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FINDING PAUL IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL: JOHN 8 AND THE RECEPTION OF
THE APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School, Marquette University,
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT
FINDING PAUL IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL: JOHN 8 AND THE RECEPTION OF
THE APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES

Jason D. Hitchcock, B.A., M.A.

Marquette University, 2022

The earliest extant Christian texts are not narratives of the life of Jesus but occasion-specific letters of Paul. Whether formed through Paul's own habit of retaining copies or by the collection efforts of early followers, a *corpus Paulinum* circulated with remarkable speed and guided the development of a Christian literary tradition.

Rudolf Bultmann convinced a generation of commentators that despite a remarkably similar theology, the Gospel of John has no literary connection to Paul's writings. This claim bolstered the Fourth Gospel's renown as a purportedly independent witness to local Christian tradition. But recent NT scholars have shown a *Tendenz* to argue for Pauline influence on texts whose authors were previously not deemed directly dependent on Paul, e.g., Matthew, Hebrews, James. In consequence of this, John's possible debt to Paul—a theory common during the first half of the twentieth century—is an idea in need of revival.

Inconsistent criteria have hindered previous efforts to assess whether one text depends literarily on another, but new tools provide more evidence than ever before. Electronic databases of ancient Greek documents allow the researcher to trace the occurrence of words and phrases over time. Since the emergence of these tools it has become possible to distinguish between major and minor, significant and insignificant, instances of literary convergence.

I argue that John 8:31–59 shows the author's engagement with Paul's letters. I contend that a dense combination of significant literary and conceptual parallels to Romans and Galatians demonstrates that a climactic argument between Jesus and “the Jews” recasts in narrative form Paul's discussions of Abraham, sonship, slavery, and sin. The same passage shows conspicuous agreements with aspects of Pauline soteriology, ethics, and salvation history.

With special attention to John 8:31–59, I have sought in this study to validate the impulse of Christians down the ages who have read Paul and John as in agreement, and I posit a historical explanation for their many shared ideas. Similarities between Paul and John are the product not only of shared tradition but of a direct line of literary influence. In other words, Paul has a literary presence in John 8.

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Jason D. Hitchcock, B.A., M.A.

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INTRODUCTION

DOES JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN KNOW PAUL THE THEOLOGIAN?

It is likely indeed that, in the case of the words we are now examining, the Jews said, “Abraham died, and the prophets” [John 8:52], after they had learned how [μεμαθηκότες τίνα τρόπον] “through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death passed to all men because all have sinned” [Rom 5:12], and had seen in addition that “death reigned over those who sinned in the likeness of Adam’s transgression” [Rom 5:14]. Their response was about the death that results from sin, which passed to all men because all have sinned. But although they had learned about these matters, inasmuch as they did not accept Jesus’ words, they did not know what comes next [τὰ ἐξῆς . . . οὐκ ᾔδεισαν], nor that “the gift is not as the offence” [Rom 5:15].

Origen (trans. Heine)

Commentators ancient and modern have long identified verbal similarities between Pauline and Johannine literature. In his commentary on John, Origen exemplifies the way early interpreters commonly explain something in the Fourth Gospel via Paul.¹ He remarks that Jesus’s questioners in 8:53 object because they know the content of Rom 5:12–14.² On the other hand, these same opponents fall short of understanding what is in Rom 5:15–17.³ Thus Origen takes a Pauline text as supportive

¹ Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 20.42.388–92 (critical text in E. Preuschen, ed., *Origenes Werke: Der Johanneskommentar*, vol. 4 of GCS 10 [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1903], 384): ET in Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John Books 13–32*, trans. Ronald E. Heine, FC 89 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 285–86.

² Origen does not specify how they would have heard this. Does he think that Jesus told them, as if Jesus preached from Rom 5? Perhaps he regards Rom 5:12–14 as containing widely-known pillars of late Second Temple Jewish faith: (1) death results from Adam’s sin; (2) sin and death spread to all humans; (3) Adam’s sin is typological. On this reading, Paul’s original contribution begins at Rom 5:15.

³ Origen considers most “misunderstandings” of Jesus in John to be superficial. Here, “the Jews” actually know the truth of Rom 5:12–14 and the spiritual death that results from sin; sin has reigned over humanity since Adam. Origen takes their disbelief of Christ’s words as tantamount to ignorance of the “next things (τὰ ἐξῆς)” in Rom 5:15–

of Jesus's preaching in the Fourth Gospel, and by rejecting Jesus's words "the Jews" display their ignorance of Paul's gospel as well.

The invocation of Paul to explain a feature of John is not unusual among Christian interpreters. In the NT canon the letters ascribed to Paul, when taken together with the Gospel and letters of John, account for a combined one-third of total verses. In antiquity, readers receiving the NT as Scripture see common language as reflecting the speech of the divine author. If Scripture is the product of a single author—God—the Johannine Jesus can invoke teachings of Paul, just as Origen allows Paul to interpret John.

But a historical explanation for the linguistic similarities between Paul and John is not commonly sought in Johannine scholarship. Without question, commentators are invested in discovering John's sources, yet I know of no recent Johannine commentary that sets out parallels to Paul as a major introductory issue, even while countless citations of Pauline texts are scattered in the footnotes. On the other hand, the Fourth Gospel's relation to the Synoptics is discussed extensively in the literature. So, for example, D. Moody Smith's monograph on the topic has even a second edition.⁴

17, which he proceeds to quote. He gives six short quotations from Rom 5:12–17 in quick succession.

⁴ That the relation between John and the Synoptics has received more attention is seen by the diversity of views represented by Smith (*John among the Gospels*, 2nd ed. [1992; Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001]); Richard Bauckham ("John for Readers of Mark," in *The Gospel for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, ed. idem [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 147–71); and Martin Hengel (*The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Collection and Origin of the Canonical Gospels* [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000]). Smith defends the independence of John's Gospel; Bauckham argues that John writes to readers of Mark; Hengel sees John as offering corrections to the Synoptic accounts. They define "gospel" in different ways, e.g., whether Mark was the first or whether Mark was a recipient of the literary tradition; further in Smith, *John*, 240 n. 65. The modern debate concerning John's independence from or dependence on the Synoptics—or some combination of the two—goes all the way back to Percival Gardner-Smith (1938).

In this study I will argue that nothing stands in the way of considering Pauline epistles as potential literary sources for John. This supposition was once common, but Johannine scholarship has now moved on to other matters.⁵ My task is therefore to describe what has happened, why the issue fell out of favor, and what interest I have in bringing it up again. Christians instinctively read and hear John to be in agreement with Paul. Paul and John's literary relationship, I shall argue, supplies historical justification to support this instinct.

John's Relation to Paul according to Recent Scholarship

Over the past century, there have been many efforts to compare the Pauline and Johannine writings, but the past 50 years of research have been conducted with two guiding assumptions: (1) that the Gospel of John has no literary relationship to the *corpus Paulinum*; and (2) that such a relationship would be impossible to demonstrate with any degree of certitude. The history of this discussion can be organized into three eras: the early twentieth century; the period of Rudolf Bultmann's influence; and the revival of tradition-historical comparisons since the 1980s.

⁵ According to the historical review of Wally V. Cirafesi ("The Johannine Community Hypothesis (1969–Present): Past and Present Approaches and a New Way Forward," *CurBR* 12 [2014]: 173–93, esp. 189), the last 50 years witness the emergence of more "model-driven" rather than "data-driven" approaches to John. Sociological theories have come to predominate.

Early Twentieth Century

At the start of the twentieth century, two competing explanations accounted for convergences between Paul and John. Proponents of the first solution, found especially in German universities, regarded John as a flawed imitator of Christianity's original genius, Paul. As Paul Wernle wrote, "In St. Paul's letters we look, as through a window, into the factory where these great thoughts flash forth and are developed; in St. John we see the beginning of their transformation and decay."⁶ Alternatively, more conservative scholars in Great Britain leaned on the traditional ascription of apostolic authorship to insist, with William Sanday, that "the confession of Jesus as Christ, the Son of God, was common ground for all Christians."⁷ As a consequence of this supposed common ground, conservatives avoided drawing a straight line of influence from Paul to John, arguing instead that these two early Christian writers accessed a common stock of tradition. This conservative impulse to regard John as an independent witness has never disappeared.

The commentary of E. F. Scott stands out as marking a milestone in the early twentieth century for straddling the divide between liberal and conservative positions.⁸ Scott was the first major British scholar to regard the Fourth Gospel as a product of third-

⁶ Wernle, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, ed. W. D. Morrison, trans. G. A. Bienemann, 2 vols. (New York: Putnam, 1903–1904), 2:275; trans. of *Die Anfänge unserer Religion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1901).

⁷ Sanday, *The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1905), 231.

⁸ Scott, *The Fourth Gospel: Its Purpose and Theology*, 2nd ed. (1906; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908).

generation Christianity rather than the testimony of an eyewitness to Jesus's ministry.⁹ In his view, the Fourth Gospel addressed the perceived need for a gospel with sophisticated Hellenistic ideas.¹⁰ Purportedly, the author of the Fourth Gospel addresses an audience of Gentile churches, some founded by Paul himself. The author's philosophically-rich narratives and discourses animating the life of Jesus are directed toward this very audience: "The aim of the Fourth Evangelist is to go back upon the life [of Jesus] with that profounder insight into its meaning which the Pauline doctrine of the Cross now made possible. . . . The work of John presupposes that of Paul, and forms its necessary outcome and complement."¹¹ Although Scott found no "literal reproduction of the Pauline theology," he saw enough to regard Paul as John's most significant source of inspiration, noting John 6:29; 8:33–39, 56, as having clear Pauline parallels.¹² But in the end, Scott's work lacked the methodological framework to show Pauline influence over the Johannine community and its Gospel.

⁹ Discussion of the significance of Scott's commentary in Joseph S. King, "E. F. Scott: 'The Fourth Gospel' – 75 Years On," *ExpTim* 94 (1983): 359–63.

¹⁰ Decades later a similar theory would appear in C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1953), though Dodd's position on Pauline influence was more guarded: "The actual range of Pauline influence upon Johannine thought has been exaggerated. Those who tie John down too closely to the Pauline tradition are inclined to undervalue his distinctive contribution to the religion and theology of early Christianity" (5). Like his contemporary Bultmann, Dodd reacted against discussing Pauline "influence" in the abstract.

¹¹ Scott, *Fourth Gospel*, 207–8.

¹² *Ibid.*, 46–49. As it happens, Scott clouded his argument with the conjecture that Paul is allegorically introduced as the character Nathanael: "'When thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee,' describes in a graphic image [Paul's] predestination to Christian service while still under the shadow of the Law" (47).

In the early twentieth century and during his time at Yale, Benjamin Wisner Bacon defended Scott's moderating view that Paulinism had influenced the writing of John. In his 1910 collection of essays, *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*, Bacon describes Paul's letters and Johannine texts as sharing "fundamental doctrines and modes of thought, such as the interpretation of the sacraments, the doctrine of mystic union 'in Christ,' and the doctrine of the Spirit."¹³ In the years that followed, Bacon described Pauline influence on the latest stratum of the Gospel, which he held to have been redacted by the first-century Pauline church in Ephesus.¹⁴ Yet by 1933 Bacon had grown less certain of John's literary indebtedness to Paul and modified his theory: the Evangelist exhibits clear "contact" with Pauline ideas, even while nothing is "directly derived" from the Pauline epistles.¹⁵

¹³ Bacon, "The Evangelist's Task," in *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate: A Series of Essays on Problems Concerning the Origin and Value of the Anonymous Writings Attributed to the Apostle John* (New York: Moffat, Yard, 1910), 295. Though he cites Scott approvingly, Bacon wishes to differentiate his position from Scott's: "Paulinism is to [the Fourth Evangelist] much more than an 'influence.' We should call it rather his universal solvent in which all elements of mere historical tradition are held in solution until precipitated and recast in his own molds of thought" (295). He goes on to cite John 8:31–47 as a rare example of "direct employment of Pauline materials." Smith (*John*, 15–19) positively evaluates Bacon's work, though noting his reluctance to distinguish oral from written sources.

¹⁴ Bacon, "Pauline Elements in the Fourth Gospel I: A Study of John 1–4," *ATHR* 11 (1929): 199–223; idem, "Pauline Elements in the Fourth Gospel II: Parables of the Shepherd, John 10:1–39," *ATHR* 11 (1929): 305–20. Bacon's descriptions of Pauline "elements" in the Fourth Gospel support his theory of the Gospel's redaction, and he finds Pauline coloration at the seams of displacement, i.e., the redactor's changes from the rough outline of Mark. For example, the sacramental theology deriving purportedly from Paul ("one born of water and Spirit," John 3:5) appears at a point where the narrative departs from the Markan outline and is intended to expose the spiritual blindness of "the Jews" before Jesus enters Samaria.

¹⁵ Bacon, *The Gospel of the Hellenists*, ed. Carl H. Kraeling (New York: Holt, 1933), 337.

The most detailed argument for Pauline literary influence came in 1941 from Albert E. Barnett.¹⁶ Barnett's intention was to extrapolate from the hypothesis of Edgar J. Goodspeed regarding the collection and publication of a Pauline corpus that had Ephesians as its cover letter.¹⁷ Barnett viewed John's Gospel as deriving from an era of renewed Christian interest in Paul and went so far as to argue for the Gospel's familiarity with a full ten-letter Pauline corpus.¹⁸ In total, Barnett lists 138 instances of at least "reasonably probable" literary influence and an additional 81 otherwise striking comparisons that fall below his critical threshold.¹⁹ Despite these impressive numbers however, only examples from Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians receive his highest rating. Barnett locates in John 8:31–59 a marked combination of parallels to Romans and

¹⁶ Barnett, *Paul Becomes a Literary Influence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941); idem, "The Use of the Letters of Paul in Pre-Catholic Christian Literature" (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 1932).

¹⁷ Goodspeed, *The Meaning of Ephesians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933). In *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), Goodspeed devotes a chapter to discussing the emergent Pauline letter collection, and cites Barnett's dissertation (210–21, esp. 213). Goodspeed's own literary-theological comparisons between Paul and John are summarized in the following (*ibid.*, 308–9):

Paul looked down the long vista of existence and saw a trial before the court of Christ awaiting every man, II Cor. 5:19; John saw reunion in a Father's house, 14:2. Paul declared himself the slave of Christ, Phil 1:1 etc.; but Jesus says in John, "I do not call you slaves any longer, . . . now I call you friends," 15:15. This is the substitution of the Greek idea of religion as friendship for the oriental idea of religion as servitude.

¹⁸ Barnett, *Literary Influence*, 142. These ten (Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, Philemon) are the same as those received by Marcion, that is, all of the NT letters claiming to be written by Paul apart from the Pastoral Epistles.

¹⁹ Barnett used a rating scale to evaluate instances of literary indebtedness: *A* signifies "practical certainty"; *B* a "high degree of probability"; and *C* a "reasonable degree of probability" (*ibid.*, x).

Galatians. He proposes many textual links but does not detail his rating criteria. On the contrary, he categorizes his findings of literary dependence as “somewhat subjective.”²⁰ Because he argued for so many literary sources and proposed numerous weak parallels, Barnett’s work had little impact on contemporaries.²¹

The Shift with Rudolf Bultmann

For a second time, German scholarship led the investigation of convergences between Pauline and Johannine theology. Despite having introduced and favored the theory that John was a student of Paul, the Germans displayed reticence to defend a specific literary relationship. So for example, no German scholar went so far as to make detailed textual comparisons as did Barnett.²² It was Bultmann who most criticized the

²⁰ Ibid. Parallels to Ephesians were crucial for his overall intentions, but he saw “practical certainty” behind what could be regarded as rather weak connections: e.g., Christ is the source of ἀλήθεια in John 1:17 and Eph 1:12; 4:21. Though he placed parallel texts together on the page, he makes only brief comments about why one word is more significant than another. Some of his examples have no terms in common.

²¹ One critical reviewer, Francis W. Beare (Review of *Paul Becomes a Literary Influence*, by Albert E. Barnett, *JBL* 61 [1942]: 65–68), notes the following (67):

Barnett fails to appreciate how very delicate and difficult is this problem of literary dependence. He seems to forget that we have no literary monuments of the Apostolic Age other than the Pauline epistles. It becomes therefore extremely difficult to say that a particular word or phrase of the religious vocabulary of Paul is peculiar to him, so that when it is used by a later writer it betrays dependence upon the Apostle, when we simply do not possess the materials that would enable us to determine the scope of vocabulary in the early church apart from Paul.

Barnett worked with the tools available to him nearly a century ago and was forced to pore over the Greek texts line by line. The determination of literary dependence requires a means to “determine the scope of vocabulary,” but it is only in recent decades that tools for this purpose have become available.

²² See the survey by Christina Hoegen-Rohls (“Johanneische Theologie im Kontext paulinischen Denkens? Ein forschungsgeschichtliche Skizze,” in *Kontexte des*

habit of contemporaries who spoke of an abstract relationship between Paul and John, claiming that

The *relation of John to Paul* cannot be understood on a linear scheme of development from the theology of the earliest Church; the two lie in quite different directions. Since John is somewhat remote from the earliest Church, he is likely younger than Paul; but he does not presuppose Paul as a link between himself and the earliest Church. The later development of Paulinism is shown by the deuterio-Pauline literature (Col., Eph., II Thess., the pastorals, I Pet.)—it is a different world from that of John.²³

Though Bultmann finds many similarities between the theologies of Paul and John—chiefly their mutual regard for the “Gnostic Redeemer-myth”—any terminological overlap he regards as common to Christians.²⁴ Above all for Bultmann, John seems to lack the salvation-historical perspective that can be traced to Paul.²⁵ John appears utterly removed from a Pauline school or a Pauline sphere of influence.

Furthermore, Bultmann judges theological similarities between John and Paul to weigh against a material relationship: “This independence of John emerges all the more

Johannesevangeliums: Das vierte Evangelium in religions- und traditions-geschichtlicher Perspektive, ed. Jörg Frey and Udo Schnelle, WUNT 175 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004], 593–612), in which she notes that Holtzmann, Wellhausen, Jülicher, and Bousset freely discussed conceptual parallels without raising the question whether John literarily depends on a Pauline text (esp. 603).

²³ Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, 2 vols. (New York: Scriber’s Sons, 1951–1955; repr., Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 2:6.

²⁴ Bultmann allows a rare exception in John 1:17 (*ibid.*, 2:8). Several more of his examples are discussed in Chapter 4 below.

²⁵ This claim is made alongside the following admission: “True, the Johannine Jesus appeals to Abraham against the Jews and denies their descent from Abraham (8:33–58); and in conflict with the Jews he knows Moses to be on his side (5:45f.; *cf.* 1:45). But the idea of God’s covenant with Israel or of the new covenant, God’s election of Israel and His guidance of the People play no role” (*ibid.*, 2:8).

clearly as one perceives *the deep relatedness in substance that exists between John and Paul* in spite of all their differences in mode of thought and terminology.”²⁶ But Bultmann’s claim is based on the questionable presupposition that literary influence must be signaled by a large number of exact parallels and extensive verbal agreements in ancient texts. The possibility of different receptions of Pauline sources did not receive sufficient attention during the heyday of redaction criticism.²⁷

Nonetheless, for decades Bultmann’s position on the issue remained persuasive. As Christina Hoegen-Rohls notes, discussion of John’s relation to Paul rested without

²⁶ Ibid., 2:9.

²⁷ Rainer Reuter regards the all-consuming concentration on the Synoptic Problem, especially its preoccupation with the “conservative” redaction of Mark and Q, as a perennial mistake in characterizing literary influence in general. Outside of the Synoptic Gospels, historians frequently find ancient authors making “selective use of material” rather than engaging in what he calls “incorporation” (“Clarifying the Issue of Literary Dependence,” in *The Early Reception of Paul*, ed. Kenneth Liljeström [Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 2011], 23–35). Rainer adds that the incorporation of large sections of a source signals an author’s desire to replace it, as in, e.g., the relationship between Jude and 2 Peter. Likewise, Thomas L. Brodie appeals to the ancient rhetorical practices of “imitation” and “emulation” within Greek and Roman texts (*The Quest for the Origin of John’s Gospel: A Source-Oriented Approach* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1993], 42–46): “Ultimately there is no limit on the way sources may be changed by a particular author” (46). In his study of Greco-Roman citation practice, Christopher D. Stanley (“Paul and Homer: Greco-Roman Citation Practice in the First Century CE,” *NovT* 32 [1990]: 48–78) shows that even quotations were extensively modified to suit the needs of a secondary literary context.

From literary theory, Jean Zumstein introduces the related concept of *relecture* to the study of Johannine texts (“Der Prozess der Relecture in der johanneischen Literatur,” *NTS* 42 [1996]: 394–411). *Relecture* is “when a first text causes the formation of a second text and when this second text only becomes fully intelligible in relation to the first text” (395). When intended to accompany the source, Zumstein refers to this as “paratext,” that is, those texts which “introduce, frame, establish, or conclude” the earlier material, e.g., the Prologue of John 1:1–18 and the epilogue of John 21:1–25 (401–4). Zumstein draws an analogy to the theological developments arising from a Pauline school to argue that 1 John constitutes a rereading of the Fourth Gospel (ibid., 397–400). See below, Chapter 1 n. 41, for more on the Johannine and Pauline school hypotheses.

further developments for nearly thirty years.²⁸ For instance, J. Louis Martyn's *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* considers the historical events behind the composition of John but attempts no reevaluation of possible Pauline influence.²⁹ Famously, Martyn proposes a two-level reading of the Fourth Gospel, a redaction-critical analysis that distinguishes (1) historical traditions about the life of Jesus from (2) an overlay of later ecclesial concerns about conflicts with Jewish synagogues. For contestable reasons, Martyn does not wish to link Paul's experience of synagogue discipline with the *Sitz im Leben* of the "ban" (Martyn) referred to in John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2.³⁰ Martyn's two-level

²⁸ Hoegen-Rohls, "Johanneische Theologie," 593–94.

²⁹ Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968; 2nd ed., Nashville: Abingdon, 1979; 3rd ed., Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003). All citations are from the third edition.

³⁰ Ibid., 52–56. As I reconstruct it, the logic of Martyn's case is as follows: (1) the exclusion of "Christians" from the synagogue is unlikely to have occurred in Jesus's lifetime; (2) this event must have occurred in a later context, roughly contemporary with the writing of the Fourth Gospel; (3) John 12:42 gives the impression that an authoritative body of Jewish leaders had reached a formal decision against confessing faith in Jesus as Messiah, and this is likely to be the historical experience of the Johannine community; (4) the *Berkath ha-Minim*, attested in the Babylonian Talmud, exemplifies a formal decision to exclude Christians from synagogues; John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2 are to be identified with this ban. Many Johannine commentators have been persuaded by the first three points, but several have followed Wayne A. Meeks (Wayne A. Meeks, "Breaking Away: Three New Testament Pictures of Christianity's Separation from the Jewish Communities," in *To See Ourselves as Others See Us*: Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity, ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs [Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985], 93–115) and dispute any relevance of the Twelfth Benediction for reconstructing the history of Johannine Christians, thereby rejecting Martyn's fourth claim.

It remains an open question whether the exclusion, or even expulsion, referred to was the result of a formal decree from an authoritative body of Jews. Martyn considers but rejects the Pauline missionary context as the historical setting of John's reports of exclusion from the synagogue. But Paul claims to have been treated severely in Jewish synagogues (2 Cor 11:24), and the narrative of Acts alleges Jewish antagonism during Paul's travels. Nonetheless, Martyn makes the following important concession (56):

reading reckons that when John diverges from the traditions of the Synoptic Gospels, he is not concerned to dramatize a theological perspective without a specific setting in the history of his community.³¹ It is this reconstruction of Johannine history—the history of the community—that precedes and determines what may be said of Johannine theology. And Martyn does not envision a relationship between Paul and this Johannine community.

Similarly, in his commentary on the Fourth Gospel Raymond E. Brown does not reconsider the question as to whether Paul influenced John. This is startling in light of his choice to entertain several other possible influences: “Gnosticism,” “Hellenistic Thought,” and “Palestinian Judaism.”³² Brown investigates a series of other texts but draws no connections to an earlier form of Christianity spread by Paul. Even Brown’s

It is not impossible that there is some kind of connection between the references in Acts 18–19 [where Paul is forced to withdraw from the synagogues in Corinth and Ephesus] and the Johannine expression [ἀποσυνάγωγος]. It is by no means clear, however, that the two refer to the same course of events, and we must therefore continue our quest of historical identification.

So Martyn has not been able to exclude the possibility that Paul’s ministry is somehow connected to these statements of John. Had he not initially labored under the impression left by Bultmann, that John is not depending on Paul or influenced by him in any way, Martyn’s comments on historical similarities might have been different.

³¹ “John 9 impresses upon us its immediacy in such a way as strongly to suggest that some of its elements reflect actual experiences of the Johannine community. It does not strike one as artificially contrived, nor does it appear to be composed merely in order to dramatize an abstract theological point of view” (Martyn, *History*, 46).

³² Brown, *The Gospel according to John: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 29–29A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966–1970; repr., New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 1:LII–LXVI.

later comments on John, to be found in the volume completed by Francis J. Moloney in 2003, do not address potential Pauline influence.³³

A third illustration of Bultmann's sway on this issue is found in the monograph by Severino Pancaro, which continues and adapts the historical theories of Martyn in a more comprehensive study.³⁴ Despite writing some 561 pages on the topic of the law in the Fourth Gospel, which might have occasioned numerous comparisons with Paul, Pancaro dismisses the significance of Pauline parallels to John 1:17; 6:28; and 8:30–36 in the space of about a page: “Nowhere does [John] consider the observance of the Law opposed to faith, nowhere does he speak of the slavery of the Law or of freedom from the Law, much less does he say that the Law leads to sin.”³⁵ By arguing against the theological compatibility of John and Paul in these terms, Pancaro makes an even more pronounced division between them than did Bultmann.

Renewed Interest since the 1980s

After decades during which authors rarely discussed any relation between Paul and John, a fresh development begins with two studies published in 1983: Rudolf

³³ Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, ed. Moloney (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

³⁴ Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel: The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity according to John*, NovTSup 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1975).

³⁵ Ibid., 526–27. Landmark Pauline studies by E. P. Sanders and Krister Stendahl (Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977]; Stendahl, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976], 78–96) have led many Pauline scholars to dispute whether Paul makes these claims either. Advances in understanding Paul since the 1970s have made it conceivable to see more similarities in the ways that Paul and John view the law.

Schnackenburg and Dieter Zeller make theological comparisons between these two authors.³⁶ For Schnackenburg, the goal is to uncover the common center of all NT theologies, *die Christusverkündigung*, as revealed in divergent historical expressions. Similarly, Zeller discusses “contacts” (*Berührungen*) between Paul and John so as to expose the unified core of all NT theology. Neither contemplates John’s employment of Pauline texts, but instead they give differing cases for Paul and John’s theological compatibility—even though such cases are almost incidental to their overall projects.

From Schnackenburg and Zeller, Hoegen-Rohls traces the development of two models for comparing Paul and John: from Zeller, (1) a “synchronically-oriented model of theological comparison that pays special attention to similarities”; and from Schnackenburg, (2) a “diachronically-oriented model of tradition-historical comparison that perceives similarities and differences.”³⁷ Since their work, Udo Schnelle, Klaus Berger, Jürgen Becker, Wilhelm Pratscher, and Nadine Ueberschaer have continued to compare the Johannine and Pauline traditions with combinations of the two approaches.³⁸

³⁶ Schnackenburg, “Paulinische und johanneische Christologie,” in *Die Mitte des Neuen Testaments: Einheit und Vielfalt neutestamentlicher Theologie*, ed. Ulrich Luz and Hans Weder (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 221–37; Zeller, “Paulus und Johannes: Methodischer Vergleich im Interesse einer neutestamentlichen Theologie,” *BZ* 27 (1983): 167–82.

³⁷ Hoegen-Rohls, “Johanneische Theologie,” 607–8.

³⁸ Schnelle, “Paulus und Johannes,” *EvT* 47 (1987): 212–28; idem, “Ein neuer Blick: Tendenzen gegenwärtiger Johannesforschung,” *BTZ* 16 (1999): 21–40; idem, “Theologie als kreative Sinnbildung: Johannes als Weiterbildung von Paulus und Markus,” in *Das Johannesevangelium: Mitte oder Rand des Kanons? Neue Standortbestimmungen*, ed. Thomas Söding (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 119–45; idem, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, ThHNT 4 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2004); Berger, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums: Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: Francke, 1995), 210–42, 653–71; Becker, “Geisterfahrung und Christologie: Ein Vergleich zwischen Paulus und Johannes,” in *Antikes Judentum und frühes*

Despite this resurgence in interest, there has been no major attempt to argue for John's employment of Pauline sources, or even his acquaintance with them.³⁹ Berger, whose perspective is typical among these figures, finds abundant literary convergence between Paul and John but argues against what he calls a "monocausal" explanation of similarities; he is seeking instead the geographical context for the Christian movement within Judaism that served as substratum to both Paul and John.⁴⁰ Likewise, according to a review of the subject by Pratscher, the "close material parallels" between Paul and John cannot be used to establish "literary use."⁴¹ Rather, similarities are easier to explain as the

Christentum, ed. Erich Gräßer, BZNW 97 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 428–42; Pratscher, "Die Rezeption von Paulus und Markus bei Johannes," in *Paul and Mark: Comparative Essays Part I: Two Authors at the Beginnings of Christianity*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer, David C. Sim, and Ian J. Elmer, BZNW 198 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 647–70; Ueberschaer, *Theologie des Lebens bei Paulus und Johannes: Ein theologisch-konzeptioneller Vergleich des Zusammenhangs von Glaube und Leben auf dem Hintergrund ihrer Glaubenssummarien*, WUNT 389 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017). See also brief comments in Siegfried Schulz, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, NTD 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 5–6; Robin Scroggs, *Christology in Paul and John: The Reality and Revelation of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 105–13. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (*John and Philosophy: A New Reading of the Fourth Gospel* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2017], 310–44) is the only recent commentator to suggest John's knowledge of Paul: "Ockham's razor suggests that we should settle for the simpler and more straightforward alternative: John knew and understood Paul" (325).

³⁹ Brodie's theory is a partial exception (*Quest*, 30). Though he argues that John has Ephesians as a source, his identification of John as an "encyclopedic synthesis" of various sources is methodologically unprecedented.

⁴⁰ Berger, *Theologiegeschichte*, 224.

⁴¹ Pratscher, "Rezeption," 668.

result of “secondary orality.”⁴² Hoegen-Rohls calls for more “textual and communication-pragmatic questions” to enter the debate.⁴³

Summary

The relationship between Paul and John has not been explored with the full array of resources now available to historical criticism. Most German scholarship from the early twentieth century painted a decidedly negative portrait of John as an inferior student of Paul. Prior to Bultmann, it was as if the Fourth Gospel made no original contribution to a sketch of Jesus. Bultmann’s reaction to this theory showed a predictable conservatism: in the absence of a clear material relationship, it appeared preferable to understand John apart from Paul, in effect turning John into an independent witness to the localized evolution of Jesus traditions. This allowed Johannine scholarship to continue to

⁴² The term “secondary orality” was coined by Walter J. Ong (*Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* [London: Methuen, 1982; repr., New York: Routledge, 2002], 10–11) to describe new mediums of present-day technological cultures, modes of orality that are distinct from the “primary orality” of cultures that make scant use of writing. For a number of years, researchers who study Christian origins applied the same term to a completely separate phenomenon. April D. DeConick (“What Is Secondary Orality?” *The Forbidden Gospels*, 13 May 2008. <http://forbiddengospels.blogspot.com>) writes:

Scholars, including myself, have used this word to refer to possible moments when we think we see preserved in a piece of literature orality that is dependent on another piece of literature. An example? A saying in one of the gospels that is not literarily dependent on another piece of literature (that is, it hasn’t been copied from one text into the other). Rather the author may have heard the saying read and is writing that down, or some such scenario.

To avoid perpetuating the resulting confusion, DeConick recommends avoiding the term when describing phenomena from ancient oral-rhetorical cultures.

⁴³ Hoegen-Rohls, “Johanneische Theologie,” 611.

pursue the elusive *Gemeindegeschichte* (“history of the community”) without an agreed foundation in the textual evidence of the Gospel.⁴⁴ The influential treatises of Martyn and Brown emerged in Bultmann’s wake, and for this reason the Pauline corpus is rarely engaged in English-language studies of John. Despite some recent interest in their possible theological compatibility, the thesis of a literary connection between Paul and John has not been reconsidered.

In this study, I accept the challenge of reassessing John 8:31–59 for possible evidence of a literary kinship with Paul, evaluating Paul against other proposed sources behind 8:31–59. In this climactic scene that depicts Jesus’s conflict with οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι—in fact, the only place where the Fourth Evangelist mentions Abraham by name—substantial similarities to Paul’s language and thinking are most pronounced. By portraying Jesus in conflict with Jews who possess a different understanding of what it means to be children of Abraham, John shows, I shall argue, that he has read and contemplated the letters to the Romans and Galatians. Similarities between Paul and John have previously been ascribed to shared tradition, but I shall contend that a direct line of influence goes from Paul to John since distinctly Pauline words and concepts appear. In sum, Paul has a literary presence in John 8.

In Chapter 1, I defend the possibility of John’s access to some of Paul’s letters on the basis of the criterion of historical plausibility. To the best of our knowledge, Paul died decades before the composition of John, and Paul’s letters are thought to have circulated

⁴⁴ On this see Cirafesi, “The ‘Johannine Community’ in (More) Current Research: A Critical Appraisal of Recent Methods and Models,” *Neot* 48 (2014): 341–64. Cirafesi concludes that “the existence of narrow and distinct gospel communities can no longer be assumed”; he favors “a prioritization of the text of John’s Gospel in the reconstruction of its social context” (360–61).

widely by the time of John's composition. The habit of early Christians to refer to a collection of Paul's letters shows that they were reading Paul as an authority around the same time. After examining three comparable studies, I summarize various models of intertextual analysis. Those cases where I find in John phrases first attested to by Paul in all known Greek literature constitute for me the clearest evidence of literary dependence. I also seek to make exegetical contributions to the interpretation of some apparently disjunctive elements of John, since the Pauline context of shared terms occasionally suggests a new reading of John.

In Chapter 2, I begin my investigation with John 8:31–38, which contains a cluster of distinctly Pauline words and concepts: ἐλευθερώω conveying salvific freedom; σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ as a polyvalent term; and δοῦλος τῆς ἁμαρτίας personifying sin's hold over the individual. Like others before me, I interpret John 8:31–59 as a *Missverständniss* or a “misunderstandings discourse,” and I seek to show that some of the misunderstanding derives from concepts taken directly from the letters of Romans and Galatians.

In Chapter 3, I continue my investigation with John 8:39–59, where John's reception of the example of Abraham is informed by the same Pauline texts. According to my argument, τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ (8:39) is Johannine shorthand for Abraham's behavior and especially his faithful character. John 8:42–47 presents “the Jews” as counterexamples to the τέκνα θεοῦ (1:12; 11:52), an epithet that in all extant Greek literature first appears in Paul. Furthermore, the foreknowledge ascribed to Abraham (8:56) matches sections of Romans and Galatians where Paul says that Abraham believed God and welcomed the good news of his future descendants.

In Chapter 4, I set out aspects of the theological compatibility between John and Paul, which I argue can be seen more clearly in light of my reading of John 8:31–59. Their agreement includes facets of soteriology, ethics, and salvation history. I account for differences in linguistic patterns on the basis of different social milieus, since John faced a challenge other than Paul’s: to present a narrative of Jesus’s rejection after the pattern of the rejection his circle had experienced from Jewish contemporaries. Like Paul, John holds that Jesus’s “own” might have received him, but did not (John 1:11). He treats οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι as a collective character of salvation history whose unbelief will open the door to the spiritual fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham, that his children would now include Gentiles as well as Jews.

CHAPTER 1

PAUL'S EPISTLES IN THE EMERGENCE OF EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

In subsequent chapters, I examine John 8:31–59 for evidence of Paul's literary presence in the Fourth Gospel. As I shall argue, words and ideas from Paul's letters, including the appeal to Abraham as key *exemplum*, appear in close proximity to one another in a single discourse between the Johannine Jesus and his opponents. Furthermore, the implications of my argument alter the conception of supposed Johannine distinctives: the theologies of John and Paul overlap on the topics of sin, faith, and salvation history.

But for the theory to be plausible, Pauline epistles must be available at the time and place of John's writing. The Fourth Gospel's provenance is, according to the majority of commentators, a city in Asia Minor in the final decade of the first century.¹ Below I summarize the evidence showing that the collecting of Paul's letters began as early as Paul's own lifetime and was well established by the end of the first century.²

¹ This consensus is unchanged since its articulation by Werner G. Kümmel (*Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. Howard C. Kee, rev. ed. [Nashville: Abingdon, 1975], 246–47).

² Citations for this discussed below. As recently as the 1990s, the former consensus held that Paul's letters circulated gradually and were formed into ad hoc collections starting in the second century CE. This theory of a "snowballing" letter corpus goes back to Theodor Zahn and Adolf von Harnack (Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons*, 2 vols. [Erlangen: Deichert, 1888–92], 1:811–39; idem, *Grundriss der Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons: Eine Ergänzung zu der Einleitung in das Neue Testament* [Leipzig: Deichert, 1904], 35–37; von Harnack, *Die Briefsammlung des Apostels Paulus und die anderen vorkonstantinischen christlichen Briefsammlungen* [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1926], 6–27). They each envisioned the grassroots popularity of Paul's letters as having led local communities to exchange his correspondence. Either because Paul's letters were incorporated into Christian worship (Zahn) or because they locally received "canonical" status in reaction to Marcion (von Harnack), the collecting of Paul's letters was seen as gradual and later than I shall argue.

Thus it is reasonable to argue for Pauline literary influence in a variety of NT contexts, and I shall survey recent studies of Matthew, Hebrews, and James that take this argument into account. Likewise, then, it is timely to reconsider potential Pauline literary influence on the Fourth Gospel.

The Development of a Pauline Corpus

It is generally recognized that Paul's writings were available by the time of the Fourth Gospel's composition: the circulation of his letters was foreseen by Paul, facilitated by his retention of notes, sanctioned by his associates, and unimpeded in the wake of his death.³ In sum, the collection of Pauline writings was well under way in the final decades of the first century. Paul wrote to various places in Asia Minor, but incipient collections of Pauline epistles are likely to have first been held by the churches of larger cities including Corinth, Ephesus, and of course Rome. And the letters most probably to be found in those early collections are Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians

"Snowball theory" is coined in Harry Y. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 36. Further, with particular attention to the issue of pseudepigraphy see Stanley E. Porter, "Paul and the Pauline Letter Collection," in *Paul and the Second Century*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Joseph R. Dodson, LNTS 412 (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 19–36.

³ David Trobisch, *Letter Collection: Tracing the Origins* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994); Gamble, *Canon*, 43–46; idem, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 95–108; Jerome Murphey-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills*, GNS 41 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 120–30; Lee Martin McDonald, *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 265–70; Porter, "Pauline Letter Collection." In addition, while not frequently defended today, Goodspeed's hypothesis concerning Ephesians (*The Meaning of Ephesians*) prompted him (and followers of this school like Barnett) to date the "publication" of Pauline letters ca. 75 CE.

(or prior letter fragments), and Galatians.⁴ In the discussion below I summarize four categories of evidence that push the collection of Paul's letters back in time to the final decade of first century: (1) extant physical evidence; (2) Marcion's collection; (3) early allusions to Paul; and (4) internal evidence from the Pauline corpus itself.

(1) *Extant physical evidence of Pauline letter collections*: From the testimonies of Eusebius and Jerome, Paul is estimated to have died in Rome around 65 CE.⁵ Yet the oldest manuscript to contain any of his letters is the Chester Beatty-Michigan Codex (P46), which dates no earlier than 200 CE.⁶ The gap in the physical record spans nearly a century and a half. But even relatively late samples of Paul's epistles contain relevant evidence. First, historians note that not once does a Pauline letter appear alone in a manuscript; Paul's letters survive only in collections.⁷ Second, the oldest of these, P46 mentioned above, contains an already impressive collection of the Pauline epistles. All the larger letters deemed authentically Pauline are present (in order: Romans; 1

⁴ Trobisch identifies these as the earliest and central "canon" of Pauline texts (*Paul's Letter Collection*, 55–96), though to call it "Paul's authorized recension" is of course speculation. Romans is Paul's longest letter and ordered first in several early collections; 1 Corinthians is widely known by early Christian leaders (Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp of Smyrna; see discussion below); 2 Corinthians is connected to 1 Corinthians and likely the product of early editorial activity; and Galatians is foremost in the "canon" of Marcion.

⁵ Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 370–71. According to Murphy-O'Connor, this estimate is confirmed if 1 Clem 6:1 refers to Paul's death during the Neronian persecution, since Nero died in 68 CE.

⁶ Bruce M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Palaeography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 64.

⁷ Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 330.

Corinthians; 2 Corinthians; Galatians; Philippians; 1 Thessalonians), and these are joined by a few extras (Hebrews; Ephesians; Colossians).⁸ More letters were once written on the outermost pages of the single quire (likely 2 Thessalonians and Philemon). Third, P46 displays extensive editorial attention to its formal features: not only is each letter carefully arranged according to length, but all headings are formatted alike so that Hebrews has Πρὸς Ἑβραίους to match.⁹ In sum, the physical evidence is that by 200 CE, Pauline letters were carefully edited in order to travel as a collection.

(2) *Marcion's collection of Pauline epistles*: Marcion, who was active ca. 140, shows knowledge of an equally large collection of Paul's letters, such as requires the existence of a broad Pauline corpus by the first half of the second century.¹⁰ Thanks to Tertullian's detailed descriptions in *Marc.* 5, Marcion is known to have possessed ten letters which he attributed to Paul, assembled in the following order: Galatians; 1 Corinthians; 2 Corinthians; Romans; 1 Thessalonians; 2 Thessalonians; Ephesians;

⁸ Trobisch, *Paul's Letter Collection*, 16–17. Altogether the order is as follows: Romans; Hebrews; 1 Corinthians; 2 Corinthians; Ephesians; Galatians; Philippians; Colossians; 1 Thessalonians. Trobisch posits that the arrangement is strictly by length, with the caveat that the scribe avoids separating the Corinthian letters by placing Hebrews before 1 Corinthians.

⁹ Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, 330. Daniel Bryson ("The Heretic Who Wrote the Epistle Against the Hebrews"; paper, Claremont Graduate University, School of Religion, n.d., <https://danielbryson.academia.edu/research>) has recently revived the theory that the title should be translated "Against the Hebrews." I accept the received translation.

¹⁰ Marcion was active during the reign of Antonius Pius (138–61 CE; Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.19). Von Harnack (*Die Briefsammlung des Apostels Paulus*, 6–27) claims that Marcion himself formed the first collection of Pauline letters, but the sheer quantity of assembled sources makes it unlikely that one person was responsible.

Colossians; Philippians; Philemon.¹¹ Galatians, which begins his collection, appears to have defined his approach to Paul since he called himself an “apostle” after the apostleship of Paul (Gal 1:1).¹²

Although Marcion’s order differs considerably from P46, there is substantial agreement in content except for the latter’s inclusion of Hebrews. Either Marcion was responding to preexisting—possibly competing—collections of Pauline epistles, or deuterio-Pauline literary activity was ongoing in the mid-second century.¹³ Further, since Marcion connected a “Pauline” epistle to a separate community of recipients (calling Ephesians “Laodiceans”), he is likely the inheritor of a textual tradition rather than the collector of unedited texts. As Harry Y. Gamble claims, “[Marcion] probably took over an existing edition of the collection without altering even its arrangement.”¹⁴

(3) *Christian citation and allusion to Paul*: In the first decades of the second century and presumably before Marcion’s activity, certain Pauline and post-Pauline letters are known to Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, and the author of 2 Peter. Rudimentary letter collections must therefore have circulated by the beginning of the second century CE.

¹¹ Ephesians is called “Laodiceans” by Marcion. Tertullian attributes to “omission” the absence of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus (*Marc.* 5.21), but this probably means only that Marcion did not have them.

¹² Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.1.

¹³ Porter defends the former view, while McDonald defends the latter (Porter, “Pauline Letter Collection,” 32–35; McDonald, *Biblical Canon*, 368).

¹⁴ Gamble, *Canon*, 41.

1 Clement is commonly dated to the 90s CE and judged to have been sent from the church of Rome to the church of Corinth, as the author claims.¹⁵ Clement of Rome adduces a Pauline letter for rhetorical support (1 Clem. 47.1–4): the Corinthians are told to “take up the epistle of the blessed apostle Paul,” which presumes that they still possess the original letter addressed to their community (1 Corinthians) while Rome’s possession of a copy requires no explanation.¹⁶ Apart from the direct appeal to 1 Corinthians, a minimalist assessment of Clement’s sources reveals his access to Romans and Hebrews, documents that already have an established relation to the Christians in Rome.¹⁷ Thus

¹⁵ The dating of 1 Clement is notoriously difficult. A persecution near the end of the reign of Domitian is frequently taken to be a *terminus post quem* of 96 CE, but no external evidence has substantiated a Domitianic persecution or this letter’s provenance from that time. L. L. Welborn has already debunked the so-called allusion to a Domitianic persecution in the words of 1 Clem. 1.1 (“On the Date of First Clement,” *BR* 29 [1984]: 35–54). Further, Andrew F. Gregory rejects taking Clement’s habit of quoting oral instead of written “gospel” traditions as indicating a narrow range of dates (“1 Clement: An Introduction,” *ExpTim* 117 [2006]: 223–30). Gregory does note that internal evidence for the succession of presbyters (44.2–3) could describe the 90s, give or take a decade perhaps. Clement’s reception of Hebrews is also relevant, though Hebrews is equally difficult to date. In any case, most historians date 1 Clement earlier than Marcion.

¹⁶ According to Gregory (“1 Clement and the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament,” in *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, idem and Christopher M. Tuckett, eds., *The New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers* 1 [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005], 129–57), Clement elsewhere alludes to the content of 1 Corinthians and is the clear possessor of said copy, though there are no certain verbatim agreements: 1 Clem. 24.1 (cf. 1 Cor 15:20, 23); 1 Clem. 24.5–7 (cf. 1 Cor 15:36–37); 1 Clem. 37.5–38.2 (cf. 1 Cor 12:12, 14, 20–28); 1 Clem. 47.1–4 (cf. 1 Cor 1:12); 1 Clem. 49.5 (cf. 1 Cor 13:4–7). None of these would otherwise demonstrate Clement’s access to 1 Corinthians without his expressed desire in 47.1–4 that the Corinthians review the letter.

¹⁷ Ibid., 142–43, 157. Gregory holds that the minimalist conclusions of A. J. Carlyle and the 1905 committee (A Committee of the Oxford Society of Historical Theology, *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1905]) are of more practical value than the maximalist conclusions of Donald A. Hagner (*The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome*, NovTSup 34 [Leiden: Brill, 1973]), the latter contending that Clement used nearly all the “canonical” Pauline epistles.

Clement of Rome, whose letter is plausibly dated within the first century, possessed at least a small collection of Pauline epistles that included a copied letter that has traveled from Corinth. Moreover, he takes for granted that Paul's epistles have had wide distribution.

Ignatius of Antioch was likely martyred by 118 CE, and he is a second individual displaying knowledge of a Pauline letter collection before Marcion.¹⁸ Not only does Ignatius know of Paul's letters, he knows them so intimately that he frequently imitates Pauline style.¹⁹ His apparent reverence for Paul is striking for a bishop of Antioch, since Paul describes a conflict during a sojourn in the same city (Gal 2:11–21). If the historical

¹⁸ J. B. Lightfoot dates Ignatius's martyrdom between 100 and 118 CE and proposes as genuine seven Ignatian epistles (*The Apostolic Fathers: Revised Texts with Short Introductions and English Translations*, ed. J. R. Harmer, 2nd ed. [New York: Macmillan, 1891], 97–104; idem, *The Apostolic Fathers: Part 2, Ignatius and Polycarp*, 2 vols. [London: Macmillan, 1889–1890; repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989], 1:30). This view remains the consensus but comes under frequent challenge. Attempts to date Ignatius's death later than the reign of Trajan (98–117 CE) rely on supposed theological innovations, which are seen as too developed for the first decades of the second century (Paul Foster, "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch [Part 1]," *ExpTim* 117 [2006]: 487–95; idem, "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch [Part 2]," *ExpTim* 118 [2006]: 2–11). Timothy D. Barnes ("The Date of Ignatius," *ExpTim* 120 [2008]: 119–30) makes the novel argument that Ign. *Pol.* 3.2 constitutes a refutation of Ptolemaeus, disciple of Valentinus (active ca. 130s and summarized in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.6.1).

¹⁹ Paul's influence on Ignatius's writing is widely recognized: Andreas Lindemann, "Paul's Influence on 'Clement' and Ignatius," in *The New Testament in Early Christianity: La réception des écrits néotestamentaires dans le christianisme primitif*, ed. Jean-Marie Sevrin, BETL 86 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 9–24; Foster, "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch and the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament," in Gregory and Tuckett, *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, 159–86; David M. Reis, "Following in Paul's Footsteps: Mimēsis and Power in Ignatius," in *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers*, eds. Gregory and Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 287–306; Alexander N. Kirk, "Ignatius' Statements of Self-Sacrifice: Intimations of an Atoning Death or Expressions of Exemplary Suffering?" *JTS NS* 64 (2013): 66–88; idem, *The Departure of an Apostle: Paul's Death Anticipated and Remembered*, WUNT 406 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 74–87.

Paul suffered a setback in support from this community, as some would argue, it appears that his reputation recovered.

Although the circumstances of Ignatius's captivity likely prevented direct consultation of texts, his familiarity with four Pauline epistles (that is, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, and 2 Timothy) is obvious by the most conservative of estimates.²⁰ There are good reasons to think he was familiar with several more. First, the praise he directs to the Ephesian church (*Eph.* 12.1–2) includes the hyperbolic assertion that Paul recalls the Ephesians “in every letter (ἐν πάσῃ ἐπιστολῇ).” This exaggerated praise relies on mutual familiarity with a substantial collection. Second, Ignatius expresses a desire to walk in Paul's footsteps (*Eph.* 12.2), which includes longing for self-sacrifice in a journey to Rome; the Pauline epistle most likely to have inspired Ignatius's thinking on this is Philippians.²¹ Third, given Ignatius's widely-acknowledged intention to imitate Paul by writing letters, he might have composed seven letters to seven churches following the example of an existing sevenfold collection of Paul's epistles.²²

²⁰ Foster, “Epistles of Ignatius,” 172.

²¹ Kirk (“Ignatius’ Statements of Self-Sacrifice”) claims that Ignatius is familiar with Philippians. Kirk reads *Eph.* 8.1; 18.1; 21.1; *Trall.* 13.3; *Smyrn.* 10.2; *Pol.* 2.3; 6.1 as passages that “mimic Paul's intimate bond with his fellow believers forged by his suffering” (87). Kirk addresses the much-discussed plea in *Rom.* 2.2: “Do not grant to me anything more than to be poured out as a libation (τοῦ σπονδισθῆναι) to God while an altar (θυσιαστήριον) is still ready.” The statement and its rhetorical effect are striking in light of Phil 2:17, which includes two related terms: “But even if I am being poured out as a libation (σπένδομαι) upon the sacrifice (θυσία) and offering of your faith . . .” (cf. also 2 Tim 4:6). Albert Mellink also claims Ignatius was moved by Philippians (“Death as Eschaton: A Study of Ignatius of Antioch's Desire for Death” [PhD diss., The University of Amsterdam, 2000], 85 n. 107). Kirk and Mellink maintain that Ignatius's attitude toward death is shaped by what he knows of Paul's.

²² One theory counts seven epistles of Paul: 1–2 Corinthians; Romans; Ephesians; 1–2 Thessalonians; Galatians; Philippians; Colossians (perhaps also Philemon?). This

Polycarp of Smyrna is a third early Christian who has access to a collection of Pauline letters.²³ Though he lived long enough to debate Marcion, his surviving writing dates earlier in his career, to the immediate aftermath of Ignatius's death. With at least a highly probably level of certainty, his letter to Philippi relies upon the sources of 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, and 2 Timothy (perhaps also Romans, Galatians, and Philippians).²⁴ Polycarp writes,

For neither I nor anyone like me is able to replicate the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul. When he was with you he accurately and reliably taught the word of truth to those who were there at the time. And when he was absent he wrote you letters (ὁμῖν ἔγραψεν ἐπιστολάς). If you carefully peer into them, you will be able to be built up in the faith that was given you.²⁵

counts letters to the same community as one. Ancient attempts to characterize Paul as a “writer to seven churches” sought to overcome the particularities of his writings, universalizing his letters for Christian communities at large (Nils A. Dahl, “Particularity of the Pauline Epistles as a Problem in the Ancient Church,” in *Neotestamentica et Patristica: Eine Freundesgabe Herrn Professor Dr. Oscar Cullmann zu Seinem 60. Geburtstag überreicht*, ed. W. C. van Unnik, NovTSup 6 [Leiden: Brill, 1962], 261–71). One relevant example is in the NT itself: the author of Revelation 2–3 begins his apocalypse with seven letters to seven churches following a distinctly Pauline epistolary prescript in Rev 1: 4 (χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη, cf. Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; Phlm 3). See further, Judith M. Lieu, “‘Grace to You and Peace’: The Apostolic Greeting,” *BJRL* 68 (1985): 161–78.

²³ He was born near the time of the fall of Jerusalem and died around 155 CE; so Michael W. Holmes, “Polycarp of Smyrna, Letter to the Philippians,” *ExpTim* 118 (2006): 53–63.

²⁴ Holmes, “Polycarp’s Letter to the Philippians and the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament,” in Gregory and Tuckett, *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, 187–227, esp. 226–27. Holmes expresses reluctance to speculate whether or not these letters form a “circumstantial accumulation, deliberate collection, or defined corpus” in the hands of Polycarp.

²⁵ Polycarp, *Phil.* 3.2 (Ehrman, LCL).

As McDonald notes, “Polycarp assumes . . . that those in Philippi were aware of Paul’s letters (plural) just as he was at Smyrna.”²⁶ Polycarp’s mention of multiple letters could refer to multiple letters that Paul sent to Philippi, or perhaps Polycarp anticipates for Paul’s letters an authority expanded to those who were not the original recipients.²⁷

Finally, the author of 2 Peter refers to an unspecified collection of Pauline epistles written “in accord with the wisdom God gave him.”²⁸ The author classes Paul’s letters as Scripture, comparing their misuse to the twisting of “the remaining Scriptures (τὰς λοιπὰς γραφάς)” (2 Pet 3:15–16). While 2 Peter is impossible to date with certainty, it was written no later than the first half of the second century.²⁹ The text is conventionally associated with the church in Rome, where the author would have been familiar with a collection of Paul’s letters—its existence though perhaps not its contents. He expresses a

²⁶ McDonald, *Biblical Canon*, 270.

²⁷ It is not certain that Paul composed only one letter to the Christians assembled in Philippi, and partition theories claim to find two or three letters combined into the one NT epistle. Paul gives no indication of previous correspondence as he does, e.g., in 1 Cor 5:9, but Phil 3:2–21 could constitute an originally separate document. For more on this, see the review of Jaakko Linko, who prefers the two-letter hypothesis for its explanation of tonal shifts, but he allows that breaks in tone could also be attributed to “the difficult circumstances of dictating a letter in prison” (Jaakko Linko, “Paul’s Two Letters to the Philippians? Some Critical Observations on the Unity Question of Philippians,” in *The Nordic Paul: Finnish Approaches to Pauline Theology*, ed. Lars Aejmelaeus and Antti Mustakallio, LNTS 374 [New York: T&T Clark, 2008], 171).

²⁸ The letter purports to be written by Peter shortly before his death in Rome (2 Pet 1:1, 14) but is widely considered pseudepigraphal.

²⁹ According to Bauckham (*Jude, 2 Peter*, WBC 50 [Nashville: Nelson, 1983], 157–58), “commentaries and reference books have placed 2 Peter in almost every decade from 60 to 160 A.D.” Bauckham identifies as the likeliest date of composition 80–90 CE, though a second-century date is not impossible.

desire to guard against improper interpretation of Paul, which indicates the author's awareness that the letters are influencing others.

(4) *Internal evidence from the Pauline corpus*: Paul's letters themselves indicate that he may have played a role in collecting and disseminating letters and perhaps letter outlines before his death. Specifically, the addresses of Galatians and Romans show that Paul foresees their circulation.³⁰ In Gal 1:2, Paul addresses not a singular church but multiple churches within a region: "to the churches (ἐκκλησίαι) of Galatia." Paul does not specify how he planned for his words to reach these congregations and whether he financed the production of copies. Perhaps he entrusted his carrier with a single original to be duplicated at each stop along the way. In any case, Galatians stands apart as the only letter Paul appears specifically to intend for multiple assemblies.³¹

Since the letter to Rome returns to many of the same themes as Galatians, Paul likely retained access to his earlier letter to the Galatians or notes of his drafts.³² The address in Romans does not name a church or church community as recipient but has an equivalent phrase: *πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ*, "to all God's beloved in

³⁰ Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 97–98: "The early copying and circulation of Paul's letters was not mere happenstance, and . . . at least in the cases of Galatians and Romans, it was already taking place in Paul's lifetime."

³¹ His two alternative addresses: (1) to a single church (τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ . . .) in 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; Phlm 2; and (2) to a single location ([πᾶσιν] τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν . . .) in Rom 1:7; Phil 1:1.

³² Paul and his secretaries likely required notes and drafts, as dictation one syllable at a time does not appear to fit the complexity of his letters, which are far longer than the average epistle. Nor was Greek shorthand widely available. These points are made by E. Randolph Richards (*Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004], 30), citing already the study of Otto Roller, *Das Formular der paulinischen Briefe: Ein Beitrag zur Lehre vom antike Briefe* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933), 333.

Rome” (1:7). The final chapter greets members of several house churches (16:5, 10, 11, 14, 15). If ch. 16 and the greetings are considered original, Paul intended the letter to be shared within the bounds of a single city, a process which again might have required the immediate production of copies.³³ At a minimum, Paul planned for regional distribution of Galatians and Romans.

Two letters conventionally deemed post-Pauline, Colossians and 2 Timothy, might yet show something of Paul’s intentions for his writings.³⁴ First, in the closing instructions of Col 4:16 the audience is told to share a letter with the Christian assembly at Laodicea and to read Paul’s letter addressed to another church.³⁵ No matter who wrote this command in Paul’s name, it advises churches to share their respective “Pauline” epistles. Likewise, in 2 Tim 4:13 “Paul” requests his “documents (τὰ βιβλία)” and “parchments (αἱ μεμβράναι).”³⁶ These refer to authorial collections of notes, possibly in a

³³ Robert Jewett’s commentary on Romans defends ch. 16 as original to Paul (*Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007], 18).

³⁴ If Colossians is post-Pauline, an additional set of conclusions must be drawn about the sources available to its first-century author. Sanders (“Literary Dependence in Colossians,” *JBL* 85 [1966]: 28–45) has sought the sources behind Colossians and determined that every undisputed letter of Paul except Philemon is incorporated into a patchwork of theological exposition, phrases of each epistle being conflated according to the appearance of Pauline keywords. Mark Kiley looks more closely at the motives behind this pseudepigraphic writing: Kiley, *Colossians as Pseudepigraphy*, BibSem 4 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986).

³⁵ Cf. the command of 1 Thess 5:27 that the letter be read to all the brethren. Gamble regards this as tantamount to literary publication: “The text, once placed in the hands of the recipients, was no longer under Paul’s control and might be used as the community of its members saw fit” (*Books and Readers*, 96).

³⁶ Grammatically, it is possible that the writer intends these to be the same. The translation suggested by T. C. Skeat (“‘Especially the Parchments’: A Note on 2 Timothy 4:13,” *JTS* NS 30 [1979]: 173–77) is “. . . the books—I mean the parchment notebooks.”

small codex Paul was known to possess.³⁷ These texts show two ways that the collection may have grown: in the first example, the recipients of an epistle are asked to exchange letters; and in the second, it is “Paul” who has notes. E. Randolph Richards comments that, in accord with the literary culture of the first century, “it is safe to assume that Paul retained copies of most if not all of his letters” since these documents represented an enormous investment of funds and energy.³⁸

Other important features of the Pauline letter corpus are frequently attributed to a “Pauline school,” which refers to a retinue of associates who studied Paul’s teaching and kept his literary influence alive in the years following his death. Contributions of a Pauline school include the production of pseudonymous epistles and composite epistles.³⁹ As Gamble summarizes,

³⁷ Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 283.

³⁸ Richards, *Letter Writing*, 215. Already C. H. Roberts and Skeat (*The Birth of the Codex*, 2nd ed. [1954; London: Oxford University Press, 1983], 30) cite 2 Tim 4:13 as evidence that Paul retained “notebooks.” Gamble is no less convinced that the historical Paul kept duplicates (*Books and Readers*, 100–101):

It seems unlikely that Paul would have written the kinds of letters he wrote without retaining copies. Ancient writers often kept copies of their private letters even when no particular literary merit or topical importance attached to them; and copies of instructional, administrative letters were all the more likely to be kept. . . . A dossier of Paul’s letters would surely have been useful to Paul and his coworkers: it can hardly be supposed that each letter immediately had its intended effect, required no further clarification, and generated no new issues. The letters themselves are proof to the contrary. The tangled correspondence of Paul with the Corinthians, if not typical, certainly indicates that Paul needed to and did keep track of what he had written.

³⁹ Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus have all been regarded as deutero-Pauline, although some of these (Ephesians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy) were probably known and assumed to be authentic by Ignatius and Polycarp. If deutero-Pauline, they were composed and circulated so quickly as to be received as genuine a single generation after Paul.

A satisfactory theory [describing the rapid formation of a Pauline corpus] must give an account of why some letters were lost, some preserved, some extensively edited, and some newly composed. It must also suggest a realistic context in which Paul's literary legacy was cultivated and finally codified in a formal collection. That the responsibility for this lay with a Pauline school is probable, for such a group furnishes just the sort of constituency which could have had the interest and the capacity for the task, and which would make intelligible both the diversity and the coherence of the Pauline letter collection.⁴⁰

Thus a Pauline school remains a necessary historical construct to be invoked to explain the development of the diverse literary corpus connected to Paul's name. However, the Pauline "school" has left few historical traces outside the corpus itself.⁴¹

According to commentators, 2 Corinthians is a composite of two, three, five, or more letters. On Clement's apparent ignorance of 2 Corinthians, see Günther Bornkamm, "History of the Origin of the So-Called Second Letter to the Corinthians," *NTS* 8 (1962): 258–64. Margaret M. Mitchell defends the five-source hypothesis in "Paul's Letters to Corinth: The Interpretive Intertwining of Literary and Historical Reconstruction," in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen, *HTS* 53 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 307–38. Mitchell cites evidence that 2 Corinthians is a composite document (317):

The two canonical letters, especially the second, contain references to other letters (1 Cor 5:9; 2 Cor 2:3–9; 7:8–12; 10:10) and to a bewildering array of visits promised, delayed, and actualized (1 Cor 4:19–21; 11:34; 16:5–9; 2 Cor 1:15–2:1; 2:12–13; 7:5; 12:21; 13:1–2), as well as literary breaks, astonishing shifts in tone (such as at 2 Cor 10:1) and in content (conciliation, castigation, self-defense, financial appeals), repetitions (such as chapters 8 and 9 of 2 Corinthians), and inconsistency in the nature of the relationship between the epistolary partners (contrast 2 Cor 1:24 and 13:5, for example).

⁴⁰ Gamble, *Canon*, 40–41.

⁴¹ Similarly, "the school of St. Matthew" (Stendahl, *The School of St Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* [1954; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968]); and "the Johannine school" (R. Alan Culpepper, *The Johannine School: An Evaluation of the Johannine-School Hypothesis Based on an Investigation of the Nature of Ancient Schools*, *SBLDS* 26 [Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975]). The concept of a "school" is derived by analogy to the ancient philosophical schools. Jewish and Christian authors often compared their movements to these: Josephus characterized the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes as philosophical sects (αἰρετισταί, *J.W.* 2.8.2), and Justin Martyr regarded Christianity as true philosophy (*Dial.* 2). But any similarity between a Pauline school and the schools of the Pythagoreans or Epicureans is mostly superficial. Meeks cautions that they "resemble the Pauline communities just to the extent that they take the form of

The literary significance of Paul's epistolary communication can hardly be overstated for the Christian writings that soon followed. Among the twenty-seven documents of the NT, twenty-one of have the ostensible form of a letter. Many of the Christian writers who came after Paul share the presumption that "the letter form is the medium through which Christ-believers engage in theological and pastoral reasoning."⁴²

Pauline Influence on Other Early Christian Writings: Matthew, Hebrews, James

Recent studies reexamine Pauline literary influence on writings of the NT, now that collections of Paul's epistles are seen as having been widely available in the first century. It can be argued that writings that were not previously deemed "Pauline" nonetheless acknowledged, mimicked, or responded to his letters. The methodological assumptions are slightly different in each case, but these studies all begin by identifying minor verbal agreements; ancient authors need not duplicate a great deal to show awareness of Paul's epistles.

modified households or voluntary associations" (*The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2nd ed. [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003], 84). The term "Pauline school" is also used in a more general sense of a "circle of fellow workers and leaders" (ibid., 82).

"Pseudepigraphy" is frequently invoked to describe the literary production of philosophical schools. Raymond F. Collins describes a category of pseudepigraphy wherein followers felt free to imitate their masters, exemplified by "the pseudo-socratic, the pseudo-hippocratic, and pseudo-platonic texts, as well as a whole series of works by the academic, peripatetic, and stoic philosophers" (*Letters That Paul Did Not Write: The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Pauline Pseudepigrapha*, GNS 28 [Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1988], 76). Yet several works in question are in fact anonymous, written without claiming to have a famous author.

⁴² Mitchell, "The Letter of James as a Document of Paulinism?" in *Reading James with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of James*, ed. Robert L. Webb and John S. Kloppenborg (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 83.

In a series of studies, David C. Sim argues that Matthew—who is concerned especially for law-observant Christian Jews—resolutely opposes the “liberal” theology of Paul.⁴³ The majority of Matthean scholars have previously been skeptical of Pauline influence, agreeing with Ulrich Luz that “nowhere does Matthew’s Gospel suggest that its author may have been familiar with Paul or his epistles.”⁴⁴ But according to Sim, the intertextual relation between Paul and Matthew is to be found in “critical responses to Pauline texts at the level of Matthean redaction.”⁴⁵ He takes Matt 16:17–18a as a test case, comparing the passage to Gal 1:12, 16–17 and 1 Cor:10:4c. The Evangelist has Jesus say to Peter, σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα οὐκ ἀπεκάλυψέν σοι (“flesh and blood did not reveal

⁴³ Sim, “The Gospel of Matthew and the Gentiles,” *JSNT* 57 (1995): 19–48; idem, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); idem, “Matthew’s Anti-Paulinism: A Neglected Feature of Matthean Studies,” *HvTSt* 58 (2002): 766–83; idem, “Matthew 7.21–23: Further Evidence of Its Anti-Pauline Perspective,” *NTS* 53 (2007): 325–43; idem, “Matthew, Paul and the Origin and Nature of the Gentile Mission: The Great Commission in Matthew 28:16–20 as an Anti-Pauline Tradition,” *HvTSt* 64 (2008): 377–92; idem, “Matthew and the Pauline Corpus: A Preliminary Intertextual Study,” *JSNT* 31 (2009): 401–22; “Polemical Strategies in the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Polemik in der frühchristlichen Literatur: Texte und Kontexte*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer and Lorenzo Scornaienchi, BZNW 170 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 491–515.

⁴⁴ Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (1993; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 147. Despite a compatible thesis that Matthew emerged from a Jewish-Christian community, Luz’s situates Matthew as having no contact (and thus no conflict) with Pauline texts. In fact, he marvels that Matthew could have escaped polemical engagement with Paul, considering its origin in Antioch: “It is highly conceivable that there were many house churches in Antioch with little contact between them” (ibid.). John P. Meier’s earlier tradition-historical comparison of Paul and Matthew concludes as follows: “If Paul and Matthew cannot be simplistically harmonized, neither can they be played off against each other. As for missionary praxis as opposed to a theory of Law, Paul and Matthew could probably have worked together in a mission to the Gentiles” (Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* [New York: Paulist, 1983], 62–63).

⁴⁵ Sim, “Matthew and the Pauline Corpus,” 411.

this to you”); Sim observes that σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα occurs together with ἀποκαλύπτω in Gal 1:12, 16–17.⁴⁶ The strength of the proposed connection hinges on two criteria: (1) that the shared terms are uncommon; and (2) that the verse is Matthean redaction, a creation of the Evangelist himself.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ According to Sim, this language is borrowed from Gal, but the aim is really to respond to Paul’s statement that ἡ πέτρα δὲ ἦν ὁ Χριστός (“the rock was Christ”) in 1 Cor 10:4c (ibid., 415–16):

Given that Paul in 1 Cor. 3.11 had described Christ as the foundation of the church, thereby denying Peter this role, the evangelist may well have seen the reference to Christ as the rock later in the epistle as a further attack on the privileged position of the disciple. . . . [The Evangelist] responds to Paul’s argument that he was directly commissioned through a divine revelation by creating an alternative tradition that it was in fact Peter who received a direct revelation from God without any human mediation from “flesh and blood.” The reliability of the Petrine revelation is guaranteed by having no less an authority than (the historical) Jesus himself acknowledge its veracity.

Sim’s reading has not had broad acceptance. First, while he indeed identifies three terms shared by Galatians and Matthew, he admits that “flesh and blood” is found also in John 1:13; 8:53–56; 1 Cor 15:50; Eph 6:12; Heb 2:14; I note that it is also in Sir 14:18; 17:31. Without evidence beyond the shared context of revelation, it is difficult to be sure that Gal 1:12, 16–17 is the source. See also the critique of Kelly R. Iverson (“An Enemy of the Gospel? Anti-Paulinisms and Intertextuality in the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Unity and Diversity in the Gospels and Paul: Essays in Honor of Frank J Matera*, ed. Christopher W. Skinner and Kelly R. Iverson, EJT 7 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012], 7–32). Second, Sim appeals to a separate passage in 1 Corinthians to explain the Evangelist’s intentions in borrowing Pauline language in the first place. Purportedly, a parable from Q (Matt 7:24–27 // Luke 6:47–49) was the “basis for [the Evangelist’s] creation” of the dialogue (414). If Matthew revised Q when writing, “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church” (16:18), then 1 Cor 10:4c is not needed to explain Matthew’s invocation of πέτρα as a title for Peter; the same word would derive from Q. Without additional connection to 1 Corinthians, therefore, and a clearer refutation of something written by Paul, the “anti-Pauline” reading requires stronger defense.

⁴⁷ A view shared by Robert H. Gundry in *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (1982; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 335–36: “Matthew’s composing the similar passage 14:28–31 favors his composition of 16:17–19.”

Second, Hebrews has long been regarded as deriving from a Pauline associate, but Clare K. Rothschild has gone further than this view in presenting a new theory of direct dependence on several Pauline letters.⁴⁸ Since critical scholars are in agreement that Paul is not the author, she argues that Hebrews should be classed as a pseudepigraphon, the product of one who wishes “to fashion Paul . . . an erudite Jewish philosopher able to think and wax eloquently about the metaphysical implications of Jesus’ (and perhaps Paul’s) death in terms of Jewish cult.”⁴⁹

The main evidence for her reading is in the postscript, Heb 13:20–25, once marginalized as secondary.⁵⁰ Here Rothschild traces a large number of literary

⁴⁸ Rothschild, *Hebrews as Pseudepigraphon: The History and Significance of the Pauline Attribution of Hebrews*, WUNT 235 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

⁴⁹ Ibid., 118.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1–3. Harold W. Attridge’s commentary laid the burden of proof on those who dispute the postscript’s originality. Ironically, he becomes Rothschild’s foil for a persistent unwillingness to treat similarities between Hebrews and Pauline letters as anything more than common tradition. See esp. Attridge’s reference to “generic commonality” (*The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989], 30): “Both [the author of Hebrews and Paul himself] share a large number of common Christian traditions, and both certainly derive from the same wing of the early church that took a critical attitude towards the Law and its applicability to followers of Christ.”

Rothschild’s methodology is indebted to James A. Kelhoffer, who writes on the Longer Ending of Mark (16:9–20): “The cumulative effect of so many allusions to the same passages makes dependence upon actual copies of the NT Gospels [for Rothschild, the Pauline corpus] the most likely explanation” (*Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and Their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark*, WUNT 112 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000], 137). She applies this criterion to establish a literary context for the entirety of Hebrews. Under the presumption of the postscript’s originality, she infers that the context of Paul’s letters is operative when literary parallels are not apparent. Hebrews is “an amplification of an early collection of Paul’s letters, perhaps even . . . a guide to reading the corpus,” which seeks the “dehistoricization of select Pauline themes and ideas” (*Hebrews*, 206).

reminiscences of Paul.⁵¹ These include mention of “our brother Timothy” in 13:23, a red herring suggesting pseudepigraphic intent to conjure up “quintessential biographical features of Paul from his undisputed letters.”⁵² Therefore Rothschild concludes inductively that additional potential allusions in Hebrews are to be accounted for by the author’s reliance on an early *corpus Paulinum*.

Third, Margaret M. Mitchell has proposed a fresh understanding of the NT letter of James as a document written “*from within Paulinism* (rather than in opposition to Paul).”⁵³ Prior to Mitchell, those who regarded James as dependent on Paul also

⁵¹ ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης (v. 20, cf. Rom 15:33; 16:20; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23); ἐκ νεκρῶν (v. 20, cf. Rom 4:24; 8:11; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:20; Col 2:12); ἐν αἵματι διαθήκης αἰωνίου (v. 20, cf. 1 Cor 11:25); τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν (v. 20, cf. Rom 16:20; 2 Cor 13:13; Gal 6:18; Phil 4:23; 1 Thess 5:28; Eph 6:24; 2 Thess 3:18); καταρτίσαι (v. 21, cf. Rom 9:22; 1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 13:11; Gal 6:1; Eph 4:12; 1 Thess 3:10); ἐν παντὶ ἀγαθῷ (v. 21, cf. Rom 2:10); τὸ εὐάρεστον (v. 21, cf. Rom 12:1–2; 14:18; 2 Cor 5:9; Eph 5:10; Phil 4:18; Col 3:20; Tit 2:9); ὃ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας [τῶν αἰώνων], ἀμήν (v. 21, cf. Rom 16:27); παρακαλῶ (v. 22, cf. Rom 15:30; 16:17; 1 Cor 16:15; 1 Thess 5:14; 2 Thess 3:12); ἀνέχεσθε (v. 22, cf. 2 Cor 11:19); ἀσπάσασθε (v. 24, cf. Rom 16:3–16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; Phil 4:21; 1 Thess 5:26; 2 Tim 4:19); χάρις (v. 25, cf. Rom 16:20; 2 Cor 13:13; Gal 6:18; Eph 6:24; Phil 4:23; Col 4:18; 1 Thess 5:28; 2 Thess 3:18; 1 Tim 6:21; Tit 3:15; Phlm 25); μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν (v. 25, cf. 1 Cor 16:24; 2 Cor 13:13; 2 Thess 3:18; Tit 3:15). Rothschild admits that some of these are more impressive than others but claims a number of “precise allusions” to the Pauline corpus (*Hebrews*, 81).

⁵² Ibid., 78. Timothy is mentioned in five of the seven undisputed Pauline letters: Rom 16:21; 1 Cor 4:17, 16:10; 2 Cor 1:1, 19; Phil 2:19; 1 Thess 1:1; 3:2, 6.

⁵³ Mitchell, “James as a Document of Paulinism?” 79. Mitchell takes “James” to be a pseudonym: “The historical James, ‘the brother of the Lord,’ may well have represented something we might choose to call and recover as ‘Jewish Christianity,’ but his own authentic voice has not been preserved, probably because he was not an author (and why should he have been?)” (98).

concluded that he wrote in opposition to Paul and is “anti-Pauline.”⁵⁴ Mitchell agrees that correspondences between Jas 2:14–26, Gal 2:16–3:29, and Rom 3–4 “defy coincidence and point to a literary relationship,” yet she wishes to avoid implying that “‘true Paul’ is to be found in Gal 2:16, read as a sentence apart from the full argument of that letter, including Gal 5:13–6:10 (or especially perhaps 5:6: *πίστις δι’ ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη*).”⁵⁵

More to her point, Mitchell argues that James has also drawn from 1 Corinthians and is replicating Pauline epistolary poetics. Her examples are many, but three stand out.⁵⁶ First is εἴ τις δοκεῖ θρησκὸς εἶναι in Jas 1:26, a syntactical construction sharing three words with 1 Cor 3:18; 11:16; 14:37. This phrase is only in James and 1 Corinthians in the NT. Second is τί τὸ ὄφελος; in Jas 2:14, 16, again unattested in the NT except for 1 Cor 15:3. Third is μὴ πλανᾶσθε (“Do not be deceived”), common to Jas 1:16; 1 Cor 6:9; 15:33; Gal 6:6. In reference to this final example, Mitchell writes,

This might seem to be conventional exhortatory vocabulary that could be shared by a host of authors in the ancient world (Christian and non-Christian). However, Paul is actually the first attested user of the phrase in Greek literature and, apart from a single instance in Epictetus (*Diss.* 4.6.23), the phrase is found only in Christian texts. . . . Virtually all Christian authors who use it down through late antiquity are quoting one of these Pauline sentences, with two exceptions—Ignatius, who is clearly imitating Paul [*Eph.* 16.1; *Phld.* 3.3], and James. I take this as strong evidence that James is alluding to Paul (by quotation or imitation) here, as well. This is confirmed also by the fact that he even follows it up with the Pauline: ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Mitchell lists seven previous models of a literary-historical relationship between James and Paul, noting that two previous commentators (Dibelius and Hengel) have granted literary dependence (*ibid.*, 77–78).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 78–79.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 82–98, esp. 89–90.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 90. Mitchell anticipates the counterargument that a phrase derives from “common Christian tradition.” If the phrase is uncommon among Christian writings (better yet, Greek texts altogether), appeal to common tradition is a hollow objection.

By showing that James relies on a collection of Paul's letters including both Galatians and 1 Corinthians, Mitchell sees James as reconciling different "faces" of Paul which he found among these letters.⁵⁸ "The Paul of 1 Corinthians" is recruited to challenge the harsher "Paul of Galatians." Mitchell takes Paul's letters as a self-interpreting collection to be a theological prolegomenon to James, akin to the air he breathed by his very participation in a literary culture whose progenitor is Paul.

Methodology for Detecting Literary Sources in John 8

In the studies discussed above, a reevaluation of Paul's literary influence on the NT has taken shape with various methodological models. Intertextual analysis is a complex business, its approaches often geared to the text under consideration and the suspected source. Although the investigative methods are numerous, three general frameworks are discernable in the literature.

The first I call the "shotgun methodology" for its tendency to report the broadest literary evidence in defense of a source hypothesis. Barnett's investigation of John fits this type: he catalogues what for him is every conceivable case where a Pauline letter stands behind something in John.⁵⁹ The potency of this approach is the sheer quantity of data it yields, which requires close examination of nearly everything from the alleged

⁵⁸ This is also the way that later Christians would come to handle conflicts between Paul and James and Peter. Mitchell cites a homily of John Chrysostom that resolves the problem of Paul's enmity with Peter in Gal 2:11–14 (*Hom. Gal. 2:11*, PG 51:372–74, 378).

⁵⁹ Barnett, *Literary Influence*, 104–42. Barnett, it will be remembered, employs this strategy as he investigates several texts which purportedly rely on an early Pauline corpus.

source. But this strength can also become a hindrance to communicating findings, as everything tends to be lumped together as one. This is why, although Barnett gives a rating to each of his findings, his reader is forced to wade through countless minor examples in search of the best evidence.

The second approach I call the “laserbeam methodology” for its tendency to disregard all but the strongest evidence of a literary source. Whereas the first method produces a greater *quantity* of data, this approach is interested only in the highest *quality*—that is, a core of assured results. The redaction-critical criterion of Helmut Koester is a good example, though his criterion is developed for the study of the Apostolic Fathers.⁶⁰ Faced with the problem of judging whether early Christians are quoting the Synoptic Gospels or separate sources, Koester places the burden of proof on those claiming the former: “How can we know when written documents are the source for such quotations and allusions? Redaction criticism is the answer. Whenever one observes words or phrases that derive from the author or redactor of a gospel writing, the existence of a written source must be assumed.”⁶¹ These redactional details, or *Sondergut*

⁶⁰ Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den apostolischen Vätern*, TU 65 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1957); idem, “From the Kerygma-Gospel to Written Gospels,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 361–81; idem, “Written Gospel or Oral Tradition?” *JBL* 113 (1994): 293–97. Koester responds to arguments as in Édouard Massaux, *Influence de l'Évangile de saint Matthieu sur la littérature chrétienne avant saint Irénée* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1950), republished in ET: *The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature before Saint Irenaeus*, trans. Norman J. Belval and Suzanne Hecht, 3 vols. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990–93). For Massaux, the written gospels, especially Matthew, are what informed early Christian authors. But in light of Koester’s criterion, according to Gregory and Tuckett “Massaux may be accused of finding dependence on Matthew too readily” (“Reflections on Method: What Constitutes the Use of the Writings That Later Formed the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers?” in Gregory and Tuckett, *Reception*, 71).

⁶¹ Koester, “Written Gospel or Oral Tradition?” 297.

as they are later called by Wolf-Dietrick Köhler, must be in the repeated section of the source in order to show a written record behind verbal agreement.⁶² In practice, those who acknowledge this criterion's force still find it limiting.⁶³

Applying a strict criterion to the Pauline letters as potential sources is comparable. There is of course the need to consider Paul's possible employment of oral sources or traditions—this is analogous to limiting comparisons to the *Sondergut* of Matthew. Clearly there are instances when Paul incorporates prior oral or written tradition, e.g., the Christ hymn in Phil 2:5–11.⁶⁴ Yet in many passages, Paul's literary artifice is rhetorically or exegetically unparalleled, and these are conventionally treated as Pauline. Furthermore, the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG) opens new possibilities for charting the distinctive features of a Greek text. As we have already seen, it is feasible not only to

⁶² Köhler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums in der Zeit vor Irenäus*, WUNT 24 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 14; also cited in Gregory and Tuckett, "Reflections on Method," 71 n. 26; James W. Barker, *John's Use of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2015), 17 n. 13.

⁶³ Gregory and Tuckett, "Reflections on Method," 71: "Koester's weakness may be that his criterion makes it virtually impossible to demonstrate any dependence on a synoptic gospel except in passages where the redactional activity of an evangelist may be readily identified. The importance of Koester's criterion must be noted, but it is important to emphasize the limitations placed upon it by the nature of the evidence to which it must be applied."

⁶⁴ Schnelle summarizes many ways that Paul reflects prior tradition (*Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology*, trans. M. Eugene Boring [2003; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005], 103–8): Paul claims that he did receive his Gospel though not his call from others (Gal 1:16–17), but he transmits tradition that he received. He claims this himself in 1 Cor 15:1–7 (cf. 1 Cor 11:2 ["the traditions I handed on to you"]). Paul refers to "sayings of the Lord" (1 Cor 7:10–11 [cf. Mark 10:9–11]; 9:14 [cf. Matt 10:10 // Luke 10:7]; 1 Thess 4:15–17), and there may be additional traditions of this sort behind Rom 12:14–21; 14:14 (cf. Mark 7:15; Luke 6:27–36). Paul has baptism traditions (Rom 3:25; 4:25; 6:3–4; 1 Cor 1:30; 6:11; 2 Cor 1:21–22; Gal 3:26–28); Eucharist traditions (1 Cor 11:23–26; 16:22); creedal traditions (Rom 1:3–4; 10:9; 1 Cor 8:6; 15:3–5; Phil 2:6–11; 1 Thess 1:9–10); and paraenetic traditions (Rom 1:19–31; 13:13; 1 Cor 5:10–11; 2 Cor 12:20–21; Gal 5:19–23).

compare the vocabulary and syntax of one NT text with another but also to compare Paul to the words of earlier and extant Greek texts included in the database.

A third methodological approach I call the “rippling methodology” for its tendency to expand outward so as to suggest wider significance from minor examples of literary dependence. Richard B. Hays’s category of intertextual “echoes” is the most representative precedent.⁶⁵ As with Koester, Hays did not develop his methodology to study intertextuality between NT authors; he developed his criteria to isolate echoes of the LXX in Paul: “Allusive echo functions to suggest to the reader that text B should be understood in light of a broad interplay with text A, encompassing aspects of A beyond those explicitly echoed. . . . Metalepsis . . . places the reader within a field of whispered or unstated correspondences.”⁶⁶ Hays can posit metaleptic employment of LXX Scriptures because Paul has already a vast number of explicit quotations.⁶⁷ The advantage of this approach is its openness to expansive implications behind the recurrence of individual words.⁶⁸ Simultaneously, this methodology’s weakness is a reliance on the imagination of the investigator, who may exaggerate a supposed significance.

⁶⁵ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), esp. 21–33; idem, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

⁶⁶ Hays, *Echoes*, 20.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 16: “The vocabulary and cadences of Scripture—particularly of the LXX—are imprinted deeply on Paul’s mind, and the great stories of Israel continue to serve for him as a fund of symbols and metaphors that condition his perception of the world, of God’s promised deliverance of his people, and of his own identity and calling.” This is a prospective assumption which Hays expects readers to share.

⁶⁸ See further Chapter 4 below.

My study is guided by all three of these methodological frameworks and incorporates aspects of each. First, Barnett's work has laid a foundation in the text of John, giving me reason to select 8:31–59 for further examination. His strongest claims of verbal links to Romans and Galatians are my starting point. Second, I subject the verbal evidence to greater scrutiny than ever before; in a few cases I find in John 8 phrases first attested by Paul in all known Greek literature. This is the clearest evidence of literary dependence, and accordingly I place greater weight on these examples. Third, I present my findings with an interest in their larger, often theological, significance. Especially in Chapter Four I consider the already acknowledged broad agreement between Paul and John in the spirit of Hays's methodology: I will scrutinize the full literary context behind employment of a source.

I claim that (1) when Paul's argument contains rhetorical and exegetical distinctives; (2) when John treats the same subject matter and with the same locutions; and (3) when apparently disjunctive aspects of the Johannine text can best be explained by invoking a prior Pauline context, it is warranted to claim a literary relationship between Paul and John. I hope to show that employment of a written source explains these features better than the theory of shared oral traditions, since it is unnecessary to posit unknown sources when known and extant texts fulfill the same role.

CHAPTER 2

PAUL AS PROLEGOMEMON TO JOHN 8:31–38

Barnett places the “use” (his term) of Romans and Galatians in John 8:31–59 in the category of “practical certainty.”¹ He indicates that eleven of the twenty-nine verses contain Pauline words and ideas, and vv. 34, 35, and 36 receive his highest rating for their supposed indebtedness to Paul.² Yet Barnett offers little by way of explanation beyond a generality: “frequently . . . the resemblance [of the Gospel to Paul’s letters] is in the realm of the fundamental modes of thought and of controlling ideas.”³

¹ Barnett, *Literary Influence*, 104–42, esp. 142. “Knowledge” of a text and “use” of a source are distinguished by Gregory and Tuckett, who caution that, “It is impossible to demonstrate knowledge of a text unless it is used, but also the inability of subsequent scholarship to demonstrate the use of one text in another does not mean that non-use, let alone ignorance, has been proved” (“Reflections on Method,” 62). On their definition, “use” stands only for demonstrable evidence of a literary relationship. However, the term could also be taken to convey intentional and deliberate employment of a source, which I do not presuppose for John.

² Words in common are ἐλευθερώω, John 8:31–32, 36 (cf. Rom 6:18, 22; 8:2; Gal 5:1); σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ, John 8:33, 37 (cf. Rom 9:7; 11:1; Gal 4:29); δοῦλος τῆς ἀμαρτίας, John 8:34 (cf. Rom 6:17, 20). Tropes in common are the hierarchy of slave and son, John 8:35 (cf. Gal 4:30, where Paul allegorizes the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael); “works of Abraham,” which could mean Abraham’s faith, John 8:39 (cf. Rom 4:12; 9:7, 8; Gal 3:7; 4:26, 29, where πίστις is the defining characteristic of Abraham); the logic of divine sonship, John 8:41–42 (cf. Gal 3:26–29; Rom 8:14–16, where Paul invokes the metaphor of adoption); Abraham’s joyful witness, John 8:56 (cf. Gal 3:8, 9, where Paul describes Abraham’s foreknowledge of the inclusion of the Gentiles).

³ Ibid., 105. Barnett draws a comparison to the way that John “used” Mark, which, according to Barnett’s contemporaries, was in a rather free and creative manner. He cites the estimate of Burnett Hillman Streeter: John retells Markan stories with fewer than 20% of the same words (Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins, Treating of the Manuscript Tradition, Sources, Authorship, and Dates* [New York: Macmillan, 1924], 397).

Hence, the present Chapter has three goals. First, I introduce John 8:31–59 and situate the passage in the Gospel as a whole. Second, by way of summarizing three relevant studies, I identify interpretive challenges in 8:31–38. As I will show, commentators who stop short of claiming dependence on Paul nonetheless invoke a shared context or tradition. Third, I provide my own reading of these verses to show that Barnett was right to call Romans and Galatians literary sources of the Evangelist. John not only presumes Paul’s description of the human condition as captive to sin—“the plight”—and requiring liberation by Jesus—“the solution”—but he also draws key terminology from Paul’s letters to illustrate that situation.⁴ In 8:31–38, Jesus is misunderstood when he takes for granted the Pauline definitions of freedom, slavery, and sonship.

Situating the Study of 8:31–59

Apart from the thorny question of Pauline influence, John 8:31–59 presents an array of interpretive challenges for those whose principle point of comparison is the Synoptic tradition. First, the discourse bears little relation to the Synoptic Gospels.⁵ Second, key terms, including “children of Abraham (σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ)” and “the works of

⁴ Language of “plight” and “solution” derives from E. P. Sanders’s “from solution to plight” (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977], 475). Conversely, see “from plight to solution” in Frank Thielman, *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul’s View of the Law in Galatians and Romans*, NovTSup 61 (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

⁵ Some regard as relevant the parabolic contrasts between slavery and sonship in Matt 21:33–46 // Mark 12:1–11 // Luke 20:9–19; Matt 17:25–26. But generally the other Gospels have similar material in contexts which appear unrelated, e.g., John the Baptist mentions τέκνα Ἀβραάμ in Matt 3:9 // Luke 3:8.

Abraham (τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ),” confound internal analysis by their absence from the rest of John.⁶ Third, identification of Jesus’s questioners is difficult. οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι is rare in the Synoptic Gospels but appears about seventy times in John.⁷ The meaning of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (v. 48) is a notorious Johannine problem, whether or not they are to be identified as an actual group of Jesus’s or John’s contemporaries.⁸ Fourth, narratorial explanation is absent—here, the author gives no assistance to the reader.⁹ Fifth, the

⁶ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ is not a collocation which appears in Jewish texts at all. On the other hand, σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ has a prehistory in the LXX to be discussed below.

⁷ It is often translated cautiously in the postwar era: “Jewish authorities” (von Wahlde); “the Judeans” (Lowe); “the Jews” (retaining quotation marks). Perhaps the struggle to narrow the referent of the term is itself intended by the Evangelist, who associates Jews hostile to his community with the historic Jews of Jesus’s day. R. Alan Culpepper expresses concern that this two-level meaning of the term (Martyn) “creates a dangerous potential for anti-Semitism” (“Anti-Judaism in the Fourth Gospel as a Theological Problem for Christian Interpreters,” in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Reimund Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt, and Frederique Vandecasteele-Vanneuville [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001], 66).

I will either leave οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι untranslated or say “the Jews.” This is not necessarily a neutral approach and has even been accused of “dressing the Johannine Jews in quotation marks . . . to whitewash this text and absolve it of responsibility for the anti-Jewish emotions and attitudes it conveys” (Adele Reinhartz, “‘Jews’ and Jews in the Fourth Gospel,” in Bieringer, Pollefeyt, and Vandecasteele-Vanneuville, *Anti-Judaism*, 227). Nonetheless I agree with the majority of commentators who identify οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι as especially antagonistic Jewish figures who do not represent first-century Jews as a whole, much less the Jews among a pluralistic readership of today. On “formal correspondence” and “dynamic equivalence” translation strategies, see Ruth Sheridan, “Issues in the Translation of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 132 (2013): 671–95.

⁸ See John Ashton, “The Identity and Function of the ἸΟΥΔΑΙΟΙ in the Fourth Gospel,” *NovT* 27 (1985): 70: The ground of John’s depiction is “the belief shared by the evangelists that Jesus’ message was rejected by his own people and the seed of his word sown on poor and unreceptive soil.” οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι begin to exclude people from the synagogue in ch. 9, which lies at the heart of Martyn’s two-level reading. Martyn alleges that the views of high priests—historical adversaries of Jesus—are described as if belonging also to the Pharisees, who only later, according to Martyn, became opponents of the Johannine community (*History*, 84–89).

⁹ As Tom Thatcher notes, some of John’s asides “*explain discourse*, telling why something was said (or not said, e.g., 7:13, 30)” (“A New Look at Asides in the Fourth

dialogue ends with a dramatic “I am” statement (v. 58), possibly the most cryptic of these in all the Fourth Gospel.¹⁰ Finally, many modern readers regard John 8:31–59 as a source of enduring anti-Jewish polemic, perhaps the sharpest example in all the NT.¹¹ Each interpreter must guard his or her words carefully so as not to be misunderstood.¹²

The Synoptic Gospels portray a single journey to Jerusalem which precipitates the death of Jesus within a few days, but the Johannine Jesus remains in the area between the

Gospel,” *BSac* 151 [1994]: 430). From time to time the narrator intervenes to explain Jesus’s confusing words: 2:21, the temple of Jesus’s body; 6:71, Judas is a “devil”; 7:13, “fear of the Jewish leaders”; 7:30, “his time had not yet come.” At other points, as here, there is no explanatory voice, and the reader is presumably expected to find a solution: 6:52–58, the institution of the Eucharist; see Brown, *Gospel*, 1:255. In John 8, the conditional clause εἰ τέκνα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ ἐστε in 8:39 can be interpreted in various ways. An elusive shift in meaning may be required, as conditionality seems to contradict οἶδα ὅτι σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ ἐστε in 8:37, and the narrator does not announce, “He was speaking about X.”

¹⁰ For ἐγὼ εἰμί see John 4:26; 6:20, 41, 48, 51; 8:12, 18, 24, 28; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 13:19; 14:6; 15:1; 18:5. In 8:58 alone the phrase provokes uncontrolled rage from the Jewish authorities, nearly leading to Jesus’s death before his crucifixion. Bultmann claims that most occurrences of ἐγὼ εἰμί are of the “recognition formula” (answering an implied, “Who is the one?” with “I am he”) or “identification formula” type (“the speaker identifies himself with another person or object”) (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray [Oxford: Blackwell, 1941; repr., Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971], 225–26 n. 3). But Bultmann rejects taking 8:58 in either of these ways: “The ἐγὼ which Jesus speaks as the Revealer is the ‘I’ of the eternal Logos, which was in the beginning, the ‘I’ of the eternal God himself” (ibid., 327).

¹¹ The “anti-Jewish tendencies” of v. 44 account for the omission of 8:43–50 from the post-Vatican II lectionary (Bieringer, Pollefeyt, and Vandecasteele-Vanneuville, “Wrestling with Johannine Anti-Judaism: A Hermeneutical Framework for the Analysis of the Current Debate,” in idem, *Anti-Judaism*, 4 n. 2).

¹² A few years ago, while discussing this text with a colleague suddenly I remembered I was in public and had been overheard talking about “the Jews.” Adele Reinhartz expresses her ambivalence even to the study of a text “replete” with references to Jews as “the Other” (*Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John* [New York: Continuum, 2001], 15).

Festivals of Tabernacles and Passover.¹³ The whole of John 7–8 is bound together by what C. H. Dodd calls “a vivid impression of the constant presence, and urgency, of the opposition,” occurring together during the festival events of Sukkot or Tabernacles.¹⁴ Beginning with the first reference to Jewish leaders seeking to kill Jesus (7:1), attempts to arrest and execute him are mentioned several times (7:19–20, 30, 32, 45; 8:20, 40), culminating in 8:59, when the opponents pick up stones to throw at him. Alongside the persistent threat of violence, Jesus’s claimed authority and overall defensiveness are evident in his self-referential statements: “The world hates me” (7:7); “I have not come on my own” (7:28); “my testimony is true” (8:14); “my judgement is true” (8:16); “I am from above” (8:23); “I know [the Father]” (8:55); “before Abraham was, I am” (8:58).¹⁵

The many references to Abraham in the Fourth Gospel are all in 8:31–59, which provides a compelling rationale for treating it as a distinct literary unit.¹⁶ As a whole, 8:31–59 yields the immediate impression of a painstakingly-crafted discourse, edited to

¹³ According to Brown, on this point John’s narrative could be the more historical since a dramatic journey to Jerusalem “is itself a composite . . . with definite theological purposes” (*Gospel*, 1:309). Regardless, the result for John is this extended depiction of conflict in and around Jerusalem.

¹⁴ Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 346.

¹⁵ Sheridan claims that the themes of “origins,” “knowledge and belief,” “judgment,” and “testimony” unite John 7–8 (*The Figure of Abraham in John 8: Text and Intertext*, LNTS [New York: T&T Clark, 2020], 101–8).

¹⁶ Jeffrey S. Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews: Abraham in Early Christian Controversy* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 129–30. The twenty-eight verses of John 8:31–59 have eleven occurrences of Ἀβραάμ.

expound Jesus's authority while "the Jews" continue to question him and provide escalating tension to the scene.¹⁷ The dialogue comprises seven exchanges:

- (1) In vv. 31–33, Jesus addresses an audience called "the Jews who had believed in him," charging them to "remain (μένω)" in his word to be true disciples. The interlocutors seize on Jesus's language of "granting freedom (ἐλευθερώω)" to declare themselves "children of Abraham (σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ)" who in no way require liberation.
- (2) In vv. 34–39a, Jesus responds with claims lacking immediate coherence: "sin (ἁμαρτία)" is the enslaving master of all who commit sin; "the son (ὁ υἱός)" rather than "the slave (ὁ δοῦλος)" will remain in the house; "the son" grants lasting freedom; and a desire to kill Jesus calls into question the opponents' paternity. In response, the adversaries restate that Abraham is their father.
- (3) In vv. 39b–41, Jesus scrutinizes their kinship with Abraham, since a murderous intent does not align with "the deeds of Abraham (τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ)." This behavior is in keeping with the deeds of a different father. In response, "the Jews" deny "infidelity (πορνεία)" in their lineage from Abraham and appeal to God as their father.
- (4) In vv. 42–48, Jesus gives a lengthy reply questioning whether God is the father of those who do not obey a message from God. Failure to hearken to Jesus's word

¹⁷ At a minimum, the *de facto* structure shows careful planning and purposeful selection of language. Culpepper goes beyond this by contending that 8:31–37 is an elaborate chiasm intended to expose the true meaning of σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ ("The Pivot of John's Prologue," *NTS* 27 [1980]: 27). This structure takes the two halves of v. 35 as the interpretive center: ὁ δὲ δοῦλος οὐ μένει ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ὁ υἱὸς μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

shows that their true father is “the devil (ὁ διάβολος),” whose murderous and deceitful nature opposes the truth. οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι respond with an ad hominem attack, calling Jesus a Samaritan and possessed.

(5) In vv. 49–53, Jesus defends himself by claiming that anyone keeping his word will never see death. This makes the interlocutors more certain that Jesus is deranged, since he appears to claim a power greater than Abraham and the prophets.

(6) In vv. 54–57, Jesus again defends his actions before God, whom he now claims his opponents do not know. Abraham “rejoiced (χαίρω)” at seeing his day. The Jewish opponents are incensed and dispute whether Jesus could have seen Abraham.

(7) In vv. 58–59, Jesus claims to preexist Abraham with the words ἐγὼ εἰμί. “The Jews” nearly take his life in response, but Jesus escapes from the scene and from the temple and surrounding area.

In approaching these complex twists, commentators posit the author’s concern with persistent Jewish unbelief. Martyn would solve the John 8 puzzle of “the Johannine Jesus, himself a Jew, [engaged] in such an intensely hostile exchange with ‘the Jews’” by appealing to a Johannine community context of persecution.¹⁸ Hostility that was directed toward Jesus is meant to prefigure the hostility of John’s local synagogues, whose members do not regard Jesus as a messiah.¹⁹ As the theory alleges, early Jewish

¹⁸ Martyn, *History*, 28.

¹⁹ Jonathan Bernier delineates two schools of thought on the ἀποσυνάγωγος passages (*Aposynagōgos and the Historical Jesus in John: Rethinking the Historicity of the Johannine Expulsion Passages*, BibInt 122 [Leiden: Brill, 2013], 11): “classic Martynian” scholars hold these texts to refer to supposedly historical expulsions from

Christians acknowledged Jesus's rejection by the priestly powers in Jerusalem. This gave new meaning to their own intra-Jewish conflicts as they continued to defend a messiah despised by religious elites.

In practice, when interpreting John 8:31–59 commentators frequently rely on Romans and Galatians; the passage has proved nearly impossible to explicate without reference to Paul. Below I summarize three studies in which an appeal is made to a Pauline context or tradition. Regardless, previous investigators stop short of taking Paul as John's literary source. It is precisely this view for which I now wish to argue.

Previous Theories: Shared Contexts, Shared Traditions

In an influential 1968 essay, Dodd describes the dialogue of John 8:31–59 as a composition by a Hellenistic author in competition with “those who sought to maintain within [the Church] the traditional privilege of the Jew.”²⁰ In other words, the context is a continuation of the “Judaistic controversy” known from Galatians. In keeping with the consensus since Bultmann, Dodd argues that John does not “stand on Pauline ground.”²¹ First, Dodd looks to ancient Hellenistic philosophy. According to Dodd, John redacts axioms supposedly alien to the “Hebraic” logic of Paul on “liberty and servitude.”²²

synagogues ca. 100 CE, whereas “neo-Martynian” scholars are less certain that any traceable and historical events lie behind this “persecution.”

²⁰ Dodd, “Behind a Johannine Dialogue,” in *More New Testament Studies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968), 47.

²¹ Ibid., 47–48.

²² Ibid., 48–49. Dodd equates certain statements in John with Stoic material: μόνος ὁ σοφὸς ἐλεύθερος (cf. John 8:32); οὐδείς ἁμαρτάνων ἐλεύθερός ἐστιν (cf. John 8:34). After paraphrasing these alleged philosophical axioms, Dodd cites as their closest analogue Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.1.23. Epictetus has two relevant terms: ἐλεύθερος, ἁμαρτία /

Second, according to Dodd, John and Paul disagree on the meaning of σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ.²³

Third, Dodd claims that John limits the concept of “sonship to God” (Dodd) to Christ alone, quite unlike Paul’s metaphor of believers’ adoption (υιοθεσία, Gal 4:5).²⁴ To explain John’s reference to the example of Abraham, Dodd cites the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 3:9 // Luke 3:8; Matt 23:9; Luke 16:22–25, 29–30): “the Fourth Evangelist has reached back to the primitive testimony, bypassing in large measure the theological development associated with the name of Paul.”²⁵ Finally, John 8:35—at the center of Barnett’s clustered findings—Dodd dismisses as irrelevant, since he considers it an

ἀμαρτάνων. However, this does not show that John adapts or responds to Stoic slogans. First, Epictetus’s does not make οὐδείς τοίνυν ἀμαρτάνων ἐλεύθερός ἐστιν (“thus no one who acts in error is free”) a slogan but an argument in defense of the claim of philosophers that μόνους τοὺς παιδευθέντας ἐλευθέρους εἶναι (“only the educated are free”). This latter phrase is more likely a slogan under discussion: cf. the Stoic paradox πᾶς ἀστείος ἐλεύθερος and its inverse δοῦλον εἶναι πάντα φαῦλον in Philo, *Good Person* 1. Second, ἀμαρτάνω in Epictetus refers to an error in judgment—fearing the unknown—while in John it has a specifically Septuagintal (and hence Jewish) sense of “sin,” meaning a failure to fulfill divine law. Third, Epictetus inflects these terms from Stoic doctrine: the person is free who exhibits self-mastery by controlling only what falls under the jurisdiction of his or her own will, while he or she who succumbs to fear of the uncontrollable (death, exile, etc.) is enslaved (see esp. *Diss.* 2.10.1–6; 2.16.41). On the other hand, in John freedom derives from the unilateral action of the Son, and a person is enslaved by ἀμαρτία—that is, “sin”—not simply by virtue of ἀμαρτία—“error.”

²³ Ibid., 49–50. According to Dodd, when the Johannine Jesus grants that his Jewish opponents (representing Jewish Christians) are σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ, this disagrees with Paul. But Abrahamic descent is not a univocal concept in the Fourth Gospel; the Johannine Jesus also limits filial relation to the patriarch to those who emulate Abraham’s deeds (8:39). In Paul, σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ can stand both for physical ancestry (Rom 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22) and for spiritual descent (Rom 9:7; Gal 3:29).

²⁴ Ibid., 50–51. Purportedly, the Evangelist intends that “Jews who are hostile to Christ cannot maintain their claim to have God for their Father” (51). But this does not cohere with Dodd’s proposed *Sitz im Leben*, since a Jewish Christian could easily claim to have received Christ, quite unlike the characters in 8:31–59 who try to kill him.

²⁵ Ibid., 57. Since Matthew and Luke have John the Baptist speak of σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ (Matt 3:9 // Luke 3:8), Dodd suggests that the Fourth Evangelist may be relying on this tradition (ibid., 54).

originally independent parable of Slave and Son.²⁶ Dodd calls the saying “intelligible within the range of ideas associated with Synoptic parables, . . . [probably taken] from the common reservoir of tradition and turned [by the Evangelist] to his own use, not without some awkwardness.”²⁷

²⁶ Dodd does not cite him, but J. H. Bernard’s commentary already described John 8:35 as an “early gloss” (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, 2 vols. [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928], 2:308). Dodd’s discussion is more detailed in *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 380–82, especially the following:

The aphorism in v. 35 . . . does not fit very aptly into this discussion. In v. 36, ὁ υἱός is clearly Christ, who teaches the truth which sets men free (vv. 31–32) and whose word does not run (οὐ χωρεῖ) among those natural descendants of Abraham (σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ) who deny their paternity by their actions. But it is only by a rather awkward twist that this is made to carry on the thought of v. 35. If the proposition, ὁ υἱὸς μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, is to be taken as a Christological statement, as the evangelist probably intended (compare 12:34), it gives neither a forcible antithesis to the statement, ὁ δὲ δοῦλος οὐ μένει ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, nor a plausible premise for the argument which follows, ἐὰν οὖν ὁ υἱὸς ὑμᾶς ἐλευθερώσῃ ὅντως ἐλεύθεροι ἔσεσθε. We may therefore reasonably raise the question whether the couplet was originally independent of its present context.

Dodd suggests that the Evangelist repurposed the parable by placing it between vv. 34, 36. Brown commends Dodd’s description of v. 35 as a “parenthetical insertion,” awkward in its secondary context but similar to Synoptic traditions which contrast slavery and sonship: Mark 12:1–11 // Matt 21:33–46 // Luke 20:9–19; Matt 17:25–26; also cf. Heb 3:5–6 (*Gospel*, 1:355–56). Barnabas Lindars maintains a slightly different version of the theory: v. 35 is a previously independent saying that John has altered (“Slave and Son in John 8:31–36,” in *The New Testament Age: Essays in Honor of Bo Reicke*, ed. W. C. Weinrich [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984], 270–86).

²⁷ Dodd, *Commentary*, 382. Below I discuss why this partition theory fails to convince, several contextual factors weighing against a removal of the verse, including no support in the Greek manuscript tradition.

Similar to Dodd, Thomas B. Dozeman posits behind John 8:31–59 a conflict with the same group as Paul’s opponents in Galatia.²⁸ His argument applies equally to John and to Paul: σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ is a technical term for law-observant Christian Jews.²⁹ Dozeman employs Paul’s letters together with Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* to reconstruct this group’s perspective, which he holds is the target of John 8:31–59.³⁰ According to Dozeman, Paul invokes σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ specifically for mission-oriented Christian Jews who are excluded from spiritual Israel.³¹ Thus “the slavery of the σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ in John 8 is *also the law*, even though it is not specifically mentioned.”³²

²⁸ Dozeman, “Sperma Abraam in John 8 and Related Literature,” *CBQ* 42 (1980): 342–58.

²⁹ Dozeman, “Sperma Abraam.” Dozeman does not define “technical term” but implies that it must be the name of a historical group, whether endonym or exonym.

³⁰ Allegedly, John has distorted the perspective of these opponents. Dozeman calls the language “highly stylized” and worries that the perspective of a real party of Jewish believers cannot be reconstructed from the Johannine text alone. He cites only two sections in Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 44 and 47 (“Sperma Abraam,” 352–54). Justin appears to mimic the language of Paul when calling Trypho “seed of Abraham according to the flesh (κατὰ σάρκα)” (*Dial.* 44; cf. Rom 4:1). Justin’s wording conceivably reflects his own dependence on Paul, which would mean that he is not an independent witness to a historical group identity, as claimed by Dozeman.

³¹ Paul mentions σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ in Rom 4:13–25; 9:6–13; 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22; Gal 3:15–29. He twice refers to himself as σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ (Rom 11:12; Cor 11:22), which is rather awkward if this were a strict title as Dozeman claims.

³² Dozeman, “Sperma Abraam,” 355 (emphasis added). Dozeman writes: “Paul again provides a parallel to this in 2 Cor 11:20–22, where the mere identification of his opponents as *sperma Abraam* implies a conflict over the law.” Margaret E. Thrall disagrees, observing that “Judaizing as such is not the problem in Corinth,” and that καταδουλοῖ in context more likely describes “the super apostles (οἱ ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι)” (2 *Corinthians* 8–13, ICC [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000], 716).

Likewise, “the denial of slavery by the σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ in John 8:33 is not political but their affirmation that the law is not a form of slavery.”³³

Dozeman detects agreements between John 8 and Pauline letters, but for him the sole connection is a context in the same conflict. Dozeman considers John 8:37–39, where Jesus appears to grant that his opponents are σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ (v. 37), only then to treat this status as conditional (v. 39). Dozeman notes this set of positions conforms with Paul, who also contrasts τέκνα Ἀβραάμ and σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ (Rom 9:6–7), but without exploring this link he concludes, “The writer [John] is affirming that his opponents are σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ but denying that they are truly Christian, for they do not do the work of Abraham.”³⁴ In sum, Dozeman posits behind John 8 the same conflict as he finds in Galatians and Romans, but only awkwardly does he read this conflict into John 8:31–59.

Ruth Sheridan argues that “the Jews” of John 8 are to be understood as representatives of “‘rabbinic’ (or proto-rabbinic)” Judaism.³⁵ According to Sheridan,

³³ Ibid., 355. Dozeman follows Dodd in regarding John 8:35 as displaced from a previous context. Nonetheless, Dozeman associates the verse with Gen 21:10 because of Paul’s allegory in Gal 4:21–31.

³⁴ Dozeman, “Sperma Abraam,” 356.

³⁵ Sheridan’s verdict on John 8:31–36 is also her view of 8:31–59 as a whole: “The Jews’ perspective in John 8:31–36 is deeply ‘rabbinic’ (or proto-rabbinic) in that it shows awareness of many traditions associating the ‘seed of Abraham’ with God’s enduring love and covenant, with freedom from bondage (Egypt, idolatry) and with freedom from the debt of sin through the merits of Abraham’s works” (*Figure*, 223).

Sheridan refers to a parable from Sifre Num. 115.5.4 (Jacob Neusner, *Sifré to Numbers: An American Translation and Explanation*, 2 vols., BJS 118–119 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986], 2:182) in which God is heralded as having redeemed Israel from Egypt as slaves (cf. Exod 25:42; Lev 26). As God’s slaves the Israelites are to obey God’s decrees. The parable compares the “seed of Abraham” (זרע אברהם) to a friend’s son, redeemed from slavery by a king. The king says to this son, “You are my slave.” Sheridan writes, “The parable conveys two notions: (1) the ‘seed of Abraham’ belong exclusively to God, the all-powerful ‘king’; and (2) God redeemed them from (an

resemblance to Pauline language is explicable if Paul himself inherited Jewish traditions, and occasional parallels must be considered on a case-by-case basis.³⁶ Paul's own purported rabbinism (or proto-rabbinism) is the source of John's continuity with Paul. Romans and Galatians exist among a field of "intertexts" for Sheridan, but she is careful not to find Paul to be a literary source.³⁷ Indeed, Paul is but a minor representative of the larger tradition that Sheridan introduces to legitimize the responses of "the Jews." In this way she seeks to deconstruct the readings of Christian commentators who have tended to characterize "the Jews" as exhibiting "pride, privilege, and prejudice," supposedly missing the intra-textual resonances of the terms "seed of Abraham"; "son"; "slave"; "sin"; and "works."³⁸

In summary, Dodd, Dozeman, and Sheridan advance three approaches to John 8:31–59 which appeal to the context and traditions of Pauline epistles but steer clear of calling the epistles sources. In John 8:31–38, there remain three interpretive difficulties that these and other commentators have not resolved:

oppressive) captivity in order to 'enslave' them to himself (in the positive sense of divine service)" (*Figure*, 212).

³⁶ Ibid., 206–7:

[Paul] speaks of the "seed of Abraham" inheriting the "promise" (through faith in Christ), or of *the* "seed" of Abraham *being* Christ, drawing out complex schemata that position "slavery" and "freedom" in relation to "the law" and "faith." Other NT writers clearly develop prior traditions about the "seed of Abraham" as beloved of God and helped by God. Paul bucks many trends, but this only goes to show that he was aware of them.

³⁷ Ibid., 224.

³⁸ Sheridan, "Seed of Abraham, Slavery, and Sin: Reproducing Johannine Anti-Judaism in the Modern Commentaries on John 8:31–34," in *John and Judaism: A Contested Relationship in Context*, eds. Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson, RBS 87 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 313–32.

- (1) *The response of “the Jews” in 8:33*: Titular invocation of σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ together with the repudiation of slavery is regularly interpreted as misguided nationalist-political pride (Brown, Dodd, et al.); a convoluted pro-Torah sentiment (Dozeman); or a claim to have inherited the merits of Abraham (Sheridan). None of these alone seems satisfactory.
- (2) *The textual variant in 8:34* (δοῦλος [τῆς ἁμαρτίας]): This variant significantly alters the closeness to Paul but receives little attention in the literature. If τῆς ἁμαρτίας is omitted as in some Western texts and Clement of Alexandria, “slavery to sin” would seem to be implied by John without the outright repetition of the Pauline phrase δοῦλος τῆς ἁμαρτίας. Alternatively, if the reading of NA²⁸ is maintained, a literary connection to Paul must be considered.
- (3) *The sense of 8:35 in its present context*: Since Dodd, commentators have found difficulty in interpreting 8:35 as it stands; they question who is “the slave” and who is “the son.” The enslaving master in v. 34—sin—appears forgotten by v. 35, in which membership in the “household (οἰκία)” is desirable. In addition, the giving of freedom (ἐλευθερώω) in v. 36 is hard to grasp from the hierarchy of v. 35. Moreover, commentators refer only circumspectly to the grammatical link between the two: οὖν (v. 36).³⁹ In part because of this word, designating v. 35 an interpolation creates its own difficulties. If v. 35 were excised, as supported by no manuscripts, οὖν of v. 36 would refer back to v. 34, rendering the meaning of the

³⁹ BDF §451(1) notes that in the NT, οὖν, a “consecutive (inferential) coordinating conjunction,” is most frequently found in John: “It does not always furnish a strictly causal connection, but may be used more loosely as a temporal connective in the continuation or resumption of a narrative.”

conjunction equally obscure.⁴⁰ One way or another, there must presumably still be a link between the household imagery (vv. 34–35) and statement about liberation (v. 36).

In what follows, I claim that the difficulties above are easier to resolve when taking account of Pauline precedent as not merely tradition-historical but literary. Since others are already invoking Paul's context or traditions, there exists a straightforward explanation of the same evidence: Paul's letters are literary sources of John 8:31–59.⁴¹

I propose that John was in agreement with Paul as to his theological anthropology. John 8:31–59 presumes that Paul was right to describe the state of human beings as captive to sin and requiring liberation by Jesus. For John, in universalizing enslavement to and liberation from sin, Paul has defined σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ over against a fleshly and racialized meaning of the term which threatened early Christians and recapitulated the persecution of those born according to the Spirit. In other words, I claim that Paul has a real literary presence in John 8, observable from unique locutions repeated by John, and a presence which has required readers of John 8 to invoke Paul, consciously or even unconsciously, in finding meaning in this discourse.

⁴⁰ The “corrected” 8:34b–36 (omitting v. 35) reads, “Everyone who practices sin is a slave of sin. So (οὖν) if the son sets you free, you will be really free” (NET). Dodd and his followers do not explain the introduction of this son figure in 8:36 if not via the intervening words of 8:35. Brown, who agrees that 8:35 is an interpolation, does not decide whether or not 8:36 is a consequence of 8:34: “since it is a question of being free from the slavery of sin, only the Son has that power” (*Gospel*, 1:356).

⁴¹ Engberg-Pedersen appeals to Ockham's razor: “John knew and understood Paul” (*John and Philosophy*, 325).

Analysis of 8:31–33

It has long been noted that in the Evangelist's discourses, characters regularly misunderstand Jesus.⁴² Commentators adduce a variety of explanations as to why the Johannine Jesus is regularly misunderstood: Jesus's revelatory content (Bultmann); his seemingly ambiguous vocabulary (Leroy, Barrett); John's compositional strategy (Vouga); John's pedagogical goals (Painter); and the author's community identity (Culpepper). Classification of 8:31–59 as a misunderstandings discourse determines certain parameters for interpretation.⁴³ R. Alan Culpepper sets out the following general rubric:

(1) Jesus makes a statement which is ambiguous, metaphorical, or contains a double-entendre; (2) his dialogue partner responds either in terms of the literal meaning of Jesus's statement or by a question or protest which shows that he or she has missed the higher meaning of Jesus's words; (3) in most instances an explanation is then offered by Jesus or (less frequently) the narrator.⁴⁴

⁴² Bultmann, *Gospel*, 135 n. 1; Herbert Leroy, *Rätsel und Missverständnis: Ein Beitrag zur Formgeschichte des Johannesevangeliums* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1968); François Vouga, *Le cadre historique et l'intention théologique de Jean*, new ed., Beauchesne religions 3 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977); Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 200, 208; John Painter, *John, Witness and Theologian*, 2nd ed. (1975; London: SPCK, 1979), 82; Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, FF (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 152–65.

⁴³ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 157–58. According to Culpepper, the pattern of misunderstanding is operative beginning in 7:33–36 and 8:21–22, when Jesus twice states his intention go away and return to the one who sent him. In both cases, the reader is prepared to understand what Jesus really means, which obviates the need for an in-text explanation. Instead, “the Jews” misunderstand Jesus and unwittingly guess at partial truths: “Jesus will go to the Diaspora but not as the Jews think, and he will lay down his life, but *they* will kill him” (157).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 152.

At the transition in 8:31, Jesus addresses “the Jews who had believed in him.”⁴⁵ His charge to “abide (μένω)” in his word is not the source of their confusion, and neither is his prediction that true disciples will “know the truth (γνώσεσθε τὴν ἀλήθειαν).”⁴⁶ But Jesus also says, “The truth will set you free (ἡ ἀλήθεια ἐλευθερώσει ὑμᾶς).” As Culpepper observes, “The misunderstanding here turns on the meaning of ‘free.’ Taking it in a political sense, and turning a blind eye to certain eras of their national history, the Jews respond, ‘We are descendants of Abraham, and have never been in bondage to anyone.’”⁴⁷ Jesus’s invocation of “freedom” is the evident difficulty for his hearers. Like

⁴⁵ I do not regard as problematic the transition from 8:30 to 8:31. The difficulty as typically described is twofold: (1) determining whether the same group is referred to in both verses; (2) determining how Jesus’s prediction in 8:37 (ζητεῖτέ με ἀποκτεῖναι) befits anyone who had expressed faith in 8:31. Dodd suggests 8:30–31 may simply show stylistic variation (“Johannine Dialogue,” 43). Additionally, the faith exhibited by the group in 8:30 is a transient faith, as required by context rather than grammar (the presence or absence of a preposition after πιστεύω). This best explains why Jesus goes on to admonish them, “Remain in my word” (8:31).

Elsewhere in John, faith that comes from seeing is distinguished from faith that precedes sight (20:29). In 6:60–66, Jesus’s “eating my flesh” and “drinking my blood” becomes the point of division, separating those who believe from those who do not. See the objection of Debbie Hunn (“Who Are ‘They’ in John 8:33?” *CBQ* 66 [2004]: 387–98) that 6:66 is not about “fleeting faith” but “faulty discipleship” (390). She takes the pronoun “they” in 8:33 to refer to a separate (possibly third) group of objectors, not the ones who are said to have faith in 8:30–31. While this is a creative solution, the introduction of an additional set of dialogue partners would violate the discourse pattern. Instead of provoking misunderstanding in his intended audience, Jesus would be addressed by a separate group of speakers who are awkwardly inserted into the climactic exchange. But since the whole chapter treats οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι as a single set of characters, evidence of internal contradiction more likely indicates variegated responses to Jesus’s words from individuals within the collective.

⁴⁶ Von Wahlde notes that the phrase “know the truth” is absent from other Johannine writings except 2 John 1 (*The Gospel and Letters of John*, 3 vols., ECC 66 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010], 2:402).

⁴⁷ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 157; so also Leroy, *Rätsel*, 72: “By believing in the promise of Abraham, Israel knows itself to be the free offspring of Abraham. . . . There are two different theological languages opposed to each other.”

the Samaritan woman at the well who thinks that Jesus possesses a literal wellspring, or “the Jews” who understand Jesus to be speaking of cannibalism (4:15; 6:52), οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in 8:33 do not grasp that Jesus intends a spiritual meaning of “freedom.”⁴⁸

But just as “the Jews” in the narrative misunderstand Jesus, the modern commentary tradition mistakes their response in 8:33 when taking it in the absolute and political sense—an example of overreading unjustified by the context. Urban C. von Wahlde says, “The desire of ‘the Jews’ to disagree with Jesus is so intense that they are led to deny that they have ever been in slavery—something patently false, for the Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for four hundred years.”⁴⁹ Likewise, Brown

⁴⁸ In contrast to modern readings, Origen of Alexandria’s commentary (*Comm. Jo.*) finds allegorical significance behind most episodes of apparent misunderstanding. He generally denies that characters misunderstand: “For it would not be plausible that the Samaritan woman answered him in regard to water that is perceptible to the senses [John 4:7] . . . The hearers were not so foolish as to suppose that the speaker was inviting the hearers to approach him and eat of his flesh [John 6:56]” (*Comm. Jo.* 20.387; trans. Heine).

⁴⁹ Von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters of John*, 2:407. In this von Wahlde repeats an early Christian critique:

After all, they were slaves to the Egyptians for 430 years, and by the grace from above they were just barely brought out from the house of bondage. . . . They were also slaves to the Babylonians and the Assyrians when they picked up the whole country of the Jews and Jerusalem itself and transferred Israel completely to their own country. In no respect, then, is the statement of the Jews sound. (Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, 5.3.63, trans. Maxwell)

Cyril’s near-contemporary Augustine also heaps scorn on the response of “the Jews,” although he also considers a simpler alternative:

Wasn’t Joseph sold? Weren’t the holy prophets led into captivity? And again, didn’t that very nation, when making bricks in Egypt, also serve hard rulers, not only in gold and silver but also in clay? . . . Or do you perhaps mean that your ancestors were in bondage, but you who speak were never in bondage to anyone? How then were you now paying tribute to the Romans? (*Tract. Ev. Jo.* 41.2 [NPNF 1/7:230])

comments, “The Jews seem to misunderstand Jesus’ words about their freedom and take them in a political sense. . . . [Their] boast is ill founded, for Egypt, Babylonia, and Rome had enslaved them.”⁵⁰ Sheridan detects a tendency among major commentaries to exaggerate the boastfulness and evasiveness of “the Jews” in John 8:32–33, “effectively exacerbating their already negative portrait in much of the Gospel” and adding to the sense of Christian triumphalism that emerges when castigating the motives of ancient Jews.⁵¹ The conventional political reading makes the speakers seem obtuse, as if they are intentionally deceptive or blatantly shortsighted, open to an immediate correction from a cursory summary of Torah. If John intended so obvious an oversight by “the Jews,” Jesus might have taken a patronizing tone and reminded his audience of their ancestors’

⁵⁰ Brown, *Gospel*, 1:355.

⁵¹ Sheridan, “Seed,” 315. Sheridan catalogues a range of commentaries on John 8:32–33 whose language could be challenged as prejudicial: the Jews are “blind men who think that they see” (Bultmann, *Gospel*, 433); the Jews make an “ill-founded boast” as “privileged heirs to the promise to Abraham” (Brown, *Gospel*, 1:355); the Jews speak “in human pride over against the representative of God himself, [which] is an instance of the bondage referred to in v. 34” (Barrett, *Gospel*, 345); the Jews show their “incomprehension” at words which “wounded their religious and national pride” (Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, trans. Cecily Hastings, 3 vols. [New York: Seabury, 1980], 2:207); the Jews use an “ugly, challenging tone” to defend a “sense of inherited privilege . . . so strong that they can neither acknowledge their own need nor recognize the divine Word incarnate before them” (Donald A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 348–49); the Jews stand in place of “all those who abuse religion, and all who, in place of genuine believing, substitute some form of triviality, superstition, idol or lie” (Brodie, *Quest*, 329); the Jews respond out of “spiritual superiority as children of Abraham chosen by God out of all the nations” (Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 309).

wanderings in the wilderness as departed slaves of Egypt, just as Jesus had already corrected them from Moses and the patriarchs in 7:22.⁵²

Sheridan's alternative to the conventional political reading is to find in the words of "the Jews" of 8:33 a "legitimate counterclaim."⁵³ Her conclusions draw from the intertextual threads of her study:

The Jews' claim to be Abraham's "seed" [8:33] reaches back into texts concerning God's faithful covenant promises; the "inheritance" and observance of the Torah that is given to Abraham and his seed; God's unconditional love and help for Abraham's "seed"; and the surplus "merits" that Abraham accumulated that benefit his "seed" in times of distress and sin. These traditions are premised on the fathers being alive to God, or alive to God's "memory" as it were, and actively available to intercede for the sake of their seed.⁵⁴

According to this theory, the initial reply, "We are seed of Abraham, and have never been slaves to anyone" (8:33), already challenges the argument that Jesus is making about sin.

οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι stand ready to counter Jesus out of their monotheistic covenant fidelity, ready

⁵² John Chrysostom notes this, and it gives him occasion to praise the patience of Jesus, who might have rubbed his opponents' noses in their error:

And why did not Christ confute them, for they had often been in bondage to the Egyptians, Babylonians, and many others? Because His words were not to gain honor for Himself, but for their salvation, for their benefit, and toward this object He was pressing [to show that they were slaves to sin]. For He might have spoken of the four hundred years, He might have spoken of the seventy, He might have spoken of the years of bondage during the time of the Judges, at one time twenty, at another two, at another seven; He might have said that they had never ceased being in bondage. (*Hom. Jo.* 54.316 [PG 59:297]; trans. Philip Schaff, *NPNF* 1/14:192)

⁵³ Sheridan, "Seed," 315.

⁵⁴ Sheridan, *Figure*, 224.

to upstage what he is about to say and to advance a claim to the meritorious works ascribed to them in light of their heritage.⁵⁵

As a result, instead of misunderstanding Jesus, “the Jews” in Sheridan’s reading are made to anticipate what Jesus will say before he says it. They would have to know from Jesus’s reference to slavery that he means “slavery to sin” in order to present the example of Abraham in the hope that “the surplus ‘merits’ that Abraham accumulated [will] benefit his ‘seed’ in times of distress and sin.”⁵⁶ Sheridan’s effort to legitimize the

⁵⁵ Here Sheridan expands on the reading of Reinhartz (“John 8:31–59 from a Jewish Perspective,” in *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, ed. John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell [New York: Palgrave, 2001], 787–97). Reinhartz suggests that Jesus’s perceived violation of strict monotheism is the pretext for the dispute (793):

Perhaps the Jews’ claims in 8:33, that they have never “served” anyone or anything, can be taken on two levels. From the Johannine Jesus’ point of view the Jews’ declaration reveals their complete ignorance of and blindness to their own spiritual state, from which they can be set free only by continuing in Jesus’ word. For the Jews, however, this declaration expresses their unshakeable commitment to monotheism: they have never served any being other than God; indeed, to serve another “divine” being would be tantamount to slavery. Read in this way, the Jews are neither lying nor boasting but simply explaining why they cannot believe in Jesus or continue in his word: to do so would be to violate the foundation of their faith and self-understanding as Jews.

Reinhartz connects 8:33 to the accusations leveled at Jesus when he is called a Samaritan who has a demon in 8:48; these indicate a response to heresy. She reads the final ἐγὼ εἰμὶ in 8:58 as an assertion of Jesus’s divine status and thus incompatible with monotheistic religion. But Reinhartz’s reading takes too little account of how the discourse unfolds: “the Jews” respond οὐδενὶ δεδουλεύκαμεν πώποτε in 8:33 before they hear Jesus’s more expansive response in 8:58. Jesus does not claim to pre-exist Abraham until challenged on this very point: πεντήκοντα ἔτη οὐπὼ ἔχεις καὶ Ἀβραάμ ἐώρακας; (8:58). “The Jews” are not guarding monotheism against a violation that they have not yet heard.

⁵⁶ Sheridan, *Figure*, 224. Sheridan does not explicitly claim that “the Jews” anticipate Jesus’s spiritual interpretation of freedom before he says it (vv. 34–36). But her explanation surely requires this. The same difficulty attaches to Dozeman’s reading that “the Jews” (who stand for Christian Jews) raise their status as σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ to dispute

counterclaim appears to reverse the pattern of misunderstanding and turn “the Jews” into prescient dialogue partners. The context resists this reversal and confirms that οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι remain confused.⁵⁷ If not anticipating Jesus’s reply, for what other reason might οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι say, “We are seed of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone”?

First, John appears to know σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ as a polyvalent category. In Paul, the same collocation is repeatedly a term that distinguishes Abraham’s ethnic from his spiritual descendants. On the other hand, in extant literature predating Paul, σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ has no such ambiguity; physical descendants of Abraham are σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ.⁵⁸

that “the slavery . . . is also the law” (“Sperma Abraam,” 355). This would have to anticipate a nonliteral meaning of slavery.

⁵⁷ “The Jews” explicitly ask for clarification: “How can you say, ‘You will become free?’ (πῶς σὺ λέγεις ὅτι ἐλεύθεροι γενήσεσθε;)” (8:33). They do not understand what Jesus means by freedom and slavery, which makes it impossible for them to anticipate that Jesus is accusing them of sin; only in v. 34 does he define sin as a kind of slavery.

⁵⁸ In the LXX, σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ refers to Abraham’s physical descendants. In the Abraham cycle of Gen 12–22, the term reflects Abraham’s children who will receive the promised land of the Canaanites (esp. Gen 12:7; 15:1–6; 22:16–18). Similarly, Isa 41:8 (in parallel with Ἰσραὴλ, Ἰακώβ); Ps 104:6 [105:6 MT] (in parallel with υἱοὶ Ἰακώβ); 2 Chron 20:7 (in parallel with Ἰσραὴλ).

Sheridan’s examination of Jewish texts that have this term or a related idea is extensive (*Figure*, 134–215). Three representative examples from the Second Temple era are as follows: (1) Tob 1:12: Tobit is advised to choose endogamous marriage after the examples of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were blessed with numerous children and married “among their own kindred (ἐκ τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτῶν)”; (2) Sir. 44:19–21: the promises to Abraham are already fulfilled in that his seed is the Jewish residents in possession of the promised land; (3) *Aramaic Levi* (a fragmentary text found in the Cairo Genizah and at Qumran): Levi is instructed against departing from endogamous marriage and defiling his seed (Sheridan, *Figure*, 167–71, 183).

The identification of Abraham’s seed is found already in the reception of Jewish Scriptures, as Philo’s allegorical reading of Gen 15:3 confirms (*Her.* 65). Philo compares Abraham’s seed to humans who incline their minds toward heaven and the incorporeal (see esp. *Her.* 68), but he makes the physical heir of Abraham the point of comparison. Indeed, Philo has Abraham declare his desire for a child of his own body:

Paul expands the meaning of the term, first in Galatians and more clearly in Romans.⁵⁹

From the cogency and internal consistency of Paul's arguments commentators grant his

For I [Abraham] know that Thou, who givest being to what is not and generatest all things, hast hated the childless and barren soul, since Thou hast given as a special grace to the race of them that see that they should never be without children or sterile. And I myself having been made a member of that race justly desire an heir. For when I contemplate the race's security from extinction, I hold it a deep disgrace to leave my own desire of excellence to come to naught. (*Her.* 36 [Colson and Whitaker, LCL])

⁵⁹ In Galatians, Paul refers to σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ in only two verses (3:16, 29), yet the term is pivotal for his message that Gentiles need not receive circumcision. In 3:6–9, he introduces Abraham by referring to his exemplary faith: “those of faith are sons of Abraham” (3:7). But “all who are from works of the law are under a curse,” says Paul, quoting Deut 27:26: “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by (ἐμμένω) all the things written in the book of the law, and do them” (3:10). Through Jesus's taking of the curse required by the law (3:13), Abraham's blessing extends to Gentiles when they receive the Spirit (3:14). Finally, in 3:15–18 Paul points out that the promises to Abraham antedate the Sinai covenant, making the former logically prior. Jesus, the σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ par excellence, is the singular “seed” of promise in Gen 12–17. Consequently, the law is not evil but a guardian and steward until Christ's arrival; faith in Christ is the new mark of identity for Abraham's spiritual descendants (3:13–29): “If you are of Christ, then you are seed of Abraham (τοῦ Ἀβραάμ σπέρμα ἐστέ)” (3:29).

Paul certainly knows that σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ can refer to a collective, as he shows in Gal 3:7. Indeed, he raises the grammatical number of the term in defense of his position, although not without precedent in Gen 15:1–6, which begins from Abram's desire for a singular heir to his house. According to Martyn (*Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33A [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997], 340),

Bold move follows bold move, for the Galatians are sure to have learned of the expression “seed of Abraham” from the Teachers, and the Teachers will have used it in its collective sense, insisting that the Abrahamic blessing, having come long ago to the plural people of Israel, is now flowing to Gentiles who join that people by observance of the Law. . . . Paul insists that God spoke his covenantal promise to only *two* persons: Abraham and his singular seed.

In Romans, Paul reformulates his position but again treats σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ as polyvalent. Instead of repeating the argument of Gal 3, Paul makes a separate claim based on historical priority: Abraham received justification prior to circumcision. In Rom 4, Paul posits that Abraham could not have been justified by works of the law, since in Gen 15:6 “Abram believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” His circumcision followed as a “seal of the righteousness of faith which he had while uncircumcised” (4:11). As a result, Abraham is father both to the uncircumcised and to

originality: before the conflict over inclusion of Gentiles became contentious—which Paul witnessed firsthand and recounts in Gal 2:11–14—there was no reason for a writer to have any other definition of σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ. It stood for those who were either bodily descendants of Abraham or Jewish converts bearing marks of Jewish identity. But because Paul faced a situation new in Jewish history—Gentiles being accorded “Jewish” identity without becoming Jews—Paul expands the category of σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ.⁶⁰ A familiarity with Galatians and Romans would explain why John also shares this terminological development.

Second, on the most neutral reading of “we have never been slaves to anyone” (οὐδενὶ δεδουλεύκαμεν πώποτε, 8:33), the speakers are themselves claiming to be free men, under no contract of servitude. When combined with the title σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ—

the circumcised—all must emulate Abraham’s example of faith (4:11–12). For that reason, the promise to Abraham and his seed comes through “the righteousness of faith” (4:13). On 4:16, Jewett notes that, “The innovation in Paul’s interpretation is that the promise was not merely guaranteed by God, which would conform to the conviction of Philo and most other adherents of the biblical faith, but ‘to *all* the descendants’” (*Romans*, 330). Also according to Jewett, Abraham’s collective seed, standing for “those of the law” and “those of the faith of Abraham,” reassures the reader that “the guarantee of Abraham’s promise remains valid for ‘those of the law’ . . . a formulation that appears to retain law-observant Jews within the realm of Abraham’s promise even if they do not, or do not yet, share his faith” (*ibid.*, 331).

In Rom 9, where Paul next refers to σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ, Paul distinguishes Abraham’s children (τέκνα) and Abraham’s seed (σπέρμα), the second being the more desirable category (9:7). “Children of the flesh” are not necessarily the “children of God”; rather, “the children of the promise are reckoned as seed” (9:8). In the same way, Isaac’s descendants, not the descendants of Ishmael, are Abraham’s seed (quoting Gen 21:12). Paul again has σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ in Rom 11:1, this time in the conventional sense of “descendant[s] of Abraham.” Paul’s Jewish identity, taken together with membership in the tribe of Benjamin, signals that the historical people of God are not forgotten.

⁶⁰ Paul does not express a desire to innovate. Instead, he reaches back to the LXX narrative to find support for a comprehensive meaning of σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ, and this he takes as intended by God all along.

here apparently an honorific—the argument seems to recall the LXX speaking of Abraham’s descendants enduring a temporary bondage before gaining possession of the land of promise, e.g., in Gen 15:12–16. Whether or not this connection was intended by John, the introduction of σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ sets up Jesus’s correction that follows, when he asks whether self-proclaimed children of Abraham are truly τέκνα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ (8:39). Seen from this angle, the words of “the Jews” are not a counterclaim in need of legitimation but convey a forgivable confusion, allowing Jesus to define σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ and to challenge his opponents.

Third, the literary context of Gal 4:21–31 provides another potential reason for self-described σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ to deny their slavery. When Paul divides the children of Abraham into two allegorical camps, one represented by the slave woman Hagar, Paul alleges, “Now Hagar represents Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children (δουλεύει γὰρ μετὰ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς)” (Gal 4:25 NET). According to Paul, children of Abraham reside in Jerusalem and remain spiritually enslaved, though they are unaware of the fact. Here some commentators claim that Paul refers to a Jerusalem church which supported law-observance for Gentile converts.⁶¹ But Paul’s description can as easily be associated with the priestly powers who reside in Jerusalem and helped to orchestrate Jesus’s death. Paul mentions a still-current pattern, that “one born according to flesh persecuted the one born according to

⁶¹ Martyn, *Galatians*, 439: “Insofar as the Jerusalem church is at present allowing itself to serve as sponsor—or at least as an acquiescing ally—for the Law-observant Gentile mission, it stands in the slavery column.” Hans Dieter Betz reckons that Paul nonetheless “wants to create a dualistic polarity between ‘Judaism’ and ‘Christianity,’ in order to discredit his Jewish-Christian opposition” (*Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 246).

Spirit” (Gal 4:29). Similarly, John has formulated Jesus’s conflict in the Jerusalem temple to reveal Abraham’s children, those who unwittingly persist in slavery and turn out to “persecute” Jesus.

Analysis of 8:34–36

I come now to the core of previous arguments for Pauline dependence in John. In the literature, the three verses deemed certainly dependent by Barnett are plagued with interpretive difficulties that seem to conspire against a coherent reading. These include text-critical problems, the partition theory as regards v. 35, and the identification of characters in vv. 35–36.⁶²

The solution that I shall propose draws on the reading of John Chrysostom, who, unencumbered by the apparatus of modern historical criticism, finds a cohesive account of these verses. Following Chrysostom, I propose that vv. 35–36 constitute a *παραβολή*, a rhetorical device taken from common human experience; the word “son” functions as a double entendre. The son is both Jesus himself, one able to set others free (cf. 8:31–32), and also the heir to the household of God, a permanent authority who guarantees a slave’s manumission. From this I shall show that John 8:34–36 shares not only vocabulary but also discursive features with Gal 3–4 and Rom 6–7.

⁶² English translations of 8:35–36 draw attention to this third difficulty especially by the capitalization of “the Son” for *ὁ υἱός*. In the alternation between “son” and “Son,” the NRSV, NASB, HCSB, NIV, NKJV, ESV, and RSV make v. 35 generic and v. 36 a theological claim. Nothing in these verses indicates that the “son” of v. 35 is not the “son” of v. 36. The repetition of *ὁ υἱός* naturally invites the reader to take both as referring to the same person.

In 8:34 Jesus comes to the point of his promise of freedom, a word and concept that has prompted misunderstanding in his hearers. Of course, Jesus does not mean physical slavery but a spiritual slavery to sin: “the doer of sin is a slave of sin (δοῦλός ἐστιν τῆς ἁμαρτίας).” τῆς ἁμαρτίας is omitted by D b sy^s and the version of Clement of Alexandria, admittedly an impressive set of witnesses from the Western text family. Bruce M. Metzger notes that the deletion could be either stylistic or interpretive: “A majority of the Committee explained the absence of τῆς ἁμαρτίας from several witnesses . . . as a stylistic improvement introduced by copyists either (a) because τὴν ἁμαρτίαν occurs just a few words earlier or (b) in order to make a closer connection with the following general expression ὁ δὲ δοῦλος.”⁶³ If John initially personifies *sin* as the enslaving master in v. 34, then v. 35 appears to depict “the household (οἰκία),” presumably the household of God. A later scribe might have wished to avoid the impression that personified sin is master over the household where Jesus exercises authority as “the son” (v. 36).

Further, internal evidence supports the inclusion of τῆς ἁμαρτίας: the hyperbaton is consistent with Johannine style.⁶⁴ Alongside this example, the Gospel contains six

⁶³ Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (Fourth Revised Edition)*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 224. The reading with τῆς ἁμαρτίας is rated C, conveying a considerable degree of doubt.

⁶⁴ Consideration of Johannine style is strangely unmentioned by commentators who dispute the originality of τῆς ἁμαρτίας. So, e.g., Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, NCBC (1972; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 325: “these words . . . should undoubtedly be omitted as a very early gloss. . . . The sentence answers the question: ‘Who is the slave [sc. of the parable of 35]?’ The further question: ‘To whom is he enslaved?’ will be raised in verse 38 and will not be answered until verse 44. There it will appear that the answer is not sin personified, as the gloss implies, but the Devil himself.”

other instances of hyperbaton exhibiting the following consecutive features: (1) a noun in the nominative; (2) a form of εἰμί; (3) a noun in the genitive denoting possession or explanation.⁶⁵ Additionally, all seven examples come at the end of a clause or sentence, the descriptor retained for emphasis: “You are the king *of Israel*” (1:49b); “. . . is a slave *of sin*” (8:34b); “I am the light *of the world*” (9:5b); “. . . is the shepherd *of the sheep*” (10:2b); “Now is the judgment *of this world*” (12:31a); “You’re not one *of this man’s* disciples too, are you?” (18:17b); “I am the king *of the Jews*” (19:21b). In each case, the final genitive when removed does not alter the sense, but what might appear to be a gloss in fact reflects the author’s intention to have the description carry greater weight. In 8:34, the retention of τῆς ἁμαρτίας until the end of the sentence adds suspense to the revelation of Jesus’s spiritualized definition. For “the Jews” who are denying their need of freedom, this is Jesus’s full reply to the question in v. 33: “How (πῶς) can you say, ‘You will become free’?” (NET).

The deletion of τῆς ἁμαρτίας is explicable as an attempt at stylistic improvement, but a motive for its addition is not apparent. As acknowledged by commentators, the thrust of Jesus’s teaching is unchanged.⁶⁶ Certainly the “doers of sin” are not enslaved to

⁶⁵ Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, rev. Gordon M. Messing (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), §3028: “In prose hyperbaton is less common than in poetry, but even in prose it is frequent, especially when it secures emphasis on an important idea by placing it at the beginning or the end of a sentence.”

⁶⁶ Barrett, *Gospel*, 345–46: “The last words (τῆς ἁμαρτίας) . . . may be an editorial supplement (rightly) giving the sense of the passage, provided that sin is understood not simply in moral terms but as the barrier between man and God.” Lindars disagrees because in 8:44 the master is ὁ διάβολος, not personified sin (*Gospel*, 325). Lindars does not say why he deems these images incompatible since Jesus also restates a connection to sin in the same reply (τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐλέγχει με περὶ ἁμαρτίας, 8:46). The devil’s role in the sinful actions of humans turns up in 13:2, where “the devil had put in the heart of Judas

God, so the context otherwise requires an enslavement to sin or to one who exercises power through sin.⁶⁷ If Jesus were to say only that “Everyone who commits sin is a slave,” a reasonable inference is that he intends slavery to sin, and the addition of τῆς ἁμαρτίας would be redundant—that is—unless a scribe otherwise heard a Pauline voice in the text and intended to make a connection to Paul explicit.⁶⁸

The same interpretive difficulty that accounts for the deletion of τῆς ἁμαρτίας can account for a second variant in 8:35: the omission of ὁ υἱὸς μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. This omission is attested in N W Γ 33 1241.⁶⁹ The reading may have arisen from an innocent mistake but is nonetheless interpretive in its effect.⁷⁰ Once again, if “the son” appears to be a member of a household where sin is master, the variant removes the explicit connection between son and slave, allowing “the son” in v. 36 to be identified as Christ, who is able to set a person free from bondage in the household of sin, by divine fiat

Iscariot, Simon’s son, that he should betray Jesus.” Judas’s betrayal is a “greater sin” according to 19:11.

⁶⁷ According to the logic of 8:39, children are known by their imitation of their fathers.

⁶⁸ This is a less satisfying hypothesis but would show that Pauline resonances are observable and were recognized by an early copyist. The theory requires that a scribe (1) heard a literary relation to Paul’s letter; (2) conceived an addition which emulates John’s characteristic hyperbaton; (3) drew his gloss from Rom 6:17–22 where he found ὅτε γὰρ δοῦλοι ἦτε τῆς ἁμαρτίας, ἐλεύθεροι ἦτε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ (6:20) and ἐλευθερωθέντες ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας (6:22).

⁶⁹ And a few other manuscripts and versions, evidently. It is conspicuous that none of the witnesses lacking ὁ υἱὸς μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα in v. 35 also lacks τῆς ἁμαρτίας in v. 34, as would be expected if both variants solve the same difficulty.

⁷⁰ Barrett suggests omission by homoeoteleuton (*Gospel*, 346). Metzger gives no summary of the committee’s deliberations in this case.

perhaps. The difficulty is avoided by distinguishing “the Son”—identified theologically as Jesus—from the household metaphor.

Dodd’s partition theory, which leads certain commentators to emend the text by bracketing 8:35, is a third solution to the same difficulty.⁷¹ But retention of v. 35 has the following advantages: (1) it requires no speculation about the state of the received text, since no extant manuscript lacks v. 35; (2) it fits with σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ, since Abraham’s son Isaac retained a permanent place in the household; (3) it explains the stylistic improvements reflected in the textual variants in vv. 34–35 (discussed above); (4) it makes better sense of the coordinating conjunction οὖν (v. 36), whose purpose disappears in the absence of v. 35 since v. 36 makes little sense as an inference from v. 34.⁷² Moreover, ὅντως (v. 36), which appears to be the key term here, is curiously not addressed by most commentators.⁷³ How does “the son” offer a certain and abiding type of freedom if the metaphor of slavery is still in view?

⁷¹ Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 380: “The aphorism in v. 35 . . . does not fit very aptly into this discussion.”

⁷² From internal logic alone, v. 36 is not easily understood as a consequence of v. 34. Bultmann allows οὖν to link vv. 35–36 given that “we can afford to tolerate the harshness” (*Gospel*, 440). If v. 36 is a consequence or inference of v. 34, “the son” has no antecedent; “the son” would be coming out of nowhere in the explanation. Brown senses the difficulty and notes that “since it is a question of being free from the slavery of sin, only the Son has that power” (*Gospel*, 1:356). But if Jesus promises freedom to those who remain in his word in 8:31–32, how does he overcome the mastery of sin? Indeed, it is hard to see how, if the metaphor is extended, “the son” can grant lasting freedom to the slave of someone else.

⁷³ Bultmann judges that ὅντως of 8:36 means “he [Jesus] *alone* can bestow it, and *only that* is genuine freedom” (*Gospel*, 440).

The modern commentary tradition has not found a way to make sense of 8:35 in its present form. Again, John Chrysostom offers an attractive alternative.⁷⁴ Instead of puzzling over v. 35, Chrysostom deems it essential to the whole: “[Jesus] adds these words [8:35], since otherwise what coherence (ἀκολουθία) do these sayings have?”⁷⁵ Chrysostom claims that v. 35 is a παραβολή, a rhetorical example from common human experience: “the parable (παραβολή) has this meaning, that is ‘the servant has no power,’ [which] is the meaning of ‘abides not.’”⁷⁶ Chrysostom notices that in v. 36 “the son” is doing something otherwise reserved for “the master (οἰκοδεσπότης).” Accordingly, he concludes that the comparison is portraying the authority of Jesus as “the Son.” Ordinarily a son possesses no authority to set slaves free. Chrysostom solves this

⁷⁴ *Hom. Jo.* 54.316–17 [PG 59.297–98]; *NPNF* 1/14:192. My attention was drawn to John Chrysostom’s homilies after encountering Miriam DeCock, *Interpreting the Gospel of John in Antioch and Alexandria*, WGRWSup 17 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020). DeCock does not discuss John 8 or *Hom. Jo.* 54, but she abstracts a general interpretive principle at work in Chrysostom: “when one encounters a difficult passage of Scripture, there is always an answer to be found either within the passage itself or in other scriptural passages. . . [and] when the text contains symbolic or allegorical language, the text itself also contains the allegory’s meaning.” (60–61). Chrysostom relies only infrequently on allegorical readings. DeCock summarizes his view: “John’s Gospel is beneficial in that it lies open to all due to its simplicity and clarity, and its corrective and transformative benefits are available to all Christians, regardless of spiritual maturity” (59).

⁷⁵ *Hom. Jo.* 54.316 [PG 59.297]; *NPNF* 1/14:192.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* παραβολή is a rhetorical instrument described in Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.20.2–4. It is a type of “example (παράδειγμα)” invented by the speaker and is not of imaginary circumstances. Frequently found in this category are legal illustrations; see Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation for Literary Study*, ed. David E. Orton and R. Dean Anderson, trans. Annemiek Jansen and David E. Orton (Leiden: Brill, 1998), §410–26 (*exempla*, παράδειγμα); §422–25 (*similitudo*, παραβολή).

difficulty by appealing to the consubstantiality of Father and Son: the son *is* the householder because Father and Son share a common essence.⁷⁷

Now, Chrysostom holds that “the Son” shares in the authority of “the Father,” as is demonstrable elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel, e.g., in 5:19. However, he does not take 8:36 to be continuing the *παραβολή* but instead identifies the second υἱός as Christ rather than the generic son of the rhetorical illustration. What I propose draws from Chrysostom’s reading, but I include all of 8:35–36 as part of the *παραβολή*. Chrysostom stops short of this view only because a son does not have a role in the conventional process of manumission; thus, he reasons this “son” who sets slaves free must be Jesus.

But as it happens, under a specific set of circumstances, a son could be empowered to free slaves: testamentary manumission. My claim is that John compares Jesus’s authority to powers vested in a household heir under precisely these conditions.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ The fuller context is as follows:

But why when speaking of sins doth He mention a “house”? It is to show that as a master (δεσπότης) hath power over his house, so He over all. And the, “abides not,” is this, “hath not power to grant favors, as not being master of the house”; but the Son is master of the house (ὁ δὲ υἱὸς οἰκοδεσπότης ἐστί). For this is the “abides forever,” by a metaphor drawn from human things (ἀπὸ μεταφορᾶς τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων). That they may not say, “who art thou?” “All is Mine, (He saith,) for I am the Son, and dwell in My Father’s house,” calling by the name of “house” His power. As in another place He calleth the Kingdom His Father’s house, “In My Father’s house are many mansions” (John 14:2). For since the discourse was of freedom and bondage, He with reason used this metaphor, telling them that they had no power to set free. . . . Seest thou the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, and how He declareth that He hath the same power as the Father? “If the Son make you free, no man afterwards gain-says, but ye have firm freedom (βεβαίαν ἔχετε τὴν ἐλευθερίαν).” For “it is God that justifieth, who is He that condemneth?” (Rom 8:33–34). (John Chrysostom, *Hom. Jo.* 54.316–17 [PG 59.297–98]; trans. Schaff, *NPNF* 1/14:192)

⁷⁸ My reading of 8:35–36 as referring to testamentary manumission was presented to the Johannine Literature session of the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting

in San Antonio, November 20–23, 2021: “Blessed Assurance against Contested Manumission in John 8:35–36”: abstract: https://www.sblsite.org/meetings/Congresses_Abstracts.aspx?MeetingId=39. I briefly summarize the papyrological evidence:

Testamentary manumission was common in both Greek and Roman legal contexts, and the household heir consistently had a decisive role. Testaments granting manumission regularly stipulate the slave’s continued faithful service up to the death of the testator. This obligation, called *παραμονή*, presupposes a later evaluation from the testator’s kin, who could not outright contravene the testator’s wishes but could present evidence which would delay or complicate the manumission. The same wills also mention a fee for the slave’s maintenance, and forgiveness of this debt was not required. See the Hellenistic wills *P. Petri* I² 3.11.8–37 and *P. Petri* I² 3.11.38–63 for the responsibility of *παραμονή* (*παραμείνωσιν* in these texts). This *παραμονή* service could also be delegated to the testator’s relative (W. L. Westermann, “The *Paramone* as General Service Contract,” *JJP* 2 [1948]: 9–50; A. E. Samuel, “The Role of *Paramone* Clauses in Ancient Documents,” *JJP* 15 [1965]: 256–84).

Not until the days of Marcus Aurelius (160s CE) did slaves have the right to take owners to court. Before then, the slave had no recourse if an heir retained him or her. Judith Evans Grubbs gives examples in which outwardly free persons were later accused of being slaves—either fugitives deliberately passing themselves off as free or children unaware of their mother’s legal status (“Between Slavery and Freedom: Disputes over Status and the Codex Justinianus,” *Roman Legal Tradition* 9 [2013]: 64–75). Over time the Roman government took a more active role in the pursuit of fugitives, and “challenges to the status of freedpeople could arise from disputes over the status of those who had manumitted them” (Evans Grubbs, “Slavery and Freedom,” 69). In short, the enduring freedom of a slave in Greek testamentary practice hinged on the son’s endorsement of the father’s wishes.

In Roman law the heir had even greater control over the fate of a slave than in Greek. First, freed slaves were expected to appear at their former owners’ funerals and to practice certain rites in honor of the dead. As a result, freeing slaves via testament was a popular way of achieving a large funeral turnout. The popularity of this strategy is evident from Caesar Augustus’s having placed limitations, the *lex Fufia Caninia* (2 BCE), on how many slaves a master could free at death. Roman slaves, once freed, became citizens (Edward Champlin, *Final Judgments: Duty and Emotion in Roman Wills 200 B.C.–A.D. 250* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991], 136). Subsequently, testators circumvented the legal limitation via a *fideicommissum*, a bequest in which the beneficiary is charged with completing certain actions or transferring some property to a third party. Hence, responsibility fell to the heir to carry out an intended manumission, but most forms of emancipatory clauses placed the execution of the manumission at the heir’s discretion (W. W. Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery: The Condition of the Slave in Private Law from Augustus to Justinian* [1908; New York: AMS, 1969], 513–19, esp. 516; Champlin, *Final Judgments*, 139).

The following rendering of vv. 35–36 which leaves the nouns generic, allows the reader to draw the comparison between Jesus and this household heir: “A slave does not remain in the household forever, but a son remains forever. Thus if a son sets you free, you really are free.”⁷⁹

John draws a contrast between the permanent residence of a son and the impermanent residence of a slave by this *παραβολή*. A son will remain in the household after the *οικοδεσπότης* is deceased, and when a son endorses his father’s wish to grant freedom to a slave there is no authority to overrule him. Thus *ὁ υἱός* in these verses is a double entendre, applying in general to all household heirs who enact the wishes of their fathers, but also to Jesus as the Son of God the Father, the heir who stands ready to set others free. Instead of identifying Jesus as God’s heir and therefore the one who can grant their “firm (*βεβαία*)” freedom (Chrysostom), *οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι* insult him and reject his teaching (vv. 37, 42, 48), failing in the critical task of gaining the favor of the son of God.

The logic of the *παράδειγμα* in 8:35–36 is mirrored elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel: the Father intends to grant a manumission, but the son is charged with carrying out the father’s wish. In 5:19–23 Jesus says, “The Son can do nothing on his own initiative, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. . . . The Father does not judge anyone, but has assigned all judgment to the Son” (NET). Jesus expresses the same unity in 5:30: “I can do nothing on my own initiative. Just as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I do not my own will,

⁷⁹ Smyth §1122: “The generic article denotes an entire class as distinguished from other classes.”; §1123: “In the singular the generic article makes a single object the representative of the entire class.” Though *ὁ υἱός* is frequently a christological title in John, but not always: see, e.g., 17:12 (“the son of destruction”) in reference to Judas; 19:26 (“Woman, behold your son”) in reference to the Beloved Disciple.

but the will of the one who sent me.” Frequently the Evangelist mentions those who are “given (δίδωμι)” to Jesus by the Father, which seems to signify an inheritance: “Everyone whom the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never send away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me” (6:37). When speaking of his sheep in 10:29–30, again Jesus speaks of them as an inheritance: “My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them from my Father’s hand. The Father and I are one.” The unity of purpose between the Father and Son is restated in 12:49 (“I have not spoken from my own authority”); in 14:6 (“No one comes to the Father except through me”); and in 14:24 (“The word you hear is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me”).

Finally, in 15:15 Jesus addresses his disciples as if they are former slaves (οὐκέτι λέγω ὑμᾶς δούλους), but they are former slaves who now understand the will of their master, since Jesus has acted as the herald of a liberating message of his Father. In addition, in 15:15 John relies on the rhetoric of παράδειγμα a second time: ὁ δοῦλος οὐκ οἶδεν τί ποιεῖ αὐτοῦ ὁ κύριος (“a slave does not know what his master is doing”). Just as “the master” in 15:15 is a parabolic expression with dual referents—masters in general and God—so “the son” in 8:35–36 is a double entendre—household heirs and Jesus.

Accordingly, the rationale emerges for the presence of ὄντως in 8:36. The slave’s residence in a household is inherently uncertain; a master could sell or turn the slave out into the cold. But the son, who is Jesus, will always have a secure position in the household. Chrysostom notes that it is the son’s permanent position that signifies his authority. As a good son of his Father in heaven, Jesus befriends those who listen to him. He does not contravene the wish of his Father or exact a bribe from those whom he is

tasked to free. Rather, the freedom that he grants is secure and irrevocable: those whom the son has set free are really free.

On this reading, John shares distinct discursive features with Gal 3–4 and Rom 6–7: parabolic examples; an appeal to testamentary practice; a description of slavery to sin; and an invitation to freedom through Christ.⁸⁰ In appealing to testamentary manumission as an illustration from human experience, John is remarkably close to Paul’s appeal to διαθήκη and his metaphor of manumission.⁸¹ In Gal 3, Paul invokes a διαθήκη as a “human category (κατὰ ἄνθρωπον)” (v. 15).⁸² Commentators are undecided whether Paul means a “covenant” or a “will,” since both are applicable to the promises to Abraham.⁸³ Either way, Paul makes Jesus the recipient of promises previously ratified in the διαθήκη

⁸⁰ In Gal 3–4, Paul is addressing the newness of life arising from faith in Christ, new life that diverges from the pattern of imprisonment under the law. Similarly, in Rom 6–7 Paul narrates the coming of the Spirit through baptism, resulting in freedom from mastery by sin. In each case believers receive divine adoption as sons and daughters who cry “*Abba*, Father” (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15).

⁸¹ See LSJ, s.v. “διαθήκη.” The term can refer to a “will” or a “testament,” the meaning in each case best determined by context.

⁸² This is deemed a παραβολή in the rhetorical analysis of Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians*, 154–55: “Although the phrase is clearly understandable, its origin is to some degree still in doubt. While it also occurs in Rom 3:5; 1 Cor 9:8, and in a different form in Rom 6:19, it is found nowhere else in primitive Christian literature. Yet the Pauline usage suggests that we have here a somewhat technical expression.”

⁸³ Nearly all commentators hold that Paul evokes testamentary language to some degree, possibly to compare the Abrahamic “covenant” to a human “will”: so Betz, *Galatians*, 156; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster, 1982), 169; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, BNTC (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993), 182; Martyn, *Galatians*, 338; Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 219–221. A recent dissertation examines the literary arguments and claims that Paul consistently refers to a “covenant” with Abraham: L. Douglas Hoffer, “Covenants Human and Divine: *Diathēkē* in Gal 3:15–17 and Its Relevance for Paul’s Argument in Gal 3–4” (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 2022).

that God made with Abraham (v. 17), and thus Paul notes that a κληρονομία (“inheritance”) is granted to Abraham and his seed (v. 18).⁸⁴ The metaphor is extended when Paul calls the law a temporary “custodian” until the coming of Christ (v. 24), during which time “the scripture imprisoned everything under sin” (v. 22). Through baptism, believers receive their new status as “sons of God through faith” (v. 26) so that they too become Abraham’s children and “heirs” (κληρονόμοι, v. 29).

The model of forgiveness of sin as manumission pervades Rom 6–7. Believers receive freedom when joined to the death and resurrection of Christ (6:8–11). Paul exhorts his readers to act as if sin were no longer their master (6:12–14). To illustrate this freedom, and “speaking in human terms (ἀνθρώπινον λέγω, 6:19),” Paul observes that a married woman’s obligation to her husband ends at his death (7:1–6)—perhaps another παραβολή.⁸⁵ In the same way believers “have been released from the law, because [they] have died to what controlled [them]” (7:6). So for Paul, the obligations of both slavery and Jewish marriage are subject to change at the death of a householder or husband. Believers experience the end of their bondage to sin and law, and they are simultaneously “enslaved” to a new master in the Spirit of God (Rom 7:6).⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Of course, God does not die, and it might seem as if this limits the scope of divine testamentary metaphor. But analogously the author of Hebrews interprets διαθήκη as a last will and testament (9:15–22): “For where there is a will (διαθήκη), the death of the one who made it must be proven. For a will takes effect only at death” (vv. 16–17a). The sacrifices accompanying the Sinai Covenant fulfill this requirement; likewise, apparently Jesus’s death fulfills the requirement of a new διαθήκη.

⁸⁵ According to Jewett, it constitutes a syllogism; see his lengthy discussion in *Romans*, 428–39.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 429: “Under Christ a new bondage in the Spirit is established, providing a climactic juxtaposition with bondage to the law.”

If John 8:34 is allowed to retain δοῦλος τῆς ἁμαρτίας as in NA²⁸, the collocation is secondary to Paul, who appears to be the first author to have the precise wording.⁸⁷ The phrase anthropomorphizes “sin,” whose enslaving ability is depicted under various guises in Rom 6:12–23.⁸⁸ The image lacks direct precedent in prior Jewish sources. On the other hand, in the Fourth Gospel ἁμαρτία is not otherwise hypostatized except in 8:34. In John 8 the imagery is not sustained; John will soon identify ὁ διάβολος as the father of those who display murderous intent (8:44). Thus, it seems likely that the phrase derives from Rom 6, even while John has made it his own to explain the slavery of the σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ who present themselves to Jesus in Jerusalem.

⁸⁷ In this connection, Brown mentions δοῦλοι τῆς φθορᾶς in 2 Pet 2:19 (*Gospel*, 1:355). But since 2 Pet 3:15–16 refers to “all of the epistles” of Paul, this collocation may derive instead from δουλεία τῆς φθορᾶς in Rom 8:21. According to Bauckham, “It is possible that the author of 2 Peter, who is almost entirely uninfluenced by Pauline theology, here shows some influence from Paul. It is noteworthy that the parallels are from Romans, a letter with which the author must have been acquainted if 2 Peter was written from Rome” (*Jude, 2 Peter*, 276).

⁸⁸ Paul’s tendency to personify has been studied by Joseph R. Dodson, who proposes a “heuristic comparison” of this feature between Romans and Wisdom (*The “Powers” of Personification: Rhetorical Purpose in the Book of Wisdom and the Letter to the Romans*, BZNW 161 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008]). Personification is a rhetorical technique described in the ancient handbooks, summarized by Dodson as “the attribution of human characteristics to any inanimate object, abstract concept or impersonal being” (30). According to Dodson, sin is for Paul an external force whose rule is endured by enslaved humanity (Rom 5:12–21); it is an internal force that seeks dominion over the bodies of believers (Rom 6:12–23); and it is a deceptive ruler who victimizes humans (Rom 7:7–13) (123–39). According to Dodson, the statement “all have sinned (πάντες ἥμαρτον)” in Rom 5:12 shows that humanity knowingly or unknowingly submits to sin’s rule (127). The same idea is in John 8:34: πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν δοῦλός ἐστιν τῆς ἁμαρτίας.

Summary of Findings in 8:31–38

The literary agreements with Galatians and Romans in John 8:31–38 were noticed by Barnett a generation ago, as follows:

- (1) ἐλευθερώω: the key term that is misunderstood in John 8:32 is found only in Rom 6:18, 22; 8:2, 21; Gal 5:1; and John 8:32, 36 in the NT. In both the Pauline and Johannine contexts, the word denotes freedom from spiritualized slavery.
- (2) σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ: a polyvalent term in Gal 3:16, 19, 29; Rom 4:16, 18; 9:7–8, where it stands for spiritual children of Abraham rather than mere physical descendants. Not only does John have the term in 8:33, 37, he has a similarly expanded definition, without precedent in pre-Pauline Jewish sources.
- (3) δοῦλος τῆς ἁμαρτίας: a personification that is original to Paul among all known Greek authors and found only in Rom 6:17, 20. The same collocation is in John 8:34, present as a Johannine hyperbaton.

I have tried to show that the whole of John 8:31–59 is a misunderstanding discourse whose interpretation turns on the meaning of the three terms shared with Paul. In the course of the dialogue, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι cannot anticipate what Jesus means by slavery. He means precisely what Paul meant, that acting sinfully makes one a slave of sin. “The Jews” uphold their status as σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ, but this proves a hollow boast since they turn out to be Abraham’s children of the flesh, who remain enslaved to sin.

Additionally, John seems to share Paul’s predilection for legal illustration. Not only does the Johannine Jesus adopt a similar rhetorical trope, he produces a metaphor drawing on the practice of testamentary manumission. John’s παραβολή recalls Galatians and Romans, since Gal 3–4 concerns Abraham’s διαθήκη with God, while Rom 6–7

exhorts believers to live in light of their manumission from sin. In sum, the author of John 8:31–38 covers the same subject matter as Paul, he does so with the same terminology, and he makes Paul’s specialized terms the interpretive crux of the dialogue.

CHAPTER 3

THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM IN JOHN 8:39–59

Whereas John 8:31–38 contains several interpretive matters which are explicable from the author’s knowledge of Romans and Galatians, my analysis of 8:39–59 will concern John’s treatment of Abraham as exemplum. The Evangelist mentions Abraham only within ch. 8, and previous commentators have proposed texts and traditions outside of the NT which could stand behind the distinctive characterizations of Abraham. After summarizing the previous source theories, I begin by retracing the internal consistency of John’s descriptions of Abraham before turning to correspondence with Romans and Galatians. Although John may have had access to multiple Abraham traditions, I contend that the links to Pauline texts in 8:31–38 continue to provide the most promising clues to understand the invocations of Abraham in 8:39–59. Indeed, the latter contains details consistent with the same sections of Romans and Galatians while also presupposing the unique Johannine title τέκνα θεοῦ (John 1:12; 11:52; also 1 John 3:1, 2, 10; 5:2); this designation for believers first appears in Paul (Rom 8:16, 21; 9:8; Phil 2:15). The goal is not to claim that John 8:39–59 is inexplicable without presuming the Evangelist’s access to Pauline letters but to show that the internal logic of 8:39–59 flows naturally from what Paul had claimed of Abraham: that Abraham was extraordinary for his faith; that he received foreknowledge of Jesus’s day; and that his true children will exhibit the same faith.

Once more, Barnett’s work blazes the trail for examinations of Pauline influence in the Fourth Gospel. He notes three examples in John 8:39–59 displaying influence from Galatians and Romans with a high degree of probability: “works of Abraham” may stand

for Abraham's faith in John 8:39 (cf. Rom 4:12; 9:7, 8; Gal 3:7; 4:26, 29 where Paul describes πίστις as the defining characteristic of Abraham and his kin); the logic of divine sonship in John 8:41–42 is paralleled in Paul (cf. Gal 3:26–29; Rom 8:14–16 where Paul invokes the metaphor of adoption by God); and the description of Abraham's joyful witness in John 8:56 is centered on a revelation of Jesus (cf. Gal 3:8, 9 where Paul describes Abraham's foreknowledge of the Gentiles' inclusion).¹ Barnett does not limit himself to examples from only two Pauline letters, but his ratings indicate that he grants the parallels above the most weight.

Barnett's findings are a good starting point, but they require more defense than he offers in his commentary. As a matter of method, in the decades since publication of Barnett's work, scholars have made numerous claims of influence from other sources, and assertions of Pauline influence are now weighed alongside several other source theories. Since John 8:39–59 contains few if any locutions directly borrowed from the Abraham traditions of the LXX, most investigators have relied on thematic comparisons and theological interpretations of later texts related to Gen 12–22, for example, *Jubilees*. However, I shall argue that John describes Abraham in distinctly Pauline terms: even if John does not deliberately invoke the authority of Paul, Paul's rhetorical presence in the text is unmistakable and explains John's portraiture of Abraham better than alternative proposals.

Nearly every commentator addresses one or more of the following in John 8:39–59:

¹ Barnett, *Literary Influence*, 124–25.

- (1) *The meaning of τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ (8:39)*: The question is whether the Johannine Jesus refers to a specific action or set of actions of Abraham or this phrase is shorthand for a complex of activities which encompass the entire life and conduct of Abraham as progenitor of Israel.
- (2) *The meaning of τὰ ἔργα τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν (8:41)*: This expression parallels the difficulty above, and to secure the meaning of these ἔργα would be useful to understand the meaning of Abraham's ἔργα, and vice versa. Yet in the surrounding context (8:42–47), divine sonship and sonship from ὁ διάβολος are not explicitly linked to the story of Abraham, and thus the implications of the parallel are uncertain.
- (3) *The referent of claims in John 8:56*: Jesus says that Abraham saw “my day (τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ἐμήν),” which caused Abraham “to rejoice (ἀγαλλιάω)” and “to be glad (χαίρω),” but none of these expressions derives from Gen 12–22. Again, these claims could refer to a specific event in the life of Abraham at a time and in place when John perceives Abraham to have been a jubilant witness, but this identification is also unclear.

As the following discussion demonstrates, it is possible to relate some of these topics to traditions of Abraham known in first-century Jewish circles. Nonetheless, according to my analysis John's access to Romans and Galatians more readily explains his singular reception of Abraham traditions, while remaining consistent with my earlier identification of Pauline tropes in 8:31–38.

Other Abraham Traditions

As a first step to defend my proposal that John reframes the Abraham traditions as he encountered them in Paul's letters, below I summarize the findings of other commentators who have sought after antecedents to John's portrayal of Abraham. The first place that scholars search for sources of Johannine tradition is the Abrahamic cycle of Gen 12–22. In a recent study concerning John's depiction of Abraham, Catrin H. Williams refers to Gen 15 as the "most likely interpretive context" for Abraham's vision as described by John 8:56.² Since John has ὁράω, Williams finds precedent in the related expression of Gen 15:1 where God speaks to Abraham ἐν ὁράματι.³ Abraham's reputation for having seen visions of the future and end times is mentioned in a number of Jewish texts (4 Ezra 3:14; Apoc. Ab. 24:2; Gen. Rab. 44:21–22), but Williams ultimately finds John to be uniquely combining traditions of Abraham both "rejoicing" and "seeing," calling this a "new mnemonic framework aligned to present realities . . . [of] belief in Jesus as the heavenly revealer of God."⁴

In an investigative essay positing John's reliance on several chapters of LXX Gen, Steven A. Hunt finds John to be depicting Jesus, the pre-existent Word of the

² Williams, "Abraham as a Figure of Memory in John 8:31–59," in *The Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture*, ed. Anthony Le Donne and Thatcher, LNTS 426 (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 205–22, esp. 219–20. She contends that the aorist εἶδεν "points to a particular event during Abraham's lifetime as the setting for what 'he saw'" (219).

³ Ibid., 219. Williams also cites Gen 15:12, 17 as examples where Abraham is experiencing visions (ἐκστασις, v. 12).

⁴ Ibid., 220.

Gospel's Prologue, as having first manifested himself physically to Abraham.⁵ Allegedly, the joy associated with Abraham in John 8:56 recalls the laughter of Abraham when he receives news of Isaac's impending birth (γελᾶω, Gen 17:17 LXX).⁶ Hunt presupposes a link between Jesus and Isaac starting in John 8:35–36, which he reads as an allusion to the conflict between Isaac and Ishmael (Gen 21).⁷ The link is essential to his reading, since he relies on the Akedah narrative and especially Gen 22:8 LXX, whose prediction of a coming sacrificial lamb establishes “the theological presentation of Jesus in John.”⁸ According to Hunt, when Abraham “saw (εἶδεν)” the place for the sacrifice to be performed, the place was “far off (μακρόθεν),” which “might have been understood by

⁵ Hunt, “And the Word Became Flesh – Again? Jesus and Abraham in John 8:31–59,” in *Perspectives on Our Father Abraham: Essays in Honor of Marvin R. Wilson*, ed. idem (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 81–109.

⁶ Since this relates to the Hebrew wordplay for the name Isaac, Hunt claims that “the laughter in Genesis that precedes Isaac's birth comes off as incredulity, [but] the laughter that follows seems joyfully sincere” (ibid., 99). Carson notes that Jewish readers of Gen 17:17 were able to take Abraham's reaction as joy rather than scorn since they harmonized the verse with Gen 21:6; see, e.g., Philo, *Mut.* 154–69 (*Gospel*, 357).

⁷ The relationship between Isaac and Ishmael could be one reason for the choice of example in John 8:35 (which begins from the son's special position in a household). But connections to the particular household of Abraham are absent from v. 36, since Isaac has no role in freeing Ishmael or his mother (Gen 21:14). Nor does a son normally possess the power to free slaves, which makes the connection even more opaque. Therefore, I argued in Chapter 2 that 8:35–36 is best understood as an illustration from the practice of testamentary manumission, since only in these circumstances does a son and heir have a role in the manumission of slaves.

⁸ Hunt, “Word Became Flesh,” 100. As commonly noted, Jesus—“the lamb of God” in John 1:29, 35—is crucified at the same time as the slaughtering of lambs on the Day of Preparation (19:14). Even though the atoning aspect of a paschal sacrifice is not clear from Jewish sources, most commentators attribute this view to John. Tracing the expiation of sin to a pre-Christian Akedah tradition is more tenuous. See already Philip R. Davies and Bruce D. Chilton, “The Akedah: A Revised Tradition History,” *CBQ* 40 (1978): 514–46.

our narrator [of John 8:56] to highlight the distance between Abraham and Jesus.”⁹ In Hunt’s reading, the question in John 8:57 is ironic (“Have you seen Abraham?”), for Jesus has in fact literally *seen* Abraham because in Gen 22:14 LXX Abraham refers to the place of sacrifice as Κύριος εἶδεν. This title, Hunt suspects, the Evangelist ascribes to Christ. In sum, according to Hunt, John reads Jesus into the LXX stories of Abraham and assumes Jesus’s pre-existence and, in fact, his identification with the Lord Yahweh.¹⁰

Another theory finds John 8:39, 56 to refer to Gen 18:1–33 LXX, where Abraham shows hospitality toward three men at the oaks of Mamre.¹¹ According to this reading, τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ are the acts of hospitality towards those sent from God, which Abraham displays by sharing food and drink with his three visitors: “Reception of the LORD in Gen 18, . . . in the Johannine theological landscape, was really his reception of an earlier manifestation of the Word, who is now Jesus.”¹² Anthony Tyrrell Hanson finds

⁹ Ibid., 101.

¹⁰ Ibid., 105. Despite what Hunt claims, this sort of connection would be unlike other examples of “unwitting truths” spoken by Jesus’s detractors. Often in John, the irony is found by examining the circumstances of the narrative itself. For instance, in 11:49–53 the narrator provides explicit commentary on the words of Caiaphas and leaves no doubt in the minds of readers. Again, in 19:14, 21–22, when Jesus is called “king of the Jews” by Roman authorities, the objections of the chief priests make the words ironic in the context of events which unfold in the narrative. It represents a departure from this pattern if, by some stroke of imagination at encountering ὁράω in John 8:56, the reader is expected to seek explanation in the text of Gen 22:14 LXX. Κύριος possesses no lingering ambiguity as a title for God in this foundational text.

¹¹ Edwyn C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, ed. Noel Davey, 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 342; Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Prophetic Gospel: A Study of John and the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 125–31; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to John*, BNTC 4 (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), 271; Hunt, “Word Became Flesh,” esp. 96–97.

¹² Hunt, “Word Became Flesh,” 97.

that the words of Gen 18:3 support John's view of Jesus as pre-existent Logos since "Abraham prostrates himself before [the three men] and calls one of them 'Lord.'"¹³ John elsewhere draws distinctions between hospitable and inhospitable receptions of Jesus, which lends support to this reading.¹⁴ And in the context of John 8, Jesus reiterates his role as herald of truth from the Father (v. 42); his detractors' desire to kill him contrasts with Abraham and is quite obviously the opposite of hospitable. Nonetheless, a difficulty for this interpretation is in the precise wording of 8:56: Jesus does not explicitly claim that Abraham saw Jesus *himself*, but only that he saw his "day (ἡμέρα)."¹⁵

Outside of the LXX, other Jewish traditions of Abraham could also be influencing the Fourth Evangelist. While admitting that that Apocalypse of Abraham may not antedate the Fourth Gospel, John Ashton still regards the text to possess significant parallels to John 8:58–59.¹⁶ He finds John to be "influenced by the idea of a revealer-figure sent by God and endowed with the authority of his name."¹⁷ In his 1994 article, M.

¹³ Hanson, *Prophetic Gospel*, 126.

¹⁴ For instance, see the contrast between those who fail to receive Jesus and those who welcome him in John 1:11–12 with παραλαμβάνω and λαμβάνω. Brown notes that the same expression is in 19:27 when the Beloved Disciple welcomes Mary into his own home, thereby demonstrating virtuous hospitality (*Gospel*, 1:10).

¹⁵ Sheridan raises this objection to what she coins the "Mamre hypothesis": "Jesus specifies that Abraham saw his 'day' (which need not be equated with Jesus's person)" (*Figure*, 32). While beyond the scope of the present study, Paul elsewhere attributes authority to Jesus on the day of judgment (ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ, 1 Cor 1:8).

¹⁶ Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 85–91.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 88. Ashton describes a potential connection to Apocalypse of Abraham 9–10, where the heavenly intermediary of Yaoel is described as bearing the divine name. In the same way, Ashton notes b. Sanh. 38b and the discussion of Exod 24:1, where God mentions "the Lord" (third person) while speaking in the first person from heaven (see

J. Edwards judges Jubilees traditions as precedent for John 8:56–58.¹⁸ After Jesus’s statements about Abraham, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι remark to Jesus, πεντήκοντα ἔτη οὐπω ἔχεις (“you are not yet fifty years old,” 8:57). Edwards sees the number as symbolic and theological, coinciding with the Jubilee Year which occurs on the seventh “week” of seven years (Lev 25:8–12).¹⁹ Yet Edwards is conscious that this is not enough to show that John “knew” Jubilees, adding that 16:17–18, 26 also shows the meaning in John 8:56.²⁰ Since Abraham foresees that one of Isaac’s descendants shall be called this “holy

Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism*, SJLA 25 [Leiden: Brill, 1977], 68). One talmudic interpretation regards Metatron, “whose name is similar,” as the speaker of these words. By analogy, Ashton suggests that John 8:58 has Jesus “actually claiming the name of Yahweh for himself” (*Understanding*, 90).

¹⁸ Edwards, “‘Not Yet Fifty Years Old’: John 8:57,” *NTS* 40 (1994): 449–54.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 453. Jub. 23:10–11, 15 recalls the life of Abraham, who “did not complete four Jubilees in his life.” Relying solely on this text, Edwards glosses the observation of John 8:57: “Since the time of Abraham, many Jubilees have passed, and no-one has lived through more than two of them. How then can you have seen [Abraham], who have not completed one?” I am not persuaded by this paraphrase, for the tone of the Jewish response is incredulous. The interlocutors do not respond to Jesus out of a defensive and accurate understanding that Jesus was claiming to be more ancient than Abraham. His words in 8:56 are confusing and ambiguous, and when Jesus does claim to come before Abraham in 8:58, the immediate response is to try to kill him rather than ask more questions. Edwards’s reading requires “the Jews” to be already guessing that Jesus was claiming preexistence before the full force of v. 58: πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί.

²⁰ *Ibid.*: “[Abraham] rejoices at the prophecy that one of his descendants will be a ‘holy seed’, an image of the Creator who will gather the righteous into the Promised land.” The same passage in Jubilees is noted by Hoskyns, *Gospel*, 348; Brown, *Gospel*, 1:360; Carson, *Fourth Gospel*, 357; Andrew C. Brunson, *Psalms 118 in the Gospel of John: An Intertextual Study on the New Exodus Pattern in the Theology of John*, WUNT 158 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 295–301. None of these authors explains what John would have gleaned from a reference to a “holy seed” whose identity “would not be counted among the nations” (Jub. 16:17; trans. Brunson). Apart from the sheer existence of promises concerning a specific descendant of Isaac, there is little in this reference

seed,” Edwards takes the status to be claimed by Jesus’s words of John 8:56.²¹ Likewise, according to Mary Coloe the rejoicing of Abraham during the Feast of Tabernacles—mentioned in Jub. 16:26—is what Abraham *did* and “the Jews” do not do when they do not observe τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ in John 8:39.²² So in this second way the Jubilees tradition of Abraham’s rejoicing is claimed as a precedent for John 8:56.²³

Finally, Jesus’s ἡμέρα in John 8:56 is taken by Andrew C. Brunson as an allusion to Ps 117:24 LXX.²⁴ Both verses have ἀγαλλιάω in the aorist middle.²⁵ On these matters,

which is not implied by Gen 21. Once again, any association with the text of John 8 remains imprecise.

²¹ Edwards, “Not Yet,” 453. The argument becomes more dubious with Edwards’s suggestion that 8:56–57 records dueling references to Jubilees: “Perhaps they hoped to refute him from his own book, but instead they have merely forced him to reveal that he, the Promised One, like the Author of the promise, is coeval with the recipient, and indeed with the whole creation” (ibid.).

²² Coloe, “Like Father, Like Son: The Role of Abraham in Tabernacles—John 8:31–59,” *Pacifica* 12 (1999): 1–11.

²³ Ibid., 6. Coloe claims that other Jewish and Christian writings apart from Jubilees refer to Abraham’s faithful obedience and not his joy: Gen 12:4; 22:1–14; 26:5; Rom 4:3, 13, 16; Gal 3:6; Heb 11:8, 16; Jas 2:23. She does not note Rom 4:20, where Abraham is said to glorify God. Nor does she note Gal 3:8–9, which records Abraham’s receipt of good news. See further on these texts below.

²⁴ Brunson, *Psalms* 118, 284–316.

²⁵ Ps 117:24 LXX has ἀγαλλιάω and εὐφραίνω, but John 8:56 has ἀγαλλιάω and χαίρω. Brunson claims that εὐφραίνω and χαίρω are often interchangeable and that χαίρω was becoming the more popular term (*Psalms* 118, 290). Brunson allows that John may have known the Hebrew of Ps 118:24 rather than a Greek translation, but this observation is not integrated into his source hypothesis.

Michael B. Cover has suggested that I consider also Philo, *Mut.* 161, in which Abraham is the subject of χαίρω and εὐφραίνω in anticipation of the birth of Isaac (rather than ἀγαλλιάω and χαίρω in John 8:56). Philo is taking the birth of Isaac as the allegorical representation of the beginning of laughter (ὁ γὰρ Ἰσαάκ ἐστι γέλως [*Mut.* 157]). As a result, Philo must explain why Abraham is able to laugh in advance of Isaac’s birth, i.e., before the coming of laughter (γελάω in Gen 17:17; also see Jub. 11:17). Philo explains this laughter as anticipatory, just as a young bird will shake its wings before it

Brunson claims that Jub.16—with “added” details unsupported by the LXX—supplies a connection between the Genesis narrative and John 8:56.²⁶ According to Brunson, Jubilees 16, with its retelling of the Abraham narrative provides the hermeneutical context for Abraham’s rejoicing, not only at the birth of Isaac but at the promised role for one of Isaac’s sons. He argues that “most scholars do not appreciate that in calling it ‘my day’ Jesus has laid claim to the day of Yahweh as his own.”²⁷ This day is “not the messianic age, or the day of the Son of Man . . . [but] the day when Yahweh would return to reign as King,” which he alleges elides any functional, let alone ontological, distinction between Jesus and Yahweh.²⁸

While many of the proposals above make bold claims about connections between Abraham traditions and John 8:39–59, these alleged parallels are not consistently close to the wording of the Gospel.²⁹ John’s phrase τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ (8:39) is found in no

can fly and a young bull acts as if possessing horns (*Mut.* 158–59). If John has the same concept in mind in 8:56—that Gen 17:17 refers to Abraham’s joyous expectation for the coming birth of his seed—John would then be substituting Jesus for Isaac as Abraham’s awaited seed, the one who prompted preemptive joy. Moreover, the identification of Jesus as Abraham’s seed would recall Gal 3:16 (. . . καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου, ὃς ἐστὶν Χριστός.). In sum, Philo may, it is true, provide a conceptual parallel to John 8:56, but only if John is taken to presume the identification of Christ as Abraham’s actual descendant, the precise argument of Gal 3:16.

²⁶ Brunson, *Psalms* 118, 295. He observes the tendency in Jubilees to “portray the patriarchs as paradigmatic examples to be emulated,” as well as Abraham’s “[specific] rejoicing at the promise(s) of future blessing.”

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 304.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 304–5.

²⁹ Robert L. Brawley shortens Hays’s criteria for assessing literary echoes from the LXX to include only two: (1) availability; and (2) volume (*Text to Text Pours Forth Speech: Voices of Scripture in Luke-Acts*, ISBL [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995], 13; cf. Hays’s seven in *Echoes*, 29–32). The criterion of volume is essential to the evaluation of an intertextual claim because it determines whether a locution is unique to a

other text. And apart from John 8:56, Abraham is never the subject of both ἀγαλλιάω and χαίρω. There is no firmness among suggestions as to what Abraham *saw*, what Abraham *did*, or when Abraham *rejoiced* in the Johannine retelling. The sheer number of possibilities and the need to invoke a diversity of texts and traditions displays the insufficiency of any source theory above.

As an additional concern, many interpreters hold that the Fourth Evangelist detects a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ within the OT narratives. But while commentators should entertain creative readings of Jewish Scripture, in this case it is needlessly overreading: John claims only that Abraham saw Jesus's day, not Jesus himself. A consistent trope of Johannine thought is that "no one has seen God" apart from the revelation of God in Jesus (John 1:18; 6:46; also 1 John 4:12, 20).³⁰ At no point does the Fourth Evangelist detract from the newness of revelation which begins in the Prologue: "He who is at the bosom of the Father has explained God" (1:18). Quite apart from a potential inconsistency, John is not relying on his audience to deduce Jesus's ontological unity with the Father or to read κύριος as a reference to Christ from a particular LXX text when John has no quotation of or clear allusion to it.

single section of the LXX or whether it appears frequently. Individual words, if sufficiently rare, may conceivably create "loud" echoes in the ears of listeners. But single words, here for instance ὁπάω (noted above in connection to Gen 22:14 LXX), are too common to serve as evidence of an author's allusion to a single Septuagintal verse.

³⁰ In John 12:41, where the Evangelist had an opportunity to describe Isaiah's vision of Jesus (εἶδον τὸν κύριον, Isa 6:1 LXX), he instead describes a vision of "his glory (τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ)," which need not imply a vision of Jesus's own person. Similarly, in John 8:56 Abraham is said to have seen Jesus's *day* rather than Jesus himself, obviating the need to search for Jesus's direct appearance in the Abrahamic cycle of Gen 12–22.

Now that I have summarized competing source theories, I present my own reading of John 8:39–59 with special attention to the three interpretive difficulties already listed above: (1) the meaning of “works of Abraham”; (2) the logic of paternity; and (3) Abraham’s foreknowledge. I hope to show that the internal consistency of John’s appeal to Abraham derives from what Paul writes in Romans and Galatians. It is from Paul’s letters that John has learned that he is to regard Abraham as a witness to Christ.

The Work(s) of Abraham (8:39–40)

Interpretation of τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ in John 8:39 requires close examination of other uses of ἔργον and ἔργα in the Fourth Gospel. Outside of John 8, the word appears in twenty-three verses of John, all occurrences falling into one of three related categories:

(1) ἔργα are the “miraculous works” performed by Jesus, intended to witness to others, which either prompt faith or serve as the basis for judgment of those who witness them (5:20; 7:3, 21; 9:3–4; 10:25, 32–33, 37–38; 14:10–12; 15:24). A subset of this category is the ἔργον (ἔργα in 5:36) which Jesus “completes (τελειόω)” through his death on a cross, the preeminent demonstration of the Father’s love for the world (4:34; 5:36; 17:4).³¹

(2) ἔργα are the works which become the basis for judgment (3:19–21; 7:7).

Those who “hate” Jesus, though he was sent by the Father, hate his testimony that their ἔργα are evil; “one who practices truth (ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν)” has ἔργα which are “done in God (ἐν θεῷ εἰργασμένα, 3:21).” A judgment on the basis of works is determined by the presence or absence of preexisting faith:

³¹ The concept is implied in John 19:30, Jesus’s cry from the cross: τετέλεσται.

“one who believes (ὁ πιστεύων)” is not judged while “one without faith (ὁ μὴ πιστεύων)” is already judged and thus blind (3:18).³²

- (3) John 6:28–29 is the singular example that appears close to 8:39. Here, Jesus is approached by followers who want more bread, and he challenges them to “work for food which abides for eternal life” (6:27). The crowd responds by asking, “What must we do in order to carry out the *works of God* (τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ, 6:28)?” Jesus’s reply has the noun in the singular, τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ ἔργον τοῦ θεοῦ, which he defines as placing faith in the one who was sent by God (6:29). Thus, even when prompted to list the demands of righteousness, the Johannine Jesus identifies the “work of God” as faith, making faith out to be a type of ἔργον.

Therefore, every occurrence of ἔργον in the Gospel outside of 8:39–59 is directly tied to faith, referring to mighty signs which provoke faith, to individual deeds which evince faith, to works censured because done without faith, or to the ultimate work that God requires—faith in Jesus.

In light of the above, when encountering τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ in John 8:39, the reader is predisposed to attribute these “works” to faith. Indeed, the context confirms this suspicion that the “works of Abraham” include Abraham’s faith. The conditional claim,

³² Dodd relates these concepts to the trial scene in John 9:13–41: “The one-time blind beggar stands before his betters, to be badgered into denying the one thing of which he is certain. But the defendant proper is Jesus Himself, judged *in absentia*. . . . Jesus swiftly turns the tables on His judges and pronounces sentence [in 9:35–41]” (*Interpretation*, 357–58). This “realized eschatology” of John explains why some hearers respond to Jesus with faith, while others respond with rejection despite abundant evidence before their eyes. Jesus does not merely restore sight to the blind, he blinds those who think they see (9:39).

“If you are Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works of Abraham,” draws a contrast with the intentions of Jesus’s interlocutors who are seeking his death in v. 40.³³ Their desire to kill a herald of truth demonstrates the absence of τὰ ἔργα in question, whatever the intended meaning: “This Abraham did not do” (v. 40).³⁴

In 8:41–51, which posits divergence from the example of Abraham, Jesus addresses τὰ ἔργα of his interlocutors—what he calls “the deeds of [their] father” (v. 41). “The Jews” do not love Jesus (ἠγαπᾶτε ἄν ἐμέ, v. 42); they do not understand the meaning of what he says (λαλιὰν τὴν ἐμὴν οὐ γινώσκετε, v. 43); and they are unable to attend to Jesus’s word (οὐ δύνασθε ἀκούειν τὸν λόγον τὸν ἐμὸν, 8:43, 47). In sum, they manifest a faithless response.³⁵ Most significantly, Jesus repeatedly states that οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι

³³ Elucidation of the conditional in John 8:39 is complicated by an abundance of variant readings: (1) with an imperfect in the protasis, which produces a contrary-to-fact condition: “If you were . . . you would be . . .”; or (2) with an imperative in the apodosis and a real condition: “If you are . . . do . . .”; (3) with ἄν in the apodosis, which implies a conditional clause but is not grammatically required. Most interpreters follow the reading of NA²⁸ and explanation of Metzger: “The variant readings arose in an effort to make a more grammatically ‘correct’ condition [than the original, a mixed condition clause]” (*Textual Commentary*, 225).

³⁴ Contra Sheridan, the negation of Abraham’s works in 8:40 does not logically predict an inverse meaning for τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ. Sheridan presupposes that τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ labels a category of actions: “by suggesting that Abraham’s ‘works’ do *not* include ‘seeking to kill a man,’ we can infer that some action—or a group of positive, life-preserving actions—is entailed by ch. 8 vv. 39–40” (*Figure*, 33). That Abraham did not seek to kill does not imply a reference to Abraham’s meritorious and life-giving works. By analogy, a friend who is “not braggadocious” is not necessarily self-deprecating.

³⁵ Failure to hearken to Jesus’s word recalls the start of the discourse, when many place faith in Jesus (πιστεύω, twice in 8:30–31), yet still he commands them to remain in his word (μείνητε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ ἐμῷ, v. 31). In Chapter 2 above I argued that the “faith” described in 8:30–31 is transient and inadequate, which flows logically from v. 24, where Jesus requires that his audience “believe that I am” (ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ πιστεύσητε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι) or else they will die in their sins.

are lacking faith: οὐ πιστεύετε μοι (8:45–46). When Abraham is invoked again in 8:52–59, *his* actions are consistent with a faith-filled reception: Abraham “was exuberant” and “rejoiced” at seeing Jesus’s day (v. 56).³⁶ If v. 56 reveals the meaning of τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ in v. 39, these works are his response of faith.

These contextual clues lead many commentators to posit that Abraham’s ἔργα are best equated with his faith, some even noting the similarity to Paul’s description of Abraham as πιστός.³⁷ In light of this near consensus, I propose that John’s reference to

³⁶ As I note below, that Abraham “saw (ὁράω)” is also consistent with a response of faith. Earlier in John 6:30–36, Jesus faces those who wish to “see” a sign that they may “believe.” Jesus claims they have already “seen” yet “do not believe” (6:36). Likewise, in 20:8 what sets the Beloved Disciple apart from Peter is that he “saw” the empty tomb and “believed.” Finally, Thomas’s doubt occasions Jesus’s words in 20:29, “Blessed are the people who have not seen and yet have believed” (NET).

³⁷ Bultmann, *Gospel*, 442: “John 8:39 scarcely has special works in view; rather ἐπίστευσεν could be reminiscent of Gen 15:6”; Lindars, *Gospel*, 327: “What Abrahamic behaviour is, is not specified, but we already know that it is the response of faith which the Jews withhold, just as it is in Paul”; Horacio E. Lona, *Abraham in Johannes 8: Ein Beitrag zur Methodenfrage*, Europäische Hochschulschriften 23/65 (Bern: Peter Lang, 1976), 365: “Das joh. Bild des Abraham enthält kaum ein konkretes Element der Abrahams-Geschichte. Höchstens Anspielung auf seine Werke (Joh 8,39) könnte auf den Glauben Abrahams hinweisen”; Barrett, *Gospel*, 347: “Descent from Abraham, in the only true sense, cannot be proved by a pedigree . . . cf. Rom 2:28ff.; 9:6ff. The latter passage is so close to the Johannine that it (or some similar Pauline argument) may well have been known to John”; Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 2:211: “For John, Abraham is essentially a witness to Christ, a voice urging faith in Christ and an accuser of non-believers”; Ridderbos, *Gospel*, 312: “Abraham’s ‘work’ consisted in attending to the voice of God and so becoming the father of Israel and of many nations (cf. Gen 15:6; 17:5; Rom 8:16ff.; Gal 3:7, 29).”

In objection to interpreting Abraham’s works as faith, Stephen Motyer worries that this “faith” sounds abstract (even Lutheran!) (*Your Father the Devil? A New Approach to John and “the Jews,”* Paternoster Biblical and Theological Studies [Carlisle, U.K.: Paternoster, 1997], 191). Sheridan argues against narrowing the referent of “works” (plural) to Abraham’s rejoicing in v. 56 (*Figure*, 310–11). On this latter objection, the grammatical number of the term is not necessarily relevant since John elsewhere moves between “works” and “work” (ἔργα, ἔργον, 6:27–29). Perhaps the two responses of v. 58 are intended as a combined faith-filled response: Abraham “rejoiced” and “welcomed” the day of Jesus. Sheridan herself must narrow the referent for “works of Abraham” to mean Abraham’s law-observance.

Abraham's works is *circumlocution for Abraham's behavior in general*, since Abraham's behavior models a response of faith. The phrase "works of Abraham" evokes a host of activities in the minds of a Jewish audience, and there is no need to limit the reference to specific actions instead of Abraham's behavior as a whole.³⁸ By the end of the discourse in 8:56, the only action Abraham is said to take is to respond favorably to Jesus's day. An advantage of this reading is that it does not require τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ to constitute a technical term, as if it applies to a particular set of actions from Abraham or is a cipher for πίστις. Rather, John's introduction of ἔργα to the discourse allows him to draw out the contrast in 8:42–47, where one's behavior and actions identify one's progenitor.³⁹

If this is correct, John's brief treatment of a faithful Abraham is at once reminiscent of Paul, who previously makes Abraham an example of faith. In Gal 3:6–9, Paul introduces the example of Abraham with a quotation of Gen 15:6.⁴⁰ Like John, Paul quickly turns the example of faithful Abraham into an appeal to his audience to share this

³⁸ The concept of faith is broad enough to encompass specific actions as well as character. Paul shows the linguistic flexibility of the terms for faith in Gal 3:6–9: under duress Abraham "placed faith (ἐπίστευσεν, v. 6)" in God, which identifies him as "of faith (ἐκ πίστεως, v. 7)," and this makes Abraham himself "faithful (πιστός, v. 9)." Abraham exhibits faith because he is characteristically faithful and believing of God.

³⁹ Sheridan takes Abraham's ἔργα to be works of the law, which breaks the parallel with τὰ ἔργα τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν in v. 41 (*Figure*, 310–11). Instead, I regard "you are doing the works of your father" as contextually equivalent to "you are behaving like your father." If both references to ἔργα stand for behavior, as I suggest, the parallelism remains intact.

⁴⁰ Above I note Williams's claim that John has in mind the same section of Gen 15 LXX in John 8:56, since John is describing Abraham's vision of the future ("Abraham," 219).

faith: “Those who have faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Gal 3:9).⁴¹ The contrast which follows divides children of Abraham, called οἱ ἐκ πίστεως (v. 9), from the accursed whose identity comes from works of the law (ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, v. 10). A possible interpretation of this dualistic contrast would be that πίστις is a *kind of work*, different from the ἔργα νόμου, since it is the distinctive work of Abraham and his spiritual progeny. That faith is a kind of work is precisely what John claims in 6:29: the singular “work of God (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ θεοῦ)” is placing faith in God’s emissary.

The closeness to Paul’s argument is also apparent from Gal 3:23–29, where Paul likens the law to a “disciplinarian (παιδαγωγός)” before the coming of Christ. Just as Paul notes the temporal priority of a covenant with Abraham—sustained during an extended guardianship under the law of Moses—John 7:22 refers to circumcision which comes not from Moses but ἐκ τῶν πατέρων, which must include Abraham.⁴² Through faith in Jesus, the children of God are revealed (Gal 3:26), and these children of God are called τοῦ

⁴¹ The combination of “having faith” and “being faithful” suggests this faith is not abstracted as Motyer fears (*Father*, 191). So according to Betz, “Abraham who in Judaism is the prototype of ‘righteousness through obedience to the Torah’ now has become the prototype of the ‘men of faith.’ They are ‘blessed together with him’ because they share in the same faith” (*Galatians*, 143). Equating this faith to *faith in Christ* separates Paul from the traditions that come before and makes his portrayal unique.

⁴² A similarity to Paul’s argument is noticed in several commentaries, e.g., Barrett, *Gospel*, 320: “Circumcision was practiced by Abraham (Gen 17:10), the heir of the promise, and, like the promise itself, was antecedent to the Mosaic Law, and took precedence of it (cf. Gal 3:17)”; Brown, *Gospel*, 1:312: “The ordinance prescribing circumcision is in the Law of Moses (Lev 12:3), but the covenant of circumcision was from Abraham’s time (Gen 17:10; 21:4). See Rom 4”; Lindars, *Gospel*, 291: “The parenthetical note, which refers to the circumcision of Abraham (Gen 17:10; 21:4), may however be an implied criticism of the Jews’ reliance on Moses, and so may be a hint of the argument of Paul in Rom 4 and Gal 3.”

Ἀβραὰμ σπέρμα (with Abraham's name frontloaded for emphasis in Gal 3:29—i.e., “*Abraham's* children” who are implicitly contrasted with other children).

Likewise in Paul's ἀλληγορία in Gal 4:21–31, he separates two kinds of Abraham's children. Represented by Hagar, an Egyptian slave, are children of Abraham who persist in “the present Jerusalem (νῦν Ἰερουσαλήμ).” For John, this could readily correspond to Jesus's contemporaries who (retrospectively) greet Jesus with hostility in the temple complex of Jerusalem and who persecute Jesus as one born according to Spirit. The other type of Abrahamic children, those who share Abraham's faith are children of the ἄνω Ἰερουσαλήμ and thus “children like Isaac (τέκνα κατὰ Ἰσαάκ)” (Gal 4:28).⁴³

Paul also delineates the relevance of Abraham's faith in Rom 4:1–25, where Abraham's example of faith once more defines the characteristics of Abraham's children. With the same quotation of Gen 15:6 LXX, Paul outlines the effect of Abraham's faith, which shows that God is impartial to all since “faith is reckoned as righteousness” (v. 5). The blessedness which comes from the possession of faith is available to all people because Abraham's faith preceded his circumcision (v. 10). Abraham's circumcision becomes the σφραγίδα τῆς δικαιοσύνης τῆς πίστεως (v. 11), making Abraham a “father to all who believe through uncircumcision” as well as a father to the circumcised who “walk the tracks of faith” from their father Abraham (v. 12). In v. 16, Paul describes the certainty of the promise to “all Abraham's seed,” not only to children who are “of the law

⁴³ The descriptions of those “born in accord with the Spirit” and “children of a Jerusalem above” (Gal 4:26, 29) have close analogues in John 3:6–7, which describes “one born of Spirit (τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος)” who is also born “from above (ἄνωθεν),” contrasted to a “what is born of flesh (τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τῆς σαρκός).”

(τῷ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου),” but “to the seed from the faith of Abraham (τῷ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ).” This description of Abraham’s faith is far from abstract, for Abraham “believed in hope beyond hope (παρ’ ἐλπίδα ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι ἐπίστευσεν, v. 18).”⁴⁴ Paul alludes to Abraham’s faith-filled response to God in Gen 17, where he showed no “unbelief (ἀπιστία)” in God’s word despite his and Sarah’s advanced age (v. 20).

Since John takes “works of Abraham” as manifestations of faithful behavior, he may have redacted his Jesus tradition to accord with Romans and Galatians. For both Paul and John, the presence or absence of faith establishes the type of one’s relation to Abraham, whether by flesh or by spirit. Thus John relates a story of conflict in the temple of Jerusalem: Jesus disputes persons who claim Abrahamic ancestry, but display none of the faith that Abraham himself showed; they lack the works of Abraham and are in bondage without realizing it.

Children of God and Children of the Devil (8:42–47)

John 8:42–47 constitutes the section’s longest uninterrupted speech from Jesus. There is no mention of Abraham or immediate connection to previous discussion. While it might otherwise appear that Jesus has changed topics by denying his interlocutors’ divine paternity, the speech is prompted by a misunderstanding in v. 41: οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι have mistakenly understood Jesus to be denying their physical parentage because he is skeptical of their status as τέκνα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ. Analogous to the freedom and servitude

⁴⁴ One grammatically possible reading of Rom 4:18 takes εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι αὐτὸν πατέρα πολλῶν ἐθνῶν as the consequence of Abraham’s faith instead of the content of his belief: “he believed, *resulting* in his becoming the father of many nations” (same interpretation as NET, ESV, HCSB, NIV, KJV). Jewett fears this makes faith into a “theological work” (*Romans*, 335–36).

misunderstood in v. 33, Jesus's specialized definition goes over the head of his audience. The Johannine Jesus communicates a logic of spiritual paternity: one's actions reveal the identity of one's father.

The characterization of those whose father is not God, who are *not* “[born] of God (ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ)” (v. 47), becomes the antithesis of those born of God, τέκνα θεοῦ. While τέκνα θεοῦ is mentioned only twice in John (1:12; 11:52), the weight of the term is suggested by occurrences elsewhere in Johannine literature (1 John 3:1, 2, 10; 5:2; also cf. John 15:15), which collectively reveal that “children of God” is becoming a designation for believers within the Johannine community.⁴⁵ Since John does not elsewhere speak of τέκνα, already τέκνα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ in v. 39 anticipates the status τέκνα θεοῦ of those who have faith (John 1:12). The shift from Abraham's children (8:31–41) to God's children (8:42–47) allows John to spiritualize the meaning of progeny, upstaging those who think only of physical descent (ἡμεῖς ἐκ πορνείας οὐ γεγεννήμεθα, v. 41).

On the other hand, identification of spiritual progeny is accomplished by comparing the offspring's behavior to the actions of the purported father. οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι have a valid claim to physical descent from Abraham—conceded by the mixed conditional statement of v. 39. But God cannot be the spiritual father of those failing to love the Father's own emissary—hence the contrary-to-fact condition in v. 42: “Were

⁴⁵ So also Culpepper: “the phrase is used in a manner which suggests that it acquired significance as the Johannine community's self-designation” (“Pivot,” 26). Both John 15:15 and 1 John 3:2 concern the evolution of group titles and a corresponding authority that they convey.

God your father [which he is not], you would love me [and you do not].”⁴⁶ Those unable to hearken to Jesus’s word reveal their alternative birth identity since they are “descended from [their] father, the devil” and desire to carry out their father’s wishes (v. 44).⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Brown, *Gospel*, 1:364: “The criterion for filiation is once more the principle that the son should act like the father, and the actions of ‘the Jews’ in hating Jesus shows that they are not God’s children. It is interesting that in Gal 3:26, 29 we have Paul joining the question of being God’s sons with that of being Abraham’s descendants.”

⁴⁷ The wording ὑμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστέ has been suggested to exhibit a grammatical lapse, since this can equally mean “You are born of the father of the devil.” The text instead means “You are born of your father, the devil”; scribal emendations confirm the intended appositional meaning for τοῦ διαβόλου (see BDF §268[1]). Bultmann raises a second grammatical difficulty from v. 44 (ψεύστης ἐστὶν καὶ ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ): “The conclusion could still mean only ‘for his (namely the Devil’s) father also is a liar’” (*Commentary*, 318). While somewhat awkward, the antecedent of the pronoun αὐτοῦ almost certainly is τὸ ψεῦδος, not ψεύστης, a reading which Bultmann rejects (see further Barrett, *Gospel*, 349; Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 2:214; Lindars, *Gospel*, 330; Ridderbos, *Gospel*, 316). The article is generic and denotes the abstract concept of “lying” rather than a particular lie (see Smyth §1122 on the generic article). The translation of v. 44b, then is “When he speaks falsehood, he speaks from himself, because he is a liar and the father of falsehood.”

Furthermore, some suspect that John wants the reader to think of Cain, given the close parallels to 1 John 3:1–24 (Brown, *Gospel*, 1:358). The rare term ἀνθρωποκτόνος appears in both, and in 1 John 3:15 it is used together with the explicit mention of Cain as ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ and himself a murderer (1 John 3:11). Dahl emends John 8:44, conforming it to his theory by reading ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου, which makes Jesus’s opponents descendants of Cain rather than the devil (“Der Erstgeborene Satans und der Vater des Teufels [Polyk 7:1 und Joh 8:44],” in *Apophoreta: Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen zu seinem 70. Geburtstag am 10. Dezember 1964*, ed. Walther Eltester and Franz H. Kettler [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964], 70–84). A tradition that Cain was born of an angelic/demonic father is at least as early as Tg. Ps.-J., where in Gen 4:1 Cain is conceived by Eve’s adultery with Samael. On this, see the text and translation in Florentino García Martínez, “Eve’s Children in the Targumim,” in *Between Philology and Theology: Contributions to the Study of Ancient Jewish Interpretation*, ed. Hindy Najman and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, JSJSup 162 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 104. The same idea is probably in 1 En. 85:1–8, where Cain and Abel are depicted as dissimilar black and red calves, owing to a different lineage. John Byron posits an ancient Jewish reading tradition which reinterprets the euphemism for sexual intercourse in Gen 4:1 (יָדָע) to mean that Adam literally *knew* of Eve’s adulterous transgression (*Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition: Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the First Sibling Rivalry*, TBN 14 [Leiden: Brill, 2011], 17).

Yet the relevance to John 8 remains questionable, since the Evangelist never mentions Cain. Dahl’s emendation turns out to be unnecessary for several reasons: (1) 1

The progeny motif accounts for the abbreviated syntax of the section. Some translations struggle to convey the prepositional shorthand of ἐκ followed by a noun of source, a construction which appears five times in short succession: ἐκ πορνείας (v. 41); ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ (v. 42); ἐκ τοῦ πατρός (v. 44); ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ (twice in v. 47).⁴⁸ The construction first accompanies verbs denoting birth: 8:41 has γεννάω; 8:42, ἐξέρχομαι.⁴⁹ This allows the reader to anticipate the meaning “born from/of” in the examples that follow: “born of your father (ἐκ τοῦ πατρός)” (v. 44), “born of God (ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ)” (v. 47a), “not born of God (ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ [ἐστέ])” (v. 47b). Birth is the central image of the section, and the audience is expected to understand the continued significance of one’s birth identity.⁵⁰

John 3:15 has ἀνθρωποκτόνος for those who *follow* the example of Cain, implying that ἀνθρωποκτόνος is not in fact a Johannine technical term for Cain; (2) 1 John 3 makes Cain an example of those born of the devil: cf. ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ὁ διάβολος ἁμαρτάνει (1 John 3:8); ἐκεῖνος ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἦν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς (John 8:44); (3) the lying predisposition of the unnamed father in John 8:44 is more in keeping with the devil than with Cain. Thus neither in John 8 nor in 1 John 3 are nonbelievers called descendants of Cain, even while Cain is the most illustrative example of a tendency to murder and hate for the author of 1 John. If the author of John 8 were portraying the devil as Cain’s father, his logic of paternity would still require that Cain’s behavior was in keeping with *his* birth identity and *his* father’s desires. As a point of method, a reference to Cain is not required to explain the argument of John 8.

⁴⁸ E.g., many translations of ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ in v. 47 are awkward: “[those] of God” (KJV, NASB, ESV) is unclear; “[those who] belong to God” (NET) conveys possession rather than source; “[those] from God” (NRSV, HCSB) is better.

⁴⁹ When describing offspring, the second of these verbs can mean “issue from the womb” (LSJ, s.v. “ἐξέρχομαι”), though the author seems to welcome the ambiguity. γεννάω might have given the impression that Jesus is “born” in the same way that children of God are “born” of God.

⁵⁰ The prepositional shorthand is remarkably close to Gal 4:22–23, that is, a son “[born] of the slave woman (ἐκ τῆς παιδίσκης)” and a son “[born] of a free woman (ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθέρης).” John 3:1–12 exhibits other similarities, including four instances where γεννάω accompanies ἐκ to convey a metaphor of birth from water, spirit, or flesh (vv. 5–8). Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel (v. 10), approaches Jesus with the true (albeit

Since John 8:42–47 communicates the etiology of those *not* born of God, it is methodologically pertinent to inquire whether or not John has the title τέκνα θεοῦ from a prior source. Frequently the LXX and other Jewish texts refer to God as the father of the Jewish people, but nowhere does a writer before Paul mention τέκνα θεοῦ.⁵¹ On the

insufficient) confession that Jesus “came from God” and that God is “with him” (v. 3). Jesus insists on the necessity of “birth from above,” which I suggest carries a meaning equivalent to τέκνα θεοῦ. Jesus chides Nicodemus for lacking faith (v. 12), and the summary of John 3:11 contains a programmatic outline of John’s perspective on Jewish unbelief: “We speak about what we know and testify about what we have seen, but you people do not accept our testimony” (NET).

⁵¹ Paul has τέκνα θεοῦ in Rom 8:16, 21; 9:8; Phil 2:15. I claim this is original to Paul in light of the absence of the term from all known prior literature. Similarly Culpepper (“Pivot,” 17–25), who surveys related titles: υἱοὶ θεοῦ in the Greek OT and Philo (e.g., Exod 4:22; Deut 14:1; *Conf. Ling.* 145–47; *Sobr.*, 55–56); παῖς θεοῦ in Wis (esp. 2:13–18); “sons of light” and other titles from Qumran (1QS I, 9). He discovers no occurrence of τέκνα θεοῦ, but he underestimates the significance of this: “The phrase ‘children of God’ [τέκνα θεοῦ {LXX} or its Hebrew equivalents] does not occur in the Old Testament, but the distinction between τέκνα and υἱοί cannot be pressed since both translate בְּנֵי in various passages” (ibid., 17). If τέκνα θεοῦ is already a synonym for υἱοὶ θεοῦ in the OT, this does not explain the nonappearance of the former.

The absence of τέκνα θεοῦ from Jewish texts is more conspicuous given that υἱοὶ θεοῦ are frequently semidivine beings, forming an occasional interpretive challenge in, e.g., Gen 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Ps 28:1; 81:6. When Paul uses υἱοὶ θεοῦ synonymously with τέκνα θεοῦ to refer to glorified Christians (Rom 8:19), interpreters sometimes understand this to mean angelic beings after the LXX pattern. I do not regard this the best interpretation, but see Olle Christoffersson, *The Earnest Expectation of the Creature: The Flood-Tradition as Matrix of Romans 8:18–27*, ConBNT 23 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1990), 120–24. Nonetheless, LXX translators never have τέκνα θεοῦ despite numerous times when God is described as a father of, or a father figure to the children of Abraham.

Otherwise, there is only Homer who calls Theseus and Peirithous “famous children of the gods” (θεῶν ἐρικυδέα τέκνα, *Od.* 11.631), i.e., referring to literal demigods; and the third poetic fragment of Nicaenetus (2nd century BCE) has τέκνα θεῶν (“children of gods/goddesses”) (J. U. Powell, *Collectanea Alexandrina* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1925], 1–4). In sum, in all known and catalogued Greek authors prior to Paul, τέκνα θεοῦ is a rare collocation lacking a single precise equivalent. This makes it nearly impossible that the title entered the Johannine community’s self-understanding independent of Pauline influence.

contrary, the evidence is clear that Paul first created the collocation τέκνα θεοῦ; subsequently, the Johannine community adopted it as a self-designation for believers.

The identification of Abraham's children is the central concern of Gal 4:21–31 and Rom 9:8. Paul finds in Isa 54:1 (“the children of the barren woman are many”) reason to compare the offspring of Hagar and Sarah, since the quotation recalls the abundant progeny promised to Abraham. In Gal 4:28, Paul concludes from his allegory, “You, brothers and sisters, are children (τέκνα) of the promise akin to Isaac.”⁵² Likewise, when returning to the topic of Abraham's seed in Rom 9:6–13 Paul differentiates the physical offspring of Abraham (τὰ τέκνα τῆς σαρκός) from his spiritual descendants: it is the latter who (like Isaac) are called by God and so reckoned Abraham's offspring, his σπέρμα in Rom 9:8.⁵³

As for the spiritual offspring, their birthright is not only from Abraham but also from God: in Gal 3:26–29, the υἱοὶ θεοῦ are Abraham's seed (also cf. Rom 9:8). Paul recounts the continuing conflict between Abraham's physical and spiritual seed (Gal

⁵² I propose this alludes to Gen 17:16, where Sarah is promised a τέκνον. This is the first occurrence of τέκνον in the LXX. Ishmael is called υἱός (Gen 16:11), while Isaac continues to be called τέκνον (Gen 22:7–8). Paul makes no consistent distinction between τέκνα and υἱοί in Romans or Galatians, yet his intention to relate τέκνα Ἀβραάμ and τέκνα θεοῦ plausibly explains why he employs the latter phrase in the first place.

⁵³ According to the majority of interpreters, Paul's distinction between Abraham's τέκνα and σπέρμα intends the latter as the more exclusive category: οὐδ' ὅτι εἰσὶν σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ πάντες τέκνα (Rom 9:7). Jewett notes, “[This distinction] corresponds exactly to that between all Israel and the true Israel in v. 6b” (*Romans*, 575). But the conventional reading has not gone unchallenged. Barrett reads πάντες τέκνα as the subject in Rom 9:7 (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, BNTC [London: Black, 1991; repr. as 2nd ed., 1991], 180–81). An ancient reader may have drawn the same conclusion, that τέκνα is the more exclusive category. Further, even if τέκνα is Paul's broader category in 9:7, the context still has *two types* of Abraham's children, for Paul immediately notes τὰ τέκνα τῆς σαρκός as distinct from τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, whom Paul also names τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ (Rom 9:8).

4:29) and challenges any who object to a gospel inclusive of Gentile believers. Precisely this pattern appears in John 8: Jesus questions whether Abraham's physical seed have the faith of Abraham and so whether they really have Abraham as their father, which in consequence determines whether they are children of God. οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι unwittingly anticipate (in the retrospective narrative of the Fourth Gospel) an expansion of Abraham's children to include those who do not possess physical relation to Abraham but walk the steps of faith following their spiritual father. Just as Paul recontextualized the example of Abraham for non-Jewish believers of his day, the Johannine Jesus dramatizes this distinction in experiencing rejection from Jewish leaders in the temple of Jerusalem.

Abraham's Foreknowledge of Jesus (8:52–59)

John 8:52–59 returns the discourse to the topic of Abraham himself as Jesus discloses Abraham's vision of the messianic age. As in v. 33, it is not Jesus but his opponents who appeal to Abraham in their defense, accusing Jesus of claiming a power over death which Abraham did not possess (8:52–53). By v. 58 Jesus will give a reply to their question, but first he reclaims Abraham's example in support of his ministry. The LXX has none of the wording of v. 56. Nevertheless, commentators search for events in the OT which might account for John's observations.⁵⁴ I noted above that some take v. 58

⁵⁴ Lona views this verse as inspired by John's Christology rather than his traditions (*Abraham*, 327); Sheridan's exhaustive investigation of the traditions of Abraham reaches an abrupt conclusion, noting a "relative paucity of intertextuality relating to Abraham's 'joy' (or 'sight') within early Judaism" (*Figure*, 319–57); Williams is open to taking Gen 15 as the inspiration for these words: "the patriarch is said to have been granted visions (cf. Gen 15:1, 'in a vision'; 15:12, 17) of the future and of end times" ("Abraham," 219).

The question in v. 57 also prompts comparison to later Jewish texts. Schackenburg asks, "Is the idea that Jesus cannot have seen Abraham in paradise because

to determine the meaning of v. 56, which supposedly justifies a search for a preexistent Jesus in traditions where Abraham rejoices.⁵⁵ I propose an approach to the passage which does not rely on these hermeneutical moves: 8:56–58 is yet another misunderstanding exchange in John.⁵⁶

In 8:56–58, the misunderstanding of “the Jews” again turns on the ambiguity of a word from Jesus’s vocabulary: ὁράω. While this frequently refers to physical sight, Jesus means the more specific “foresee” or even “foresee through a vision.”⁵⁷ A meaning such as this is required by the object of the verb, τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ἐμὴν, which is not a thing that can appear to Abraham’s physical sight but a manifestation of Jesus’s life and ministry that was still in the future for Abraham: “Your forefather Abraham was overjoyed to see (ἰδῆ—that is *perceive*) my day, and he saw (εἶδεν—that is *foresaw*) it

he is too young for such a (mystical) vision?” (*Gospel*, 2:223, citing Str-B 1:30; 3:220). Gen. Rab. 38.13 has a young Abraham’s words to an idol-worshipper: “Fifty years old and you are going to bow down to something only one day old!” (H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., *Midrash Rabbah: Translated into English*, 3rd ed., 10 vols. [London: Soncino, 1983], 1:310; cited in Sheridan, *Figure*, 347–47; also cited in James L. Kugel, *The Bible as It Was* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997], 138).

⁵⁵Hunt, “Word Became Flesh,” 104: “[The question in v. 57] becomes in the hands of a skillful narrator a moment of Christological truth, a truth understood only within the broader framework of Jesus’ deity and pre-existence in the Gospel. . . . Yes, Jesus did see Abraham. The question, then, is ‘when?’”

⁵⁶ Sheridan notes the tendency among commentators to focus on “misquoted” speech: οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι think only of Jesus’s rather than Abraham’s sight. Sheridan explains this as according with traditions which describe Abraham as a recipient of revelation (*Figure*, 337–43). But her effort to legitimize the Jewish voice in John does not consider v. 59: “The Jews’ ‘voice’ has become totally obscured by the monologism of the Gospel’s narrative design and point of view” (*ibid.*, 362).

⁵⁷ LSJ, s.v. “ὁράω,” notes under mental sight, “to discern, perceive,” or occasionally the specialized meaning “to see visions.”

and was glad” (v. 56 NET).⁵⁸ Instead of grasping this meaning, “the Jews” think only of physical sight and thus ask, “You are not yet fifty years old! Have you *seen* (ἐώρακας—that is, *physically seen*) Abraham?” (v. 57 NET).⁵⁹ From the perspective of a sarcastic questioner, Jesus is not old enough to have beheld Abraham in the distant past. Jesus’s response in v. 58 marks his acceptance of the challenge, uniting the misunderstanding of his words in v. 56 with the equally disrespectful statements of 8:52–53. Jesus does claim to be greater than Abraham; he antedates Abraham’s own birth because he is the pre-existent λόγος of the Johannine Prologue who is claiming the very name of God.⁶⁰ But

⁵⁸ Culpepper (*Anatomy*, 158) remarks that the ambiguity of ἡμέρα in v. 56 contributes to misunderstanding:

The meaning of “my day” is more difficult, but probably it means that Abraham was privileged to see proleptically the revelation which would come through Jesus. Such an interpretation fits with the later reference to Isaiah’s having seen Jesus’ glory (12:41; cf. Isa 6:1ff.), but there is no event in the story of Abraham’s life comparable to the vision of Isaiah. . . . “Day” is not used in exactly this sense elsewhere in John (cf. “in that day” 14:20; 16:23, 26).

⁵⁹ Besides misunderstanding the meaning of the verb, this question shifts the subject from Abraham to Jesus. A variant reading “corrects” this shift and makes Jesus the object of Abraham’s sight. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 226–27: “The reading chosen . . . is more fitting on the part of the Jews, who, assuming the superiority of Abraham (v. 53), would naturally represent Jesus as seeing Abraham rather than Abraham as seeing Jesus.”

⁶⁰ Many see a connection to the Tetragrammaton of Exod 3:14, but the absolute ἐγὼ εἰμί is closer to Isa 43:10 LXX: “I too am a witness, says the Lord God, and the servant whom I have chosen so that that you may know and believe and understand that I am (ἐγὼ εἰμί). Before me there was no other God, nor shall there be any after me” (NETS). Brown reports, “No clearer implication of divinity is found in the Gospel tradition, and ‘the Jews’ recognize this implication” (*Gospel*, 1:367). The weight of the words grows from their repetition: “‘I am the light of the word’ (verse 12) becomes ‘I am (he)’, i.e. the light and all other possible predicates which denote salvation (verses 24 and 28); and this in its turn becomes the simple ‘I am’ of the present verse, denoting timeless pre-existence” (Lindars, *Gospel*, 336). On this issue see esp. David Mark Ball, “*I Am*” in *John’s Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications*, JSNTSupp 124 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 91–92:

only when Jesus makes his intentions clear with the absolute ἐγὼ εἰμί (v. 58) do the Jewish authorities get the point and respond to him as a blasphemer.⁶¹

John treats Abraham as the recipient of a divine revelation which concerns Jesus. This treatment is best explained by John's acceptance of the authority of Pauline letters. Gal 2:11–14 reveals that the Jerusalem followers of Jesus were predisposed to accept pressure from “the circumcision party (οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς)” (Gal 2:12).⁶² The example of Abraham was transformed by Paul, who claims Abraham as the spiritual father of all who have faith, Gentiles as well as Jews (Gal 3:6–7). Paul describes the foreknowledge that Abraham received: προῖδουσα δὲ ἡ γραφὴ ὅτι ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοῖ τὰ ἔθνη ὁ θεός, προεηγγελίσατο τῷ Ἀβραάμ ὅτι ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν σοὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη· ὥστε οἱ ἐκ πίστεως εὐλογοῦνται σὺν τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ (Gal 3:8–9). In Paul's statement, it was personified Scripture which “saw in advance (προοράω)” the justification of the Gentiles

The ἐγὼ εἰμί [of v. 58] . . . raises different questions from those above [in vv. 12, 18, 24, 28]. . . . γενέσθαι, the aorist infinitive of γίνομαι, expresses the coming into existence of Abraham, maybe even his birth. ἐγὼ εἰμί is in stark contrast to that verb. Not only does the one verb express coming into existence while the other expresses existence itself, but the change in tense is evocative. . . . The omniscient narrator of the prologue is echoed by the omniscient, and “omni-temporal” Jesus.

If γίνομαι refers to Abraham's birth, Jesus stands above the children of flesh or Spirit; Jesus is a son of God who requires no adoption into God's family (cf. Gal 4:4–5).

⁶¹ Lev 24:16 prescribes stoning for blasphemy, granting Brown's caution: “We are not certain what the legal definition of blasphemy was in Jesus's time; but in John's account the use of the divine name represented by ἐγὼ εἰμί seems to be sufficient, for the Jews seek to carry out the command of Leviticus” (*Gospel*, 1:367).

⁶² Martyn describes “a party within [the Jerusalem church] whose members derive their basic identity from their ethnic (Jewish) heritage and who are sure that all members of the church have to be taken into this ethnic heritage, at least to some degree” (*Galatians*, 234).

by faith.⁶³ As a result, Abraham is the recipient of divine “glad tidings.”⁶⁴ Since the same context has Abraham’s response of faith—which signals his belief that what he heard was true—the Evangelist could infer that Abraham received his revelation with joy.

This aspect of the story is even clearer in light of Rom 4:13–22. Paul recalls the strengthening of Abraham’s faith (οὐ διεκρίθη τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ ἀλλ’ ἐνεδυναμώθη τῇ πίστει) (v. 20). He was “fully assured that what God promised, he was able to do” (v. 21 NET); indeed, “he gave glory to God (δοῦς δόξαν τῷ θεῷ),” a phrase not taken from the LXX. Conversely in John: “I honor my Father—and yet you dishonor me. I am not trying to get *praise* (δόξα) for myself,” says Jesus (8:49–50 NET). Again in 8:54 he denies that he *glorifies* himself, but Abraham “rejoiced” and “was glad” (ἡγαλλιάσατο . . . καὶ ἐχάρη) to envisage Jesus’s day (v. 56), which forms the contrast with Jesus’s opponents. Thus Paul’s description of Abraham’s gratitude (Rom 4:20; also implied by Gal 3:8–9) is a close analogue to Abraham’s joy in John 8:56.

To this point I have analyzed Abraham’s exuberance in each text, but I have not yet asked why Abraham is giving thanks. Like John, Paul reads Jesus into the Abraham story. The divine promises were for Abraham and his σπέρμα (Gal 3:16, citing Gen 12:7 // 13:15 LXX). This singular descendant is Christ (Gal 3:17), so that his own Spirit can

⁶³ προοράω in Gal 3:8 is equivalent to Jesus’s ὁράω in John 8:56. The difference is that in Gal 3:8, the foreknowledge is the initial possession of personified Scripture (ἡ γραφή, with a quotation from Gen 12:3 // 18:18 LXX), whereas John reports Abraham’s foreknowledge with the simple ὁράω. Additionally, Gal 3:8 implies that Abraham is the recipient of auditory revelation. Yet these are not large differences, since the words of the citation are direct speech from God in their original LXX context, Gal 3:8 is euphemistic: God granted Abraham foreknowledge. Likewise, the Johannine Jesus supplies a nonphysical object of foreknowledge: τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ἐμὴν (John 8:56). For the wordplay on ὁράω to make sense, John supplies an object of sensory perception which corresponds to the good news which God proclaims to Abraham in Scripture.

⁶⁴ LSJ, s.v. “προεναγγερίζομαι.”

fill believers, making them children of God who cry, “Abba! Father!” (Gal 4:6–7).

Abraham learns that Gentiles are to be included among his progeny: “All the nations will be blessed in you” (Gal 3:8 NET, quoting Gen 12:3 LXX); “I have made you the father of many nations (πολλῶν ἐθνῶν)” (Rom 4:17 NET, quoting Gen 17:15). The question is whether Jesus’s “day” fulfills the promise to Abraham in this manner for the Evangelist, that is, whether Abraham’s family grows because of Jesus. The point seems to be that *Jews fall short so that Gentiles may enter the fold*. Jesus’s intention “to teach the Greeks” is stated ironically by οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι themselves (7:35), just as Caiaphas unwittingly prophesies Jesus’s death “not for the Jewish nation only (οὐχ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἔθνους μόνον), but to gather together into one the dispersed children of God” (11:52 NET). It follows that Abraham’s foretaste of the messianic age conveys that τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ will come from all corners of the earth, as in the Pauline paradigm.

Summary of Findings in 8:39–59

The purpose of this chapter has been to show that the Pauline voice of Romans and Galatians orders our expectations for the second part of John 8. To counter the thesis that John has adopted Paul’s portrait of Abraham, anyone claiming John’s dependence on additional traditions must explain what John gains from another source that he did not already have in Paul.

In John 8:39–59, there are three points of correspondence:

- (1) *Abraham’s example*: τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ (8:39) is Johannine shorthand for Abraham’s behavior and disposition. Either because John sees faith as the work of God (6:29) or because John understands Abraham as faithful in

general, the Evangelist conforms his dialogue to Paul's picture of Abraham and his offspring (Rom 4:1–25; Gal 3:6–9, 23–29; 4:21–31). Paul cedes no ground to opponents who speak of Abraham's submission to circumcision, for Paul reinterprets this rite as a sign of Abraham's prevailing faithful character.

- (2) *Abraham's children*: Birth identity is the consistent metaphor of 8:42–47, marking the difference between the unbelieving opponents and the τέκνα θεοῦ (John 1:12; 11:52). As in Rom 9:6–13; Gal 4:21–31, John sees no distinction between the (true) children of Abraham and the children of God. On the one hand, Abraham has spiritual descendants who are children of God by their faithful and loving attitude toward Jesus and his message. Alternatively, Abraham also has children of the flesh who cannot be children of God. Language deriving from Isaac's birth narrative (according to Paul) is latent in the self-understanding of the Johannine community; as τέκνα θεοῦ, they too are “children like Isaac” (Gal 4:28).

- (3) *Abraham's witness*: Abraham looks forward to Jesus's day, when Abraham's children will be numbered from all people of the world. For Paul, Abraham becomes the father of Jew and Greek, for those who walk in his footsteps of faith (Rom 4:12). God makes promises to Abraham and his seed, promises that Abraham believes (Gal 3:8; Rom 4:29). In John, Abraham's joy is the result of a vision of Jesus's day, the messianic age when God gathers children from among the nations.

Accordingly, the example of Abraham in John 8:39–59 is in agreement with Paul's teaching. Mere decades before the composition of the Fourth Gospel, Paul describes

Abraham's example with words and phrases now appropriated by Johannine Christians. This finding provides fresh support for the argument made half a century ago by C. K. Barrett, that Paul's thought here is "so close to the Johannine that [Rom 9] (or some similar Pauline argument) may well have been known to John."⁶⁵ If John does not intentionally evoke the text of Paul, the impress of Paul's argument remains.

⁶⁵ Barrett, *Gospel*, 347.

CHAPTER 4

THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN AND PAUL

In Chapter 1, I noted that literary comparisons of Johannine and Pauline texts are few and far between in recent scholarship. Hoegen-Rohls observes that while nearly every study of John reviews the topics of authorship, eschatology, and Christology, the relation between Johannine and Pauline theologies remains among the *Dauerprobleme* in the shadows of NT studies.¹ The seeds of a tendency to overlook Pauline parallels were spread by Bultmann's analysis of Johannine thought, which he reckons as fundamentally dissimilar to "Hellenistic Christianity" in the guise of Paul.² Bultmann proposes for John a socio-historical context within Mandaean Gnosticism, a theory that requires him to differentiate Johannine writings from other Christian texts. This insistence on reading the Fourth Gospel on its own terms (*für sich*) echoes to today, even while Bultmann's historical position—the Evangelist as former Gnostic—appears to have no advocates in the modern guild.³

¹ Hoegen-Rohls, "Johanneische Theologie," 595–96.

² Bultmann, "Die Bedeutung der neuerschlossenen mandäischen und manichäischen Quellen für das Verständnis des Johannesevangeliums," *ZNW* 24 (1925): 100–146, reprinted in abbreviated form in *Der Mandäismus*, ed. Geo Widengren, *Wege der Forschung* 167 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), 265–316. All citations below are from the original. Bultmann writes, "[The Gospel of John] belongs neither to Palestinian Christianity, as attested by the Synoptics, nor to Hellenistic Christianity from the type of the Pauline communities, nor to the type of Jewish-Hellenistic Christianity as attested by 1 Clement, the Shepherd of Hermas, or the letters of Hebrews and Barnabas" (100).

³ *Ibid.*, 267: "If you take the Gospel on its own terms (*für sich*), what is its central idea, its foundational conception (*Grundkonzeption*)?" See the discussion of this question by Ashton (*Understanding*, 2–3), who declares the Mandaean hypothesis "one of the oddest of the many remarkable bits of jetsam that litter the shores of Johannine

Bultmann's approach has had wide influence, even though his historical reconstruction has not been widely adopted. For example, in 1968 Martyn lauds the commentary as "an indispensable tool, and its major thesis partly correct."⁴ Because Bultmann needs to isolate John from Paul, his Gospel commentary and his *Theology of the New Testament* make frequent comparisons of Johannine and Pauline objectives.⁵

Though Bultmann is credited with inspiring fresh theories of John's originality, the theological compatibility of Paul and John remained and remains an open question.⁶ Just as in previous chapters I reexamined the very literary evidence that Bultmann rejects, so now my goal is to throw open a door that he closed. Whereas Bultmann made Paul a

scholarship." Ashton also notes, "the hypothetical source effectively isolates the Gospel from other sources and influences by interposing itself between them."

⁴ Martyn, *History*, x; quotation from the preface to the first edition. The fuller context is as follows:

When I began to study the Fourth Gospel, two brilliant articles of Rudolf Bultmann and his incomparable commentary soon convinced me that the conceptual milieu in which the evangelist penned his work was dominated by a kind of gnostic thought kin to that reflected in the Mandaean literature. The commentary still seems to me an indispensable tool, and its thesis partly correct.

In a move away from Bultmann, Martyn comes to argue that Jewish rather than Gnostic literature has more in common with Johannine thought. He situates this context in early "Christian" conflict with Jews: "The evangelization which brought the Johannine community into existence was very probably carried out wholly within the bosom of the synagogue. As regards the Johannine community, 'In the beginning was the sermon of the Gospel of the circumcision'" (ibid., 150).

⁵ Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:1–92, esp. 6–14.

⁶ For the early twentieth-century tendency to describe John as an impoverished imitator of Paul, see, e.g., Paul Wernle (*Beginnings*, 2:275). Hoegen-Rohls summarizes German studies from F. C. Bauer to Johannes Weiss, showing that nineteenth- and early twentieth-century comparisons of Paul and John presupposed Paul's initial genius ("Johanneische Theologie," 596–604).

foil for the examination of Johannine theology, it turns out that several theological motifs of the Fourth Gospel are distinctly Pauline. I have argued (1) that Galatians and Romans were available to John; (2) that Pauline locutions appear in John 8:31–59; and (3) that Paul’s rhetorical presence is unmistakable. I set out below to show ways in which this literary presence gave decisive shape to John’s narrative and theological claims including his soteriology, ethics, and understanding of “the Jews” as salvation-historical characters.

As a preliminary point of method, Bultmann’s model of historical development is more or less strictly linear.⁷ But since Bultmann’s work on John, commentators have shifted their evaluation of supposed anachronisms, positing instead that authentic tradition and theological purposes orient John’s narrative.⁸ John does not require Paul as a “link” in the chain to connect him to early tradition, for he has accurate historical tradition. However, I also see this issue as separate from evaluating his relation to Paul, because it is likely that John refracts his traditions through the theology of Paul. John displays Pauline influence whether or not reliable historical traditions underlie his narrative.

⁷ Thus to be “Pauline” means to diverge from the early church in Paul’s particular direction (Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:6):

The *relation of John to Paul* cannot be understood on a linear scheme of development from the theology of the earliest Church; the two lie in quite different directions. Since John is somewhat remote from the earliest Church, he is likely younger than Paul; but he does not presuppose Paul as a link between himself and the earliest Church. The later development of Paulinism is shown by the deutero-Pauline literature (Col., Eph., II Thess., the Pastorals, 1 Pet.)—it is a different world from that of John.

⁸ So already Brown, *Gospel*, 1:XLI–LI.

A second methodological difference distinguishes my approach from Bultmann's: although Bultmann rightly acknowledges the emergence of a distinctly Christian vernacular, he applies the label "common Christian terminology" too broadly. In fact, Bultmann dismisses a great deal of evidence in this manner: John and Paul account ζωὴ αἰώνιος, χαρά, and εἰρήνη among the gifts of salvation;⁹ they both have πέμπω or ἀποστέλλω to describe Christ's divine commission, and δίδωμι or παραδίδωμι for God's handing over his son for the world;¹⁰ John and Paul both refer to Jesus's δόξα and the gift of the Spirit to believers;¹¹ and both see fulfillment of Isa 53:1 in the failure of the prophetic herald (whether Jesus or Paul) to prompt faith among their contemporaries.¹² More to the point, Bultmann overstates the case in claiming that "specifically Pauline terminology is missing in John," since he admits a striking number of exceptions to his

⁹ ζωὴ αἰώνιος: John 3:15–16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 39; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10:28; 12:25, 50; 17:2; Rom 2:7; 5:21; 6:22–23; Gal 6:8; χαρά: John 3:29; 15:11; 16:20–22, 24; 17:13; Rom 14:17; 15:13, 32; Gal 5:22; εἰρήνη: John 14:27; 16:33; 20:19, 21, 26; Rom 1:7; 2:10; 5:1; 8:6; 14:17, 19; 15:13, 33; 16:20; Gal 1:3; 5:22; 6:16.

¹⁰ πέμπω: John 1:33; 4:34; 5:23–24, 30, 37; 6:38–39, 44; 7:16, 18, 28, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29; 9:4; 12:44–45, 49; 13:16, 20; 14:24; 16:5; 20:21; Rom 8:3; ἀποστέλλω: John 3:17, 34; 5:36, 38; 6:29, 57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21; ἐξαποστέλλω: Gal 4:4; δίδωμι: John 3:16; 6:32; Gal 1:4; παραδίδωμι: Rom 4:25; 8:32; Gal 2:20.

¹¹ δόξα: John 1:14; 2:11; 8:50, 54; 12:41; 17:5, 22, 24; Phil 2:9; 3:21; παράκλητος: John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; πνεῦμα: John 3:5–8, 34; 7:39; 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:13; 20:22; Rom 5:5; 7:6; 8:2, 4–16, 23, 26–27; 9:1; 14:17; 15:13, 16, 19; Gal 3:2, 5, 14; 4:6, 29; 5:5, 16–18, 22, 25; 6:8.

¹² John 12:38; Rom 10:16. The case can be made that John's reading of Isa 53:1 is directly informed by Romans. I am grateful to Hoffer for sharing his notes for a forthcoming publication with the working title, "Whose Report is Disbelieved? Pauline Influence in the Use of Isa 53:1 in John 12:38." Hoffer notices that "both [John 12:40 and Rom 11:7] describe the audience's stupefaction with the relatively uncommon verb πωρόω ('to harden, render insensate'), a term absent from the 'hardened heart' passages of the Septuagint."

own characterizations.¹³ Above all, he finds few manifestations of Pauline *faith* and *grace* in the Fourth Gospel, as it purportedly lacks a history-of-salvation perspective altogether.¹⁴

Hence it is also Bultmann's view of Paul that leads him to argue for so many other theological distinctives. Despite having abundant examples at his disposal, Bultmann rules out many of them as appearing insufficiently "Pauline." Yet the binary of faith and works, description of justification, and appeals to grace are not common topics in early authors citing Paul.¹⁵ Rather than deciding in advance what John should have gleaned from Pauline epistles, I began with a different methodological assumption: given

¹³ Bultmann's full list is as follows (*Theology*, 2:7–8):

Though Paul and John both use the term "world" and in the same sense, Paul's dominant contrast "flesh-spirit" retreats far into the background in John, occurring only at 3:6 and 6:63. In fact, "flesh" only rarely occurs (1:13f.; 1 John 2:16—except in the passages that speak of Jesus' coming "in flesh"; 1 John 4:2; 2 John 7). The characteristic Pauline expression "according to flesh" (κατὰ σάρκα) has an analogy, if at all, only in κατὰ τὴν σάρκα, 8:15. "Desire" (ἐπιθυμία) occurs only in 8:44, 1 John 2:16; the verb "desire" (ἐπιθυμεῖν) never does. Paul's characteristic anthropological terminology derived from the Old Testament is not found in John: *soma* and *psyche* in the Pauline sense do not occur, "heart" is relatively rare (13:2; 14:1, 27; 16:6, 22 in addition to the quotation 12:40, with which cf. 1 John 3:19–21), "mind" (νοῦς or νόημα) is completely missing. Also missing are "boast" and its cognates (καυχᾶσθαι, καύχημα, καύχησις) and "care," noun and verb (μέριμνα and μεριμνᾶν). Likewise missing are the terms that Paul took over from the Stoic-Cynic diatribe: "conscience," "virtue," "nature."

¹⁴ Below I offer counterclaims to these points. Bultmann recognizes tension when he specifies that "πιστεύειν (believing) is demanded [in John], [but] it is demanded *not in the specifically Pauline but in the common-Christian sense*" (*Theology*, 2:8; [emphasis added]).

¹⁵ E.g., Clement of Rome repeats terms from Paul's epistles (πίστις, δικαιοσύνη) but has δικαιοσύνη for Paul's *own life* as an outstanding "example (ὑπογραμμός)" of one who exhibited endurance in the face of persecution: τὸ γενναῖον τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ κλέος ἔλαβεν, δικαιοσύνην διδάξας ὅλον τὸν κόσμον (1 Clem 5:5–7). 1 Clem 47:1–4 invokes the authority of Paul's letters to inveigh against σχίσμα.

Christian propensity to harmonize texts and defer to Paul's authority, the literary evidence is the firmer ground for building a theory of theological compatibility.

Below I compare Johannine and Pauline theologies according to my reading of John 8:31–59. These authors agree in their definitions of sin, their description of salvation through faith, and their salvation-historical frameworks. Since I have argued for a literary relationship of Galatians and Romans to the Gospel of John, here I limit analysis to these three texts, where I find no incompatible theological traditions. Instead, the similarities among core theological ideas are numerous, and linguistic differences are accounted for on the basis of different social milieus.

Sin

As I claim, John 8:31–59 shows the author's presupposition of the Pauline concept of sin, with the result that the Johannine meaning of sin is unbelief even while a person's faith/unbelief reflects a *prior* (im)moral character. Not surprisingly, "sin" in John has been the topic of many studies.¹⁶ Matthew E. Sousa summarizes two competing positions in recent scholarship: "(1) 'sin' in John's Gospel is deemed *not* to be a moral or ethical category; or (2) 'sin' in John's Gospel is deemed to be the source and cause of

¹⁶ See, e.g., Martin Hasitschka, *Befreiung von Sünde nach dem Johannesevangelium: Eine bibeltheologische Untersuchung* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1989); Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 81–82; Rainer Metzner, *Das Verständnis der Sünde im Johannesevangelium*, WUNT 122 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); Jan G. van der Watt, "Salvation in the Gospel according to John" in *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology*, ed. idem, NovTSup 121 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 101–31; Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 65–73; Matthew E. Sousa, *Sin, the Human Predicament, and Salvation in the Gospel of John*, LNTS 647 (New York: T&T Clark, 2021).

immoral behavior, and it is rectified when one ‘believes’ in response to divine revelation.”¹⁷

The first of these identifies sin with unbelief. It is not any generalized moral or ethical failing but the “fundamental blindness and hostility of the world towards God’s will.”¹⁸ This is the position of Bultmann, that sin as exposed among “the Jews” of John 8 is resistance to truth and to God’s revelation.¹⁹ Bultmann outlines the correspondence between sin and unbelief: “Sin . . . is not any single ghastly action, even if that action be the crucifixion of Jesus; sin is not moral failure as such, but unbelief and the bearing that springs from it, i.e. the world’s conduct determined by unbelief and taken as a whole. From now on that is ‘sin.’”²⁰

The second prominent view of sin in the Fourth Gospel likewise identifies it as unbelief, holding unbelief to be the cause of further failings and moral evil.²¹ For this

¹⁷ Sousa, *Sin*, 2.

¹⁸ Metzner, *Verständnis*, 352.

¹⁹ Bultmann takes the opportunity distinguish John from Paul for not identifying sin with a specific ethical failing: “The sin of ‘the Jews’ is not their ‘boasting’ on the basis of works, as in Paul . . . , but their imperviousness to the Revelation which throws into question their self-security—which in substance, of course, is the very same sin. One might almost say: the sin of ‘the Jews’ lies not in their ethics, as in Paul, but in their dogmatics” (*Theology*, 2:27–28).

²⁰ Bultmann, *Gospel*, 563.

²¹ Sousa takes Brown, Koester, and van der Watt to represent this view (*Sin*, 5). Van der Watt finds John portraying the disciples of Moses as members of a fervent but misguided faith: “The essence of their sin is clear: it is not expressed in terms of individual deeds or guilt, but in terms of not accepting (believing in) God as he is revealed in and through Jesus. . . . This existential situation, namely, to be without God, results in the hatred for and rejection of the Son and the Father by the opponents of Jesus, and consequently, in their evil behaviour” (“Salvation,” 107).

view, lack of faith is akin to a crack in the foundation of a building, liable to throw everything into ruin because the foundation is suspect. The advantage of this position is that it does not have to strain to account for all the evidence, since Johannine characters appear to exhibit moral failings.²²

First, to represent sin as unbelief is obviously consistent with Paul, since faith is Paul's resolution of the problem of human sin. For Paul, those who *have faith* are released from imprisonment under sin and share the promise that was given to Abraham. Paul dramatizes the arrival of Jesus as the "coming of faith," the moment when the guardianship of the law ended (Gal 3:23–25). The law gave only knowledge of sin (Rom 3:20), and while it was intended by God for good, the law compounded sin all the more (Rom 7:7–12). Paul personifies sin as an enslaving master who demands obedience to its desires (Rom 6:12–20), and the release from servitude is secured by dying to sin in baptism and thereafter living to God (Rom 6:11; 7:6; 8:10). Faith grants a person's adoption into the family of God (Rom 8:15–17; Gal 3:26–4:7), which repeats the pattern of Abraham's faith that results in δικαιοσύνη (Rom 4:1–5). Paul quotes Ps 32:1–2 with its Davidic prayer noting forgiveness of sins (Rom 4:7–8), which applies equally to Jews and Gentiles who follow the model of Abraham's faith (Rom 4:9–12). On the other hand, Paul describes the hardening of the majority of Israel through unbelief: "They were broken off because of unbelief; you stand by faith" (Rom 11:20). In the divine plan that "all Israel will be saved," Paul predicts deliverance of Zion, renewal of the covenant, and

²² Judas's behavior can be connected with his lack of faith from 6:69–71, and thus "[Judas] was a thief. As keeper of the money box, he used to steal what was put into it" (12:6 NET). He lacks faith and acts sinfully.

forgiveness of sins (Rom 11:25–27).²³ Although a remnant of Israel has been preserved by God, the rest “were hardened (ἐπωρώθησαν),” without eyes to see or ears to hear (Rom 11:5–8).

Likewise, in John 8:31–59 Jesus sees both sin and unbelief in his Jewish questioners. ἁμαρτία occurs first in John 8:21, 24, where Jesus three times predicts death as a consequence of persisting in sin.²⁴ John 8:31 calls the audience “ones who had believed in him,” whom Jesus invites as disciples if only they will remain in his word. Since John orchestrates the conflict in Jerusalem to convey the unwitting slavery of children of Abraham (cf. Paul’s allegory of Gal 4:21–31), he continues to rely on Paul when describing the nature of their slavery: πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν δοῦλός ἐστιν τῆς ἁμαρτίας (8:34). This adopts both the Pauline motif of sin’s enslavement and Paul’s expression for redemption from sin (δοῦλος τῆς ἁμαρτίας, ἐλευθερώω; cf. Rom 6:17–18, 20, 22; 8:2, 21; Gal 5:1).²⁵ Furthermore, the inability of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι to hear the words of God (“Why don’t you understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot accept my teaching” John 8:43 NET) aligns with Paul’s composite quotation in Rom 11:8: “God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, until

²³ Here the composite quotation of Isa 59:20–21 and Isa 27:9 communicates a great deal about Paul’s reasoning, since Paul “in some ways subverts the original meaning of these texts in order to demonstrate the mystery of triumphant grace” (Jewett, *Romans*, 702–3). Jewett notes that “Jacob’s ἀσέβεια [‘impious deeds’] in this new context must refer to Israel’s ‘stumbling,’ ‘trespass,’ and ‘unfaith’ in relation to the gospel message” (ibid., 704).

²⁴ Brown (*Gospel*, 1:347) cites the term ἀποθνήσκω alongside ἐν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ (also ἐν ἁμαρτίας) in Ezek 3:18, 20; Prov 24:9.

²⁵ See my defense of these claims in Chapter 2.

this very day.”²⁶ Unbelief while in the very presence of Christ is truly a form of spiritual disability since it renders a person unable to recognize the things of God.

But the repercussions go deeper. John has fully systematized the Pauline “children of Abraham” and “children of God.” John’s narrative is imbued with the Pauline distinction between two *types* of children from Abraham: those *κατὰ σάρκα* and those *κατὰ πνεῦμα* (cf. John 1:13). *σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ*, Paul’s polyvalent term with spiritual and physical definitions, is placed on the mouths of “the Jews” and has become integral to their identity (John 8:33). The Johannine Jesus sees that these descendants of Abraham are unlike Abraham himself, who exhibited faith and rejoiced in expectation that God’s word was true; thus Jesus decries their Abrahamic ancestry (John 8:39). What is more, Jesus denies they can be God’s children, since John accepts from Paul that God’s children are the fulfillment of Abraham’s progeny. They are not God’s children (*τέκνα θεοῦ*), hence John diagnoses them as children of the Devil (John 8:44). Just as the children of Abraham exhibit the behavior of Abraham (since *τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ* is a metonymy for Abraham’s faithful character), the children of the Devil exhibit the behavior of their father (*ἔργα τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν*) by remaining enslaved to sin.

This parallelism sheds new light on the question of sin’s ethical status in John. As others have shown, Johannine “sin” is impossible to disassociate from unbelief. But John nowhere portrays unbelief as the root of moral failing. Rather, the Fourth Evangelist reverses cause and effect: he asks what *preexisting* moral character explains the unbelief of Jesus’s contemporaries. In John’s social context, the ramifications of unbelief were obvious in the rejection of Jesus (*ὁ δὲ μὴ πιστεύων ἤδη κέκριται*, 3:18); more difficult

²⁶ Quoting Deut 29:4; Isa 29:10.

was accounting for why Jewish authorities did not believe Jesus in the first place, since Jesus possessed the words of eternal life (6:68). As early as the Prologue, a central theological concern of John is that οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον (1:11).

John offers four reasons, all with precedents in Galatians and Romans: (1) those who did not respond to Jesus with faith were morally corrupt;²⁷ (2) Jesus's God-given prophetic mission occasions both belief and unbelief;²⁸ (3) a minority of religious authorities responded sympathetically to Jesus's message;²⁹ (4) Jewish unbelief prompts

²⁷ In John 3:16–21, whoever exhibits faith in God's son is not judged. Those who do not believe are *already* judged because of their preexistent evil character (αὐτῶν πονηρὰ τὰ ἔργα). The cause of unbelief is a corrupted state of existence, where one does what is evil and refuses to come into the light. God's wrath is not aroused by unbelief itself, but wrath "remains (μένω)" over those who do not believe (3:36). Their disbelief is because they have no desire to come to Jesus (5:40), and the world hates Jesus's testimony that its deeds are evil (7:7). Jesus foreknew the ones who did not believe, including his betrayers (6:64, 70–71; 13:11; cf. also 12:6 where Judas is called a thief). They would not believe because Jesus spoke the truth (8:45), and by their claim "we see" their sin remains (9:41; 15:22–25). Likewise, in Gal 3:22 Paul calls out the universal imprisonment of humans under sin, whose internment ends for those who respond with faith. And when addressing Jewish unbelief in Rom 10:3, Paul sees Jews as "ignoring the righteousness of God and seeking to establish their own," which recalls his description of the universal negative judgment of Jews and Greeks who "labor in evil" (Rom 2:9). According to God's impartiality, ὅσοι ἐν νόμῳ ἥμαρτον, διὰ νόμου κριθήσονται (Rom 2:12).

²⁸ Those chosen by God are able to come Jesus and respond with faith (John 6:44, 65; 17:6). Those who do not believe are rendered unable to hear or to see (8:43; 9:39; 12:37–40). When Paul defends God against a charge of "injustice (ἀδικία)" in Rom 9:14–24, he invokes God's words in Exod 33:19: "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." As God hardened the heart of Pharaoh to demonstrate his power, God will "harden (σκληρύνω)" those he wants to harden (Rom 9:18).

²⁹ Nicodemus is singled out as a ruler who sympathizes with Jesus (John 3:1–2; 7:45–52; 19:39). In 12:42–43, John claims that many Jewish rulers have faith in Jesus but remain silent out of fear. The disciples are treated as reconstituted Israel, and Jesus hails Nathanael as ἀληθῶς Ἰσραηλῆτης. Likewise, in Rom 9:27 Paul alludes to God's plan to save a "remnant (ὑπόλειμμα)" of Israel (altering the original wording of Isa 10:22 LXX). As God kept prophets for himself who were not killed in the days of Elijah, Paul claims that God has preserved a "remnant (λεῖμμα)" chosen by God's grace (Rom 11:4); Paul

inclusion of non-Jews who respond with faith.³⁰ These theological rationales find broad support in Romans and Galatians.

Faith

In John 8:31–59 and often elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel, the language of “having faith” (πιστεύω) defines the *exclusive path to salvation*, which is consistent with Paul on the same subject. Once again, others frequently comment on the nature of faith in the Fourth Gospel, but without considering the implications of theological continuity between Paul and John.³¹ Scholars acknowledge some diversity of meaning for Johannine “faith,” since characters in John occasionally “believe” without being transformed.³² Also

classes himself among them: καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ Ἰσραηλῆτις εἰμί, ἐκ σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ, φυλῆς Βενιαμὴν (Rom 11:1).

³⁰ In 7:35–36, Jewish leaders wonder whether Jesus intends to teach the Greeks of the dispersion; in 10:16, Jesus elusively names his sheep from another sheepfold; in 11:52, Jesus’s death is prophesied on behalf of the scattered τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ, who are not only Jewish people. Alternatively from Paul in Rom 11:11–32, by the stumbling of the majority of Israel, salvation has come the Gentiles in order to make Israel jealous (Rom 11:11). Through Jewish unbelief, the world receives the riches of salvation, yet Paul conceives of a reciprocity whereby Israel is restored in the future, resulting in blessing for all. According to Paul, a “hardening of part of Israel has come until the full number of Gentiles comes in,” and the result is that “all Israel will be saved” (Rom 11:25–26).

³¹ Brown, *Gospel*, 1:512–14; Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 1:558–75; van der Watt, “Salvation,” 119–22; Robert Kysar, *John, the Maverick Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 93–113.

³² Van der Watt lists occasions when πιστεύω is found with subjects who exhibit inadequate “change in attitude towards oneself as well as towards Jesus” (“Salvation,” 120–21): John 2:22–25, sign-believing disciples; 6:14–15, those who would make Jesus king; 6:25–27, followers who want bread; 6:60–71, disciples who turn away; 9:35–39, the man born blind; 12:42–43, those preferring human praise. In fact, in his list he includes 8:30–47 and notes what is for him a paradox, that “although they believe, they do not live as children of God.” Rather, 8:45–46 has Jesus claim they do *not* believe, which he explains by their spiritual ancestry.

commonly noted is that John never has πίστις but frequently has πιστεύω.³³ Bultmann maintains that “while πιστεύειν (believing) is demanded [in John], it is demanded not in the specifically Pauline but in the common-Christian sense. . . . Faith as the right way to salvation is not contrasted with false ‘zeal for God’ (Rom 10:3); in John the way to salvation as a problem actual for the Jew is not under discussion.”³⁴ In support of Bultmann’s conclusions, Schnackenburg claims that

John did not merely bring out (exactly like Paul) the central function of faith within the Christian message of salvation, as the one decision and attitude demanded of man, and affirm its critical significance in eliminating other ways of salvation, but he also (like Paul for his day) confronted his own times and his own situation with the challenge of faith and formulated it accordingly.³⁵

On this reading, the absence of an explicit contrast between faith and “salvation by works” closes the door to the compatibility with Pauline theology. But the centrality of faith and its role in salvation is nonetheless a persistent trope in John.³⁶ πιστεύω has three times as many occurrences in John as in the Synoptic Gospels combined.³⁷ T. W.

³³ πίστις is in 1 John 5:4. The noun is common in the Synoptic Gospels and absent from John. Brown argues that “to a certain extent ‘knowing’ and ‘believing’ are interchangeable in John,” this alongside his suggestion that “the Evangelist is not thinking of faith as an internal disposition, but as an active commitment” (*Gospel*, 1:512–13).

³⁴ Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:8.

³⁵ Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 1:568, citing only Bultmann’s discussion of faith on this page.

³⁶ Kysar (*Maverick Gospel*, 87) suggests a context for the emergence of John’s vocabulary of faith. According to Kysar, the Evangelist began from material that treated faith without great nuance, because “Christians were very optimistic about converting persons to their faith.” But over time and in the face of missionary failure, the Johannine community developed the idea that faith does not arise automatically from the individual but must be prompted by God.

³⁷ I count ninety-eight occurrences in John; so Brown, *Gospel*, 1:512.

Manson specifies what is for John the “absolutely vital . . . question of decision” in the individual, which Bultmann himself was keen to emphasize.³⁸ The Johannine τέκνα θεοῦ are those who “believe in his name” and receive him (1:12), as “every person who believes in his name may have eternal life” (3:12, 15–16, 18, 36; cf. 6:47; 11:25). What God requires (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ θεοῦ) is “believing in the one he sent” (6:29). Belief goes to the core of the Gospel proclamation, since those who believe without seeing are blessed (20:29), and the words of the Gospel are intending to evoke belief that Jesus ἐστὶν ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (20:31).

All this is well known, but some see a persistent tension in the way that John views the Jewish law. Sheridan observes that “the debate across the whole of John 7–8 is not about belief in Christ *versus* observance to the Torah; indeed, on the one occasion that Jesus mentions the Law in this discourse (7:19–21) . . . Jesus is concerned about *how to interpret the Law rightly*.”³⁹ Similarly, in my introduction I cited Pancaro’s dismissal of Pauline parallels to John 8 on the grounds that “nowhere does [John] consider the observance of the Law opposed to faith, nowhere does he speak of the slavery of the Law or of freedom from the Law, much less does he say that the Law leads to sin.”⁴⁰ These arguments align with those of Bultmann, Schnackenburg, and others who see John as

³⁸ Manson, *On Paul and John: Some Selected Theological Themes*, SBT 38 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1963), 89: “It is no accident that the pages of Bultmann, for example, are peppered—in more senses than one—with the word ‘*Entscheidung*.’”

³⁹ Sheridan, *Figure*, 26. Here Sheridan is disputing the thesis of Dozeman (“Sperma Abraam”), who sees in John 8:31–59 a conflict with Torah-observant Jewish Christians. For my evaluation of these studies, see Chapter 2.

⁴⁰ Pancaro, *Law*, 526–27.

unsupportive of what would seem a Pauline doctrine that “salvation by faith” opposes “salvation by works.” In the Fourth Gospel, keeping Torah is not antithetical to faith.

John does see faith as necessary for salvation, but rather than contrast saving faith with “salvation by works” he distinguishes it from *ancestral inheritance in the absence of faith*, which is equally a concern in Romans and Galatians. Paul himself does not present faith and works as opposites; he too attacks appeal to ancestral inheritance in the absence of faith.⁴¹ In John, the accusation in 7:19 (“none of you does the law”) is inseparable from 5:45–47 (“If you believed in Moses, you would believe in me, because he wrote about me”). John never disparages keeping the law per se, but contrasts the law, given through Moses, with grace and truth, that come through Jesus (1:17). The law is more or less neutral in John: both Jesus and his accusers claim its support (7:23, 49, 51; 8:17; 10:34; 12:34; 19:7).⁴² Jesus, Pilate, and the narrator view the law as belonging to “the

⁴¹ In Rom 2:12–29, Paul makes mere possession of the law inconsequential for those who simultaneously break the law. Jewishness itself is determined by the inward disposition of the heart “in the Spirit” (vv. 28–29). The public demonstration of God’s righteousness in Jesus requires that “boasting (καύχησις)” be excluded (Rom 3:19–27). Faith becomes the determiner of a person’s justification, whether as a Jew or Greek, and those of faith “establish (ἵστημι)” the law rather than abolish it (Rom 3:31). Paul recounts the internal war that results from receipt of God’s law, for (without faith) the members of the body render a person captive to sin (Rom 7:22–23). Further, in Gal 3:6–7, 26–29, Paul makes possession of faith the mark of spiritual ancestry from Abraham. Paul’s allegory in Gal 4:21–31 holds that mere physical ancestry from Abraham is akin to ancestry from Hagar, because her τέκνα descend from Abraham but inherit none of the benefits of the promise that passed to Isaac.

⁴² The final example, John 19:7, has οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι claim that Jesus must die κατὰ τὸν νόμον. This is potentially an example where (misplaced) zeal for the law leads to sin; see Rom 9:31–33; Gal 3:13.

Jews.”⁴³ In John 8:38 Jesus tells his opponents to “do what things you have heard from the father” (ἃ ἠκούσατε παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ποιεῖτε), which makes no distinction between believing Jesus’s message (8:31, 37, 51) and following the example of Abraham (8:56). Thus neither ancestry from Abraham (8:39), nor discipleship from Moses (9:28), nor possession of the law (19:7) grants salvation if one is otherwise rejecting Jesus, who came to reveal the things of God (1:18).

All of these points are consonant with Paul, who was not an antinomian and who explicitly defends the goodness of the Torah.⁴⁴ Paul’s argument in Gal 3—while characterizing those whose “identity comes from works of the law (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου)” as under a curse (v. 10)—makes the law weak to the point of being inoperative rather than evil. It was “added because of transgressions” (v. 19) until the coming of Christ (v. 24). Paul’s concern in Gal 5:4 is that by seeking circumcision, Gentile converts “fall away from grace (τῆς χάριτος ἐξέπεσατε)” and are “estranged from Christ (κατηργήθητε ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ).” Equally, in Rom 3:31 the law is not “abolished” by faith but reaches fulfillment. The law was unable to free humans from the mastery of sin (Rom 7:7–12), but by sending his son, God overcomes this weakness so that the children of God who walk by the Spirit fulfill the “right ordinance (δικαίωμα)” of the law (Rom 8:4).

Thus I affirm with Schnackenburg that John “confronted his own times and his own situation with the challenge of faith and formulated it accordingly.”⁴⁵ Whereas Paul

⁴³ Jesus refers to “your law” in speaking to Jews in 8:17; 10:34. Pilate echoes this language when telling Jewish leaders κατὰ τὸν νόμον ὑμῶν κρίνατε αὐτόν. Indeed, even the narrator calls it “their law” when recounting its fulfillment (15:25).

⁴⁴ Rom 3:5–8; Gal 5:13–26, esp. vv. 13–14 (“Love your neighbor as yourself”).

⁴⁵ Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 1:568.

addresses the situation of Gentiles who seek to adopt circumcision and other demands of the law, John formulates his Gospel at “two levels” (Martyn) to address the community’s alienation from synagogues that are hostile to faith in Jesus. Paul proclaims his opposition to adopting works of the law to supplement faith in Jesus, and John opposes Jewish leaders who reject faith in Jesus while claiming Abrahamic ancestry or mastery of Mosaic law. John sees continuity between the rejection of the historical Jesus by the high priesthood, on the one hand, and, and on the other, the rejection of Jesus by contemporary synagogue leaders. Just as Paul had to bridge contexts in his own preaching, John bridges two contexts by prescribing faith in Jesus as the only path to salvation.

History of Salvation

In the field of Johannine studies, perhaps no other words from Bultmann have had more impact than these: “The author is only interested in the *existence* (*Dass*) of revelation, not its *content* (*Was*).”⁴⁶ Bultmann means that the message of Jesus’s ministry as it may be reconstructed from the Synoptics is lacking in John, replaced by one thing: the revelation of God in the person of Jesus himself.⁴⁷ The Synoptic Jesus who spoke in parables about the kingdom of God is transformed into a Jesus who reveals himself

⁴⁶ Bultmann, “Bedeutung,” 145. According to Gail R. O’Day, the *Dass/Was* polarity is assumed by scholars who otherwise reject Bultmann’s claim that John expresses no dogma apart from Jesus’s identity as revealer. She argues for a reconsideration of the “how” (*Wie*) of revelation (“Narrative Mode and Theological Claim: A Study in the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 105 [1986]: 657–68).

⁴⁷ Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:4: “[The Johannine Jesus] speaks only of his own person as the Revealer whom God has sent. He does not argue about the Sabbath and fasting or purity and divorce but speaks of his coming and his going, of what he is and what he brings the world. He strives not against self-righteousness and untruthfulness but against disbelief toward himself.”

through repeated “I am” statements and revelatory discourses. On topics pertaining to salvation, Bultmann’s division between Pauline and Johannine theologies is adamant: not only does John lack key terms expressing a history of salvation but “the history-of-salvation perspective as a whole is lacking in John.”⁴⁸ Bultmann grants that the Fourth Evangelist appeals to Moses and Abraham and adduces their support of Jesus’s self-revelation. Yet as Bultmann reads him, the Evangelist has no role for the fulfillment of prophecy, the status of God’s covenant with Israel, or the former election of Jews.⁴⁹ While a complete response to these claims is beyond the scope of this study, with respect to the denial of a salvation history, my analysis of John 8:31–59 suggests the near opposite: John narrates the coming of Jesus in Jewish history and portrays the patriarchs, prophets, and Jewish contemporaries as characters in the salvation-historical drama.

First, John turns figures of Israel’s past—Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Isaiah—into witnesses to the revelation of Jesus, thereby inviting readers to see continuity with heroes of the tradition. Moses, who is named a dozen times in John, is the agent who delivered the law to the Jewish people (1:17, 45; 7:19, 22–23).⁵⁰ Not only is Moses invoked as the

⁴⁸ Ibid., 2:8.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 2:8–9. Ironically, commentators occasionally dispute the centrality of “covenant” as a salvation-historical category for Paul as well, claiming that he speaks of *διαθήκη* infrequently and without more than passing interest: Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977), 513–14; Dunn, “Did Paul Have a Covenant Theology? Reflections on Romans 9:4 and 11:27,” in *The Concept of the Covenant in the Second Temple Period*, ed. Porter and Jacqueline C. R. de Roo, JSJSup 71 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 306; A. Andrew Das, *Paul and the Stories of Israel: Grand Thematic Narratives in Galatians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 90.

⁵⁰ The last group of these examples, John 7:19–23, is exceptional for two reasons. First, John shows discretion in considering the regulations of circumcision since the practice of circumcision appears first in the covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:9–14). The same chronological observation is made in Rom 4:9–12. Second, John is usually read as making an argument *a minori ad maius*, a logic at home in rabbinic discourse:

lawgiver, but John also appeals to the imagery from Num 21:9 to explain Jesus's death on a cross (3:14; cf. 12:32–33). Just as Moses lifted up the bronze serpent as a “sign (σημεῖον)” which granted life (Num 21:9 LXX), so Jesus is raised up to draw all people to himself.⁵¹ Likewise, Moses's role in the provision of bread to the Israelites in the wilderness provides a second typological image of Jesus, who is himself the “bread of God” coming down to grant life (6:32–33).⁵² The presence of Jacob in 4:5, 12 conveys another instantiation of the same trope: whereas Jacob gave a well which produced literal water, Jesus offers water which results in everlasting life (4:13–14); the unspoken answer to the Samaritan woman's question is, “Yes, Jesus is greater than your father Jacob.”⁵³

“Circumcision affects only a part of the body; if that is permitted, an action affecting the good of the whole body should be permitted” (Brown, *Gospel*, 1:313). Bultmann cites a close parallel in Yoma 85b (*Gospel*, 276): according to Bultmann's reading, “the Jews” are habitually transgressing the law of Moses by circumcising on the eighth day. Barrett defends the far more likely alternative, that they transgress the law of Moses *by seeking to kill Jesus*, as e.g., in John 8:59 (*Gospel*, 319).

⁵¹ Brown, *Gospel*, 1:133: “Could this be one of the factors that led to the Johannine use of ‘sign’ for the miracles of Jesus?” To answer in the affirmative would imply that John's revelatory “signs” are inseparable from a salvation-historical mindset.

⁵² John 6:31 quotes Ps 77:24 LXX and seems acutely aware that the hymnic context conveys God's provision despite the continued sin of Israel.

⁵³ Bultmann sees no connection between Jacob and the description of Jesus's living water (*Gospel*, 180–87). The Samaritan woman, whom Bultmann supposes represents the unbelieving world, encounters in Jesus a fundamental dualism between earthly and heavenly realities: “Whereas human life is false and inauthentic, the revelation bestows true, authentic life. For the false points to the true, the inauthentic to the authentic. The very fact that man mistakes what is inauthentic for what is authentic, what is temporary for what is final, shows that he has some knowledge of what is authentic and final” (ibid., 182). Ridderbos rejects such abstraction, claiming that the Jewish and Samaritan historical context is essential to understanding the events narrated (*Gospel*, 157):

The point of this story and the way by which Jesus leads the woman to faith can only be understood against the salvation-historical background of God's revelation to Israel. The gift of water from the well of Jacob was for the

Next, the prophet Isaiah appears twice in the Gospel (1:23; 12:37–41). After the combined quotation of Isa 53:1 and Isa 6:10, John surmises that “Isaiah saw [Christ’s] glory and spoke concerning him” (12:41).⁵⁴ Finally, the example of Abraham is cited by Jesus in John 8:56; Abraham “foresaw” Jesus’s day and rejoiced. Jesus is greater than Abraham because Jesus preexists Abraham’s lifetime (8:58). In each of these examples, Jesus’s presence supplies fulfillment or amplification of the ancient faith, and the great patriarchs are narrated into their new roles as witnesses to Christ.⁵⁵

Second, John portrays Jesus’s contemporaries as witnesses to the revelation of Jesus, whether to positive or negative ends. John wants readers to observe the emergence of Israel’s apostasy. The Fourth Gospel makes John the Baptist a witness to Jewish leaders (1:7, 19), so that the baptism of Jesus results in John’s testimony that “he is the

Samaritans, like the manna in the wilderness to Israel, a reminder of the sacred tradition—continuing evidence of God’s richly salvific involvement with his people through history. . . . What is referred to here as “living water” is already present in the OT portrayal of what the people in their distress desired from God, and that not only in a physical sense (cf. Ps 23:2ff.; 36:8; Isa 12:3, etc.): one reads of “thirst for God” (Ps 42:1) and of God as the “fountain of life” (Ps 36:9; Jer 2:13: “the fountain of living waters”); the salvation of the Lord is offered as waters for those who are thirsty (Isa 55:1ff.) as contrasted with that which only temporarily quenches thirst.

⁵⁴ Here Bultmann identifies Jewish unbelief, but his comments universalize the effect on the reader: “Looking at Jewish unbelief, which is not an accidental factor, the question should rise up in a frightening manner before the reader as to what he belongs to, ‘whence’ he comes, and what determines his existence” (*Gospel*, 453). The foreknowledge of Isaiah eventually became an apologetic concern for some Christians, though the text which best conveys this foreknowledge (Ascension of Isaiah) is dated to the second century or later.

⁵⁵ Ernst Käsemann’s description of John’s Christology as “naïve docetism” is a famous departure from Bultmann on these matters, since he argues that christological dogma is what John most wishes to communicate; the content of the revelation is of course christological (Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968], 26).

Son of God” (1:34).⁵⁶ The character of Nathanael is introduced as skeptical of Jesus’s ministry, but Jesus calls him “a true Israelite in whom there is no deceit” (1:47 NET). Nathanael’s initial willingness to come to Jesus and to *see* contrasts with those who remain blind.⁵⁷ Likewise, Nicodemus himself a “teacher of Israel” (3:10) comes to Jesus and thereby exemplifies nascent faith. αἱ γραφαί witness to Jesus and the eternal life he brings (5:39); the crowds witness his miraculous deeds (12:17); even the high priest unwittingly prophesies his death on behalf of the people (11:49–53).

It is with these patterns in mind that I approach “the Jews” as characters in John’s salvation history. Bultmann’s sees οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι as representative of a *generalized unbelieving world*.⁵⁸ Cultic practice, ancestry from Abraham, and real existence in history—these are almost incidental to their role in the story. They exemplify unbelief in general, and thus are unrelated to salvation history. Bultmann of course does not contextualize 4:22, that “salvation is from the Jews.”⁵⁹ However, since the second half of

⁵⁶ The testimony of the Baptist manifests Jesus “to Israel” (1:31). As Jesus is greater than Israel’s patriarchs, Jesus’s testimony is greater than John’s (4:1; 5:36; 10:40).

⁵⁷ Brown notes this feature and mentions the precedent in Paul (*Gospel*, 1:86–87):

He is not, then, like “the Jews” of ch. 9 who claim to accept Moses (9:29), but reject Jesus’ challenge to see and thus sink into blindness (9:41). Because of Nathanael’s willingness to come to the light, Jesus hails him as one truly representative of Israel. Here John may be close to the distinction that Paul makes in Rom 9:6: “Not all who are descended from Israel [Jacob] belong to Israel”; the true Israelite believes in Jesus.

⁵⁸ Bultmann, *Gospel*, 86–87.

⁵⁹ This Bultmann calls “impossible in John, and that not only because of 8:41ff.; for 1:11 already made it clear that the Evangelist does not regard the Jews as God’s chosen and saved people.” He reasons, “In spite of 4:9 it is hard to see how the Johannine Jesus, who constantly disassociates himself from the Jews . . . could have made such a statement” (*Gospel*, 189–90).

the twentieth century, commentators have not demythologized “the Jews” in the narrative, since what they see in John is intra-Jewish conflict.⁶⁰

“The Jews” are essential to John’s salvation history whether or not the modern investigator judges the narrative to be historical.⁶¹ What is necessary is that John wished to portray continuity between the rejection of Jesus in history and the subsequent rejection of Jesus’s followers. The Evangelist does not paint Jewish authorities as unsympathetic or beyond all hope: John relays the internal deliberations of the high priesthood (11:47–53; 12:19), and the Johannine Jesus invites the same group of Jews who seek to kill him to become his disciples (8:31). Because we can assume that the rejection of Jesus is a part of John’s received tradition, it stands out all the more that he details the emergence of unbelief in those he took to be real Jews, those who were in real positions of authority during Jesus’s ministry and who stood in Jesus’s presence while conspiring to end his life.

In sum, Paul and John both see the followers of Jesus as legitimate inheritors of the legacy of Israel. As a result, Jewish unbelief is a problem. Paul points to his own agony about his fellow Jews, since “theirs is the adoption and the glory and the covenants and giving of the law and the temple service and the promises” (Rom 9:4). Paul adduces

⁶⁰ Nathan Thiel argues that John is not alienating “the Jews” from Jesus or his followers: “Blinded Eyes and Hardened Hearts: Intra-Jewish Critique in the Gospel of John” (PhD diss., Marquette University, 2016).

⁶¹ For John, the historical and the theological are one; he conveys what he takes to be true. Reinhartz agrees that “the Fourth Evangelist believes in the historical truth of the narrative he is relating, including the elements of conflict between Jesus and the Jews” (“‘Jews’ and Jews,” in Bieringer, Pollefeyt, and Vandecasteele-Vanneuville, *Anti-Judaism*, 226), although paradoxically she insists that “his concerns were more literary and theological than historical” (ibid, 214).

the same combination of witnesses as John: Abraham (Rom 4:16; 9:7; Gal 3:16, 18, 29; 4:22), Jacob (Rom 9:13), Moses (Rom 9:15; 10:5, 19), and Isaiah (Rom 9:27, 29; 10:16, 20; 15:12). For his part, Paul sees that all the nations will come to receive faith. By quoting Isa 65:2, he compares unbelieving Jews to their ancestors who were “disobedient” and “contrarian” (Rom 10:21). Yet Paul does not end on this harsh note but references the hidden mysteries of God, who miraculously preserved a remnant in days of old (Rom 11:1–5). Paul foresees a renumbering of the people of Israel, a “fullness (πλήρωμα)” which promises to overcome present weakness, and he expresses hope for a future resurrection (ζωὴ ἐκ νεκρῶν, Rom 11:12, 15).

In this hope that “all Israel will be saved” (Rom 11:26), comparison to Johannine salvation theology reaches an uncertain close. The reciprocity evident in Paul’s theology—whereby Jewish unbelief gives way to Gentile faith in order to arouse the jealousy of Jews—is not equaled in the Fourth Gospel. John presupposes that ethnic Jews are included among the τέκνα θεοῦ, but in the narrative he is content to leave “the Jews” who are Jesus’s consistent antagonists as static characters.

Summary

Bultmann was constrained by two factors: on the one hand, his historical identification of the Fourth Evangelist as a former Gnostic; on the other hand, his “Augustinian-Lutheran” tradition of reading of Paul. These led him to claim Paul and John’s theological incompatibility, but in this chapter I have tried to show a way forward. On the topics that Bultmann previously invoked to foreclose a literary connection between them, I find more theological similarity than he allowed: (1) John identifies sin

with unbelief, as a closer reading of Paul might already suggest; (2) in light of the inclusion of Gentiles, both Paul and John describe faith as the only path to salvation; (3) both Paul and John portray “Israel”/“the Jews” as actors in salvation history. These conclusions are drawn especially from the detailed analysis of John 8:31–59 above.

Like all theological readings, I draw conclusions that are necessarily provisional. I have reserved this chapter for last in my study so that the relationship between Paul and John can be shown to bear fruit: John’s theology comes into clearer focus when read as including the development of ideas that he drew from Paul.⁶²

⁶² This is analogous to the criterion of “satisfaction” in Hays’s taxonomy of textual echoes: “Does the proposed reading make sense? Does it illuminate the surrounding discourse? Does it produce for the reader a satisfying account of the effect of the intertextual relation? . . . It is in fact another way of asking whether the proposed reading offers a good account of the experience of a contemporary community of competent readers” (*Echoes*, 31–32).

CONCLUSION

In his famous seventeenth-century novel *Don Quixote*, Miguel de Cervantes's character Sancho Panza quotes the proverb, "Tell me your company, and I will tell you what you are."¹ Almost unanimously until the nineteenth century, Christians held the author of the Fourth Gospel to be John, son of Zebedee, a disciple of Jesus and a member of Jesus's closest circle of friends (Matt 17:1 // Mark 9:2 // Luke 9:28; Mark 5:37 // Luke 8:51; Matt 26:37 // Mark 14:33). But with the rise of historical criticism, the Fourth Evangelist has lost his company; in a way, we know less about him.

Wayne A. Meeks regards John's language as the detached mythos of a secluded sect, writing that "one of the primary functions of the book . . . must have been to provide a reinforcement for the community's social identity, which appears to have been largely negative. It provided a symbolic universe which gave religious legitimacy, a theodicy, to the group's actual isolation from the larger society."² As if we witness a photographic negative in the Gospel, Meeks seems to imply that we can know more about John's opponents than about his friends. John, once thought the consummate insider and comrade of Jesus, is commonly reckoned the Evangelist whose community exists on the furthest periphery.

¹ Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *The life and exploits of the ingenious gentleman Don Quixote de la Mancha*, trans. Charles Jarvis, 5th ed., vol. 3 (London: J. Dodsley, 1788), 209: "Here, quoth Sancho, the proverb hits right, Tell me your company, and I will tell you what you are. If your worship keep company with those, who fast and watch, what wonder is it that you neither eat nor sleep while you are with them?"

² Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *JBL* 91 (1972): 70.

First, in the judgment of many, John does not know the Synoptic Gospels.

Percival Gardner-Smith (1938) argued that oral tradition of the earliest church accounts for similarities between John and the Synoptics. Thus John's narrative and his discourses presumably do not depend literarily on Matthew, Mark, or Luke.

Second, according to the majority since Bultmann, John does not know Paul either. Bultmann found in John the "principal biblical witness to his own existential hermeneutic," and Bultmann's dialectical approach made John remote from the early church.³ The Gospel's independence made it a witness to local Christian traditions. How disappointing it would have been to find John imitating the "Hellenistic" Christianity of Paul rather than charting his own path. And while it would be wrong to say that Bultmann was uninterested in John's sources, his form-critical perspective inspired instead the quest of sources within the Gospel itself.⁴ These efforts too have been all but abandoned in recent years.

³ The quoted words are those of Jörg Frey who depicts Bultmann as Baur's "like-minded follower" living a century later: both admired the Fourth Gospel and regarded it as superior in design to the Synoptics ("Ferdinand Christian Baur and the Interpretation of John," in *Ferdinand Christian Baur and the History of Early Christianity*, ed. Martin Bauspiess, Christof Landmesser, and David Lincicum, trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017], 235).

⁴ Bultmann's theory of a Signs Source was famously taken up and expanded by Robert Tomson Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs: A Reconstruction of the Narrative Source Underlying the Fourth Gospel*, SNTSMS 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). The pursuit of one, two, four, or more internal sources was already underway: H. H. Wendt, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Inquiry into Its Genesis and Historical Value*, trans. Edward Lummis (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902); Alexander Faure, "Die alttestamentlichen Zitate im 4. Evangelium und die Quellenscheidungshypothese," *ZNW* 21 (1922): 99–122; G. H. C. MacGregor and A. Q. Morton, *The Structure of the Fourth Gospel* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1961); W. Nicol, *The Semeia in the Fourth Gospel: Tradition and Redaction*, NovTSup 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1972); Howard M. Teeple, *The Literary Origin of the Gospel of John* (Evanston: Religion and Ethics Institute, 1974); Edwin D. Freed and Russell B. Hunt, "Fortna's Signs-Source in John," *JBL* 94 (1975): 563–79. The most complex source hypothesis is surely that of M.-É. Boismard and A.

As a result of the legacy of Bultmann and the earlier Tübingen school, the majority of commentators do not even consider a possible relation of Paul and John, a condition I have diagnosed as calcification of the joints.⁵ I have asked why it should be the case that introductions to John consider the Gospel's religious sources of influence—Philo, Qumran, rabbinic Judaism, Samaritan religion, Gnosticism, Hermetic literature, Mandaism, et al.—and somehow Paul does not make the list.⁶ I am surprised to find that the possibility of John's dependence on Paul poses few problems for the Gospel's *Sitz im Leben* according to Martyn, though Martyn himself neglects this possibility.⁷ Rather, the

Lamouille, *L'Évangile de Jean: Commentaire*, vol. 3 of *Synopse des quatres évangiles en français* (Paris: Cerf, 1977), who propose that John revised his own text multiple times with sources shared with the Synoptic Gospels. More recently, von Wahlde has written a commentary on three compositional layers of John rather than the Gospel itself (*Gospel*).

⁵ Brown, *Gospel*, 1:LXXX: “F. C. Baur put the Synoptics, Paul, and John into the framework of Hegelian thesis, antitheses, and synthesis, with John representing a period that had gone far beyond Pauline theology.” It is an enduring legacy of the Tübingen school that the Fourth Gospel is seen as having “a point of view clearly deviating from the older tradition” since “the writer systematically brings his own christological understanding into his picture of Jesus, Jesus' actions, and Jesus' speeches” (Frey, “Interpretation of John,” 231). More than his students, Baur was happy to read John as a “spiritual” gospel, but the tensions between “layers” of the Gospel led his followers to propose increasingly detailed analyses of sources behind the received text (*ibid.*, 232).

⁶ These “religious relations of the Fourth Gospel” are detailed in the introduction of George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2nd ed., WBC 36 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), liii–lxv.

⁷ The most controversial aspect of Martyn's theory has been his insistence that actual persecutions stand behind the narrative of John. Martyn's reliance on the *Birkath ha-Minim* to substantiate this has not found broad support, but Paul's ministry—which prompted disagreement from Jewish Christians and perhaps Jews in general—provides a context of dispute that may yet be considered relevant. When examining the narrative of Acts, Martyn argues, “One hears no hint in Acts of a formal agreement lying back of the synagogue's hostility to Paul. On the contrary, such events as narrated in Acts appear to be *ad hoc* measures taken in one city after another” (*History*, 56). I suspect that Martyn's evaluation would have been different if he had seen the letters of Paul as potential

adoption of my proposal lends support to the majority reading of the Gospel as operating on two levels.

In Chapter 1, I set the stage for my reading of John 8. Following others, I defended the availability of Paul's letters to the cities of Asia minor around the end of the first century. Quotation of Paul is apparently rare in the earliest period, yet the circulation of Pauline letters is presupposed by early Christians. Well before Marcion assembled a collection of Pauline letters, churches were exchanging correspondence and responding to the authority of Paul's writings. Romans and Galatians are among the epistles that Christians appear to have exchanged at an early date. This accounts for Matthew; Hebrews; and James all exhibiting Pauline literary influence, as recently rediscovered. In consequence, a reevaluation of John is also timely.

In the same chapter I described methodological approaches to an intertextual study such as mine. Some investigators seek the greatest quantity of literary examples, while others limit their study to examples of highest quality. Now that a researcher can find the prehistory of terms in the TLG, I set out to privilege those findings where John and Paul agree and no previous known text accounts for their shared wording.

In Chapter 2, I reported the results of my investigation of John 8:31–38. Terms which are likeliest to derive from Paul are ἐλευθερώω; σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ; and δοῦλός τῆς ἁμαρτίας. The last of these is exceptional in that Paul seems to have been the first Greek writer to personify sin in this manner. I did more than catalogue terms; I drew from John Chrysostom to commend a new approach to reading 8:35–36 as a rhetorical example.

sources. The author of Acts may have his own reconciliatory goals, and the model of Jewish hostility to Paul according to Acts cannot be the sole point of comparison.

Paul recalls Abraham's διαθήκη with God as well as the manumission of believers from sin. Likewise, John compares Jesus to a household heir conveying his father's desire to grant freedom for those enslaved to sin.

In Chapter 3, I established another point of comparison to Romans and Galatians in John's regard for Abraham as a witness to Christ. In John 8:39–59, there were only a few terms in common. On the other hand, τέκνα θεοῦ is the Johannine title presupposed by Jesus's words, and I noted that this epithet appears first in Paul among all extant writings. Because commentators are already convinced that John must be drawing on sources for his portrayal of Abraham, I reviewed some alternative proposals. In fact, what I found was that John has more in common with Paul's portrait of Abraham than with the LXX or its paraphrases: John shares Paul's view of Abraham's example of faith; Abraham's true children; and Abraham's joyful witness.

In Chapter 4, I measured the theological compatibility of Paul and John according to the same points as those on the basis of which Bultmann claimed their incompatibility: sin; faith; and salvation history. Instead of finding John and Paul to be mismatched on these terms, my analysis of John 8:31–59 and the rest of the Fourth Gospel indicates substantial agreement between them. By considering the literary contexts of their shared vocabulary, I argued that John can be read as distinctly “Pauline” if Paul is taken to convey more than a simple law-faith binary.

Readers will detect that I have proposed no solution to any major or pressing problem in NT studies—at least among the standard repertoire of biblical inquiry. I have not claimed to introduce previously unexplored evidence; to have altered the course of investigation of the Johannine community; or to have found the key to reading the Fourth

Gospel entire. Instead, I hope that I have opened, or perhaps more modestly, reopened, horizons in mapping the early journey of a strand of precious Christian tradition as it passed through Paul to John, and thence to the universal church.

I have come to imagine a dinner party at which the invited guests are the earliest Christians and writers of the NT. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are seated on one side of the room, and they are comparing notes—"memoirs of the apostles" (Justin), so to speak. Meanwhile, according to the received historical-critical view, John sits at his own small table in the darkest corner: he talks incessantly to himself; has few acquaintances; and no one else seems to know how he received an invitation. I have come to believe that John's seat is at the table beside Paul, near the center of the room. John listens intently when Paul speaks, adds his own contributions to their conversation, and soon the pair get along like old friends.

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