13</sup> For a more complete response to criticisms of *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* raised by Stephen Moore, Don Carson, and Martin de Boer see R. Alan Culpepper, “Vingt ans d’analyse narrative des évangiles: Nouvelles perspectives et problèmes en suspens,” in *La Bible en récits*, ed. Daniel Marguerat (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2003), 73–93.

<sup>14</sup> Jeffrey Staley, *The Print's First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel*, SBLDS 82 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), esp. 11–15.

struct an implied reader that forces the actual reader to play a role or adopt an assumed persona, but that is not the case with the Gospel of John. It is a fair assumption that the actual author(s) wrote for intended, actual readers, and that the implied reader fits the profile of the intended reader as closely as the author(s) could. The narrative asides may also provide evidence of adaptation of the Gospel for a wider circle of readers. The narrative critic need not make inferences about the actual first readers, but for those interested in the historical setting of the Gospel narrative criticism may offer additional data that can supplement or corroborate historical research. In the flush of excitement over the development of narrative criticism of the gospels and questioning the “assured results” of historical criticism, some narrative critics viewed any engagement with historical investigation as a return to the assumption that only that which is grounded in history is valid, or that only historical studies really matter. While striving to make a place for narrative criticism and its concern with the literary design and dynamics of the gospels,<sup>15</sup> I have never thought that the gospels can be understood apart from study of the historical and social context in which they were written. Such historical study can no longer be viewed as the sole concern of gospel studies, but it is indispensable. Historical criticism and narrative criticism raise different questions. In pursuit of answers to the questions each raises, the interpreter will use different methods, but the two need not be mutually exclusive and indeed may be complementary. The modern critic can infer from the implied author’s assumptions about what the actual reader would know or not know, or how the reader would respond to various characters, ironies, or symbols insights that can be correlated with the proposals advanced by interpreters concerned with understanding the history of the Johannine community. In the quest to understand the Gospel of John there is no place for methodological exclusivism.<sup>16</sup>

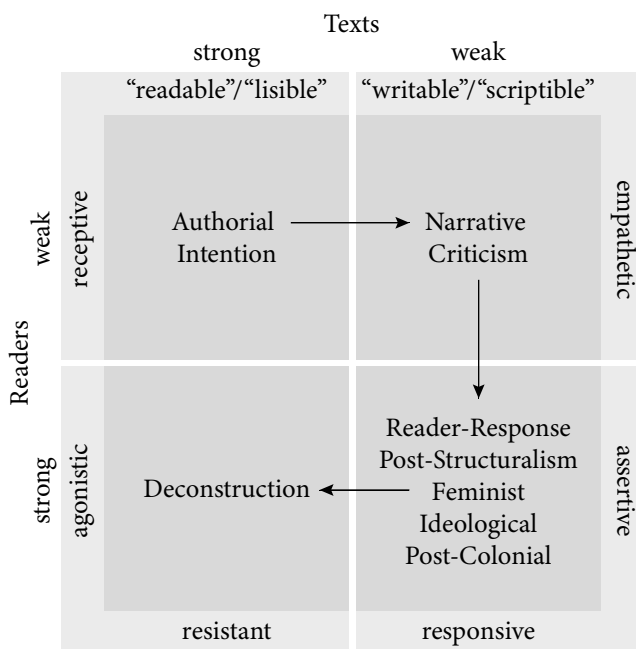
The field of gospel studies was moving rapidly in the 1980s.<sup>17</sup> Before the theory, methods, and potential of narrative criticism could be explored fully, new perspectives from reader-response criticism, ideological criticism, post-structuralism, and post-colonial criticism were being advanced. The sheer proliferation of perspectives was both energizing and debilitating. I have attempted to make some sense of the field and its assumptions regarding the nature of the text

<sup>15</sup> Especially in R. Alan Culpepper, “Story and History in the Gospels,” *RevExp* 81 (1984): 467–78.

<sup>16</sup> See for example Patrick Chatelion Counet, “No Anti-Judaism in the Fourth Gospel: A Deconstruction of Readings of John 8,” in *One Text, A Thousand Methods: Studies in Memory of Sjef van Tilborg*, ed. Patrick Chatelion Counet and Ulrich Berges, *BibInt* 71 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 198: “Even R. A. Culpepper, the godfather of the Johannine narratology, loses his religion by ignoring the narrative through a strict theological solution of the problem.”

<sup>17</sup> See Stephen D. Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); and Fernando F. Segovia, ed., “What is John?": *Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, *SymS* 3 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996).

and the role of the reader with a grid or logical square.<sup>18</sup> By arranging literary theories along the axes of text and reader, strong and weak, adapting Roland Barthes' analysis of texts as "lisible" or "scriptible" – "readable" or "writable,"<sup>19</sup> one can begin to understand the relationships among contemporary theories more clearly. As one moves clockwise, beginning in the top left quadrant, the text moves from being open and clear to requiring constructive response from the reader, to once again being dominant but now resisting interpretation. Correspondingly, the reader may be receptive, empathetic, assertive, or agonistic. Read the square, starting at the top-left quadrant. If the text is strong (and lucid) and the reader is weak, the text transmits the author's intended meaning, and the reader receives or discerns the meaning the text was intended to convey. The text is "readable" and "author-itative." This position has been defended by E. D. Hirsch.<sup>20</sup> One typically assumes this is the case with discursive texts such as articles, lectures, or letters, but in narrative texts the writer's voice is more remote and mediated by the role of the narrator. Narrative texts therefore require the reader to construct meaning from the narrative features of the text.



<sup>18</sup> The following paragraphs are abbreviated from Culpepper, "Vingt ans d'analyse narrative des évangiles."

<sup>19</sup> Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 4.

<sup>20</sup> E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); idem, *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

Moving across the square, we find the place of narrative criticism, which I would contend views both the text and the reader as weak. The text is “writable” in the sense that its complexity, openness, and ambiguities require the reader to construct the sense and subtleties of the narrative from the way it employs the various features of a narrative. Narrative criticism therefore requires an empathetic reader, one who can follow the lead of the narrative voice and discern the functions of the other narrative entities (setting, character, plot, imagery, irony, etc.). The fact that narrative criticism views both the text and the reader as “weak” does not mean that the method itself is weak or deficient. It means, rather, that for narrative criticism the interpretive process is less confrontational than in methods where both text and reader are strong, and less one-sided than in approaches where either the text or the reader dominates.

The difference between narrative criticism and reader response criticism is one of degree: the role of the reader moves from empathetic to assertive, while the text is still understood to be responsive, if at times more opaque or resistant. The reader therefore takes a more dominant role in the interpretive process. In this quadrant we may also place post-structuralism, feminist, ideological, and post-colonial readings, though with these methods the reader becomes even more assertive.<sup>21</sup> The reader must struggle to construct meaning from a hostile or offensive text. Because the text strives to impose an untenable ideology, reading requires that the reader aggressively block the text, subvert its ideology, and expose the ideology of conventional readings.

The final quadrant contains contemporary methods that view interpretation as the confrontation of a resistant text and an agonistic reader. In this quadrant, I have placed deconstruction. Deconstructive criticism highlights the gaps and openness of literary texts that are filled by the reader in various ways as the reader strives to impose coherence on texts that resist and defy coherent interpretations. Reading is therefore understood as struggle with a text in which the text never succumbs to the efforts of the reader but maintains its enigmas intact.<sup>22</sup>

Although the critical options for approaching the text have proliferated, the work of narrative criticism has continued, both in the United States and elsewhere. At the risk of overlooking notable contributions, one may cite the fol-

<sup>21</sup> Letty M. Russell, ed., *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985); Janice Capel Anderson, “Mapping Feminist Biblical Criticism: The American Scene, 1983–1990,” *CRBR* 1991: 21–44; Renita J. Weems, *Just a Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women’s Relationships in the Bible* (San Diego: Luramedia, 1988); Stephen D. Moore, “Are There Impurities in the Living Water that the Johannine Jesus Dispenses? Deconstruction, Feminism, and the Samaritan Woman,” *BibInt* 1 (1993): 208–27; Jeffrey Staley, *Reading with a Passion: Rhetoric, Autobiography, and the American West in the Gospel of John* (New York: Continuum, 1995); Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger, “How Can This Be? (John 3:9): A Feminist-Theological Re-Reading of the Gospel of John,” in *What is John? Vol. 2: Literary and Social Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia, *SymS* 7 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 19–42; Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> E. g., Moore, *Poststructuralism and the New Testament*.

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