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An Archimedean Point for Dating the Gospels

The Pre-66 CE Dating of John, Luke's Use of John among His "Polloi" (93/94–130 CE), and the Implications for Mark's and Matthew's Place within This Chronological Framework

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Abstract

Based on new arguments for a pre-66 CE dating of John's Gospel, this article argues that John's early date and Luke's late date (between 93/94 and 130 CE) establish the direction of dependency in the special, verbatim Johannine–Lukan parallels which have long been recognized. It shows how these parallels are part and parcel of John's argument, and how and why Luke made use of them. This also raises the question of how Matthew and Mark fit within this new chronological framework. The article suggests that Matthew's "thunderbolt from the Johannine sky" is indeed derived from John, together with John's narration of Jesus' post-resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene. Mark's Gospel, however, seems to have been written around the same time as John's Gospel, so that Mark was not familiar with John. Another implication of this rearrangement is that the presumption of the source Q is no longer necessary.

Keywords

dating Gospel of John – special relationship between Luke and John – Luke's and Matthew's uses of John – criticism of Q – Cribbs/Shellard/Matson hypothesis of Johannine priority – construction of the Synoptics vs John antithesis (D.F. Strauss)

1 The Pre-66 CE Dating of John and the Direction of the Lukan–Johannine Parallels*

Scholars have long recognized that the most clearly parallel passages between John and the Synoptics are the six parallel passages found in John and Luke, which show verbatim similarities that are absent from Mark and Matthew. However, as the direction of this dependence could never be proven, it remained unclear whether Luke used John, as F. Lamar Cribbs, Barbara Shellard, and Mark A. Matson believe, or whether it was John who used Luke, as others think. Scholars on both sides of this debate have argued that the differences make it clear that Gospel Author X is using and adapting Gospel Y, or that Author Y is using and adapting Gospel X. Yet the truth is that, in most cases, the changes themselves are insufficient to prove the direction of dependence conclusively.[1]

Recently, from an entirely different angle, I have argued that the internal evidence of the Gospel of John suggests that it was written (and edited) before the First Jewish Revolt against Rome (66–70 CE).[2] Commentators have largely ignored the Gospel's statement in the present tense that "There *is* (ἔστιν) in Jerusalem near the Sheep [Gate] a pool, called in Hebrew Bethzatha, which has five porticoes" (5:2). Most of those who have taken note of this statement believe it to be a simple historical present, which John uses to dramatize his narrative. This is how scholars responded to and discarded the views of Johann Albrecht Bengel (1742), Friedrich Blass (1907), John Robinson (1976/1985), and Daniel Wallace (1990), who had previously drawn attention to the present tense used in John 5:2. However, as I have shown, modern Greek grammarians agree that the "there is" formula John uses (ἔστιν δὲ ἐν + place in the dative case, followed by an architectural phenomenon in the nominative) is exclusively employed by geographers, historians, and novelists (since

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1 I have taken translations of the bible from the NRSV and translations of Graeco-Roman authors from the Digital Loeb Classical Library, both with minor adaptations where needed.

2 G. van Kooten, "The Pre-70 CE Dating of the Gospel of John: 'There *is* (ἔστιν) in Jerusalem … a pool … which has five porticoes' (5:2)," *NTS* 71 (2025) forthcoming.

Herodotus) to refer to buildings that still exist at the time of writing. Thus, the present tense in John's statement that "there is" in Jerusalem an impressive colonnaded pool complex is not a historical present, but an existential present. The likely destruction of the colonnaded pool in the Bezetha area of Jerusalem in the course of the First Jewish Revolt (66–70 CE) implies that the Gospel's reference to a still-existing monumental pool complex dates its composition prior to 66–70 CE. Based on its reference to Peter's death (21:18–19; cf. 13:36), which took place in 64 CE, it must have been concluded in or after 64 CE. Hence, I have argued that the Gospel was finalized around 65 CE.

Given this early date of John's Gospel and the late date of the Gospel of Luke—who shows that he is acquainted with the *Jewish Antiquities* which Josephus published in Rome in 93/94 CE but shows no knowledge of Hadrian's rebuilding of Jerusalem in 130 CE[3]—the direction of the Lukan–Johannine verbatim parallels is now clear: it is Luke who, among his "polloi" (1:1–4), is making use of John's Gospel. In the current article, I will raise the following questions: What was John's argument in the Johannine–Lukan parallels, and what did Luke make of it? Furthermore, how do Matthew and Mark fit into this new chronological framework?

2 Luke's Use of John among his "Polloi": John's Narrative and Luke's Modifications

I will first discuss the four most important verbatim parallels between Luke and John, and then briefly refer to the two less extensive parallels.

2.1 *Differing Attitudes to the Greek Practice of Anointing Jesus' Feet: Positive (John) and Negative (Luke)*

The first parallel concerns the anointing of Jesus which, in John as well as in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, is a pre-funerary anointing (John 12:1–8; Matthew 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9). Luke, however, lifts out this episode and places it earlier, during Jesus' ministry in Galilee (7:36–50). On the one hand, Luke follows Mark in his narration of the anonymous woman who "brought an alabaster jar of ointment" (Luke 7:37) and anointed Jesus (Luke 7:38). But whereas Mark has the woman pour the "very costly ointment of nard" on

3 For Luke's use of Josephus's *Antiquities*, see S. Mason, *Jews and Christians in the Roman World: From Historical Method to Cases* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2023) 445–488: "Was Josephus a Source for Luke-Acts?"

Jesus' head (Mark 14:3; cf. Matthew 26:7), Luke has her pour it on Jesus' feet.[4] Here Luke follows John, according to whom the woman—whom John identifies as Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha—"took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed *the feet* of Jesus, and wiped *his feet* with her hair" (John 12:3).

This is a remarkable difference between Mark and Matthew on the one hand, and John and Luke on the other. Anointing someone's head is both a Jewish and a Greek practice. In the Jewish Scriptures, oil is poured over the heads of high priests and kings.[5] At the same time, anointing the head is also a Greek practice, as the Greeks pour oil over the heads of poets, kings, and gods, and use it to soothe those who have suffered.[6] However, the custom of also using oil to anoint the feet, as we see in John and Luke, seems distinctively Greek. According to Athenaeus, "It was an Athenian practice to rub the feet of people addicted to luxury with perfume."[7] In support of his statement, Athenaeus refers to passages written by Greek poets, who refer to the sexual favours that particular men request and receive from "luscious young girls," lovers, and prostitutes, who rub their feet with all kinds of exquisite perfumes. The first-century CE Roman author Petronius, in his *Satyricon*, describes a meal at which, "in defiance of convention, long-haired boys brought round perfume in a silver bowl and rubbed it on the feet of those reclining" (70.8).[8]

In John's Gospel, the woman who anoints Jesus' feet shares rather intimately in the ointment by effectively also anointing herself with the perfume: she anoints Jesus' feet with the liquid perfume and then dries them with locks of her hair, so that her hair will smell like the perfume with which she anointed Jesus. Such intimacy with Jesus occurs with reference to various figures throughout the Gospel. Nicodemus, for instance, spends the night with Jesus (John 3:2), like Alcibiades does with Socrates, and their discussions explore the ambiguities of common and heavenly love and generation (John 3:3–12). Furthermore, the beloved disciple reclines in an intimate

4 Cf. J.F. Coakley, "The Anointing at Bethany and the Priority of John," *JBL* 107 (1988) 241–256.

5 On high priests, see Psalm 132 (133 MT): 2 LXX; cf. Exodus 29:7 LXX; Leviticus 8:12 LXX. On kings, see 1 Sam 10:1; cf. 2 Kings 9:3, 6.

6 Plato, *Republic* 3.398a; Plutarch, *Table-Talk* 3.647E; Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters* 5.194a–c (5.21 TLG); Polybius, *Histories* 26.1.12–14.

7 Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters* 12.553a–e (12.78 TLG). Cf. Coakley, "The Anointing at Bethany," 247.

8 Reference derived from Coakley, "The Anointing at Bethany," 247.

position at Jesus' bosom (John 13:23, 25; 21:20).[9] Mary of Bethany's intimacy with Jesus is thus fully consistent with the Gospel's character.

Luke follows John's attention to Jesus' feet, but among the changes Luke makes, he now attributes the anointing explicitly to a sinful woman (7:37, 39, 47–49). Luke recognized the arguably uncomfortable intimacy between Jesus and the woman in John's account and explained it as the typical behaviour of a prostitute. Noting the similarities and differences between Mark (and Matthew) on the one hand and John on the other, Luke moved away from their unanimous chronological placement of this episode immediately prior to Jesus' death, and also from their understanding of the pre-funerary symbolism of the woman's action.[10] He merged these Gospel accounts, changed the chronological order, and allocated the episode instead to the period of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. Indeed, as Cribbs, Shellard, and Matson have previously noted, this is a case (to quote Shellard) in which "the Johannine material and the Markan/Matthean conflict, and Luke rewrites the incident and places it at a different point in the narrative."[11] Another example of Luke changing John's chronology might be Luke's use of John's post-resurrection story involving the miraculous catch of fish in the Sea of Tiberias (John 21:3–8; Luke 5:4–7). Since Luke remains focussed on Jerusalem after the resurrection, he does not relate post-resurrection events in Galilee and therefore integrates this story about a miraculous haul of fish into the story of Jesus' calling his disciples as "fishers of human beings" in Galilee at the beginning of his ministry, as narrated in Mark and Matthew (Mark 1:16–20; Matthew 4:18–22).[12] This example also shows that Luke knows the Gospel of John, including chapter 21. As Cribbs,

9 Cf. G. van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium: 'The Continuation of Dialogue' in Christianity—A Contrapuntal Reading of John's Gospel and Plato's *Symposium*," in *Intolerance, Polemics, and Debate in Antiquity* (ed. G. van Kooten and J. van Ruiten; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019) 282–357, at 307, 310–311, 329–330, 343.

10 Cf. B. Shellard, *New Light on Luke: Its Purpose, Sources and Literary Context* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) 243.

11 B. Shellard, "The Relationship of Luke and John: A Fresh Look at an Old Problem," *JTS* 46 (1995) 71–98, at 76–77. Cf. F.L. Cribbs, "St Luke and the Johannine Tradition," *JBL* 90 (1971) 422–450, at 441; and M.A. Matson, *In Dialogue with Another Gospel? The Influence of the Fourth Gospel on the Passion Narrative of the Gospel of Luke* (Atlanta: SBL, 2001) 79–80, 82.

12 Although there are no verbatim parallels, note the following parallels in narratival content: failure to catch fish during the night (John 21:3; Luke 5:5); Jesus' instruction (John 21:6; Luke 5:4); successful catch of fish (John 21:6/8; Luke 5:6–7); the name "Simon Peter" in Luke used only here in Luke 5:8, cf. John 21:2–3, 7, 11; the name "the sons of Zebedee" in Luke and John used only here (John 21:2; Luke 5:10); Peter's confession (John 21:15–17; Luke 5:8); Peter's special commission (John 21:15–17, 19; Luke 5:10; *pace* Mark 1:17 and Matthew 4:19). Cf. Cribbs, "St Luke," 434; Shellard, *New Light*, 238–240.

Shellard, and Matson recognize, Luke's changes to John's chronology are of course consistent with Luke's indication of his modus operandi in the preface to his Gospel—that is, to redetermine the exact chronological order of the events he found in the written narratives of the "polloi" before him (Luke 1:1–4).[13] This shows that Luke takes John's Gospel seriously as a source.

2.2 *Pilate's Triple Assertion of Jesus' Innocence: Depiction of Pilate's Legal Positivism* (*John*) *or Structure for the Events* (*Luke*)

The next parallel is also substantive and very closely bound up with the principal interests evident in the Gospel of John. It concerns the trial before Pilate; both John and Luke, in marked contrast to Mark and Matthew, explicitly state three times that Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judaea, considers Jesus innocent. Whereas John's Pilate asserts "I find no guilt in him" three times in the present tense (18:38; 19:4, 6) and uses the term αἰτία, Luke's Pilate makes the statement in the present tense the first time (23:4), followed by two statements in the past-tense aorist (23:14; 23:22), using the term αἴτιον. In John the three statements about Jesus' lack of guilt are part of a highly juridical passage, containing the following aspects which are absent from or different in the Synoptics. First of all, in John the trial opens with Pilate's formal enquiry as to what the "accusation" (κατηγορία, John 18:29) is, and thus contains the full formal juridical pairing of κατηγορία and αἰτία.[14] Secondly, John depicts the full extent of Pilate's legal positivism by referring not only to the law (18:31), but also to custom (συνήθεια, 18:39). Pilate's provocative question later in the passage—"What is truth?"—is in full agreement with "cultural relativist versions of legal positivism" in his time, against which Cicero (106–43 BCE) is arguing, and which stems from the Academic scepticism of Carneades (214/213–129/128 BCE), who holds that there is no truth apart from law and custom.[15] Busts of Carneades have been found around the Roman Empire,

13 Noted explicitly in Cribbs, "St Luke," 450. Also noted subsequently by Shellard, "Relationship," 84–87, 96–97; Shellard, *New Light*, 259–260, 290; and Matson, *In Dialogue*, 448.

14 For the combination of κατηγορία and αἰτία, see, for instance, Plutarch, *Caesar* 54.5–6; *Roman Questions* 265D–E; *Precepts of Statecraft* 817F. See also Philostratus of Athens, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 8.7 (TLG; 8.19 LCL); Philo, *On the Embassy to Gaius* 38; and Josephus, *Ant.* 10.251. Cf. Matson, *In Dialogue*, 324–325 and 328–329 on Luke's inconsistent imitation of John.

15 M. Schofield, "Debate or Guidance? Cicero on Philosophy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Philosophy* (ed. M. Garani, D. Konstan, and G. Reydams-Schils; New York: Oxford University Press, 2023) 119–140, at 123–125.

including in Caesarea Maritima, where Pilate had his headquarters.[16] Thirdly, John's juridical knowledge also extends to the local situation in Judaea, as he depicts the Jewish leadership's awareness of the limitations of their Jewish jurisdiction in accusing Jesus: "We are not permitted to put anyone to death" (18:31). Josephus confirms this state of affairs (*Ant.* 20.200–203), and this is consistent with John's narration: Jesus is not arrested by the Jewish temple police, but by a Roman tactical unit (σπεῖρα, 18:3, 12) under the command of a Roman captain (18:12).

Pilate's triple statement that he finds no guilt in Jesus is thus fully consonant with the consistent, formal, technical depiction of Jesus' trial in John's Gospel. However, in drawing on John for this triple statement of innocence, Luke merely uses it to better structure the narrative, which he is copying primarily from Mark's Gospel, with a hearing before Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, inserted between the first and second statements (Luke 23:6–12, 15).

2.3 *The Run to the Tomb: Homeric Motif* (*John*) *or Male Verification of Women's "Humbug"* (*Luke*)

The subsequent parallel is found in the narrative of one or two male disciples running to the tomb on the morning of Jesus' resurrection. Only in the Gospels of John and Luke is Jesus' tomb visited by male disciples on the day of his resurrection. All four of the gospels narrate the visit to and detection of the open tomb by women early in the morning (Mark 16:1–8 and parallels), but only John and Luke go on to tell about the subsequent visit made by male disciples who responded to these women's report (John 20:2–10; Luke 24:9–12). The Johannine narrative of this male visit to the tomb revolves around Peter's and the beloved disciple's teamwork, which is driven by both collaboration and competition. Their teamwork is described as follows: When Mary Magdalene found that the stone in front of Jesus' tomb had been removed and reported this to Peter and to "the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved" (John 20:2–3)—that is, to the anonymous author of the Gospel (21:20, 24–25)—these two male disciples "set out and went (ἤρχοντο) towards the tomb. The two (οἱ δύο) were running together, but the other disciple ran before (προέδραμεν) Peter and reached the tomb first (πρῶτος)" (20:3–4). The rest of the episode offers an elaboration on their collaboration and competition, which seem to move through three phases, in each of which one of the two is behind and the other catches up or takes the lead.

16 R. Gersht, "Three Greek and Roman Portrait Statues from Caesarea Maritima," *'Atiqot* 28 (1996) 99–113, at 100 fig. 1.

(1) In the first phase or movement, the beloved disciple outruns Peter and arrives at the exterior of the tomb first, but does not enter it. At that stage, stooping for the purpose of looking into the tomb from outside, he sees linen cloths lying inside (20:4b–5).
(2) In the second movement, Peter, who arrives later, catches up with the beloved disciple and is the first to enter the tomb, immediately upon his arrival. From his perspective within the tomb, he sees not only the linen cloths that the beloved disciple spotted from outside, but also a separate *sudarium* (John 20:6–7), a facial towel of the type—as readers of the Gospel will recognize—that had also been used at Lazarus's burial and was still covering Lazarus's face when Jesus raised him from the dead and ordered it to be removed (John 11:44).
(3) In the third movement, the beloved disciple subsequently also enters the tomb and sees the same situation, with the *sudarium* lying separate from the linen cloths, but he perceives its importance and believes—that is, he believes that Jesus was resurrected (John 20:8–9).

The reason that the beloved disciple, seeing the separate position of the *sudarium* in the tomb, believes that Jesus has been resurrected is that this reminds him of Lazarus's resurrection, which he witnessed, when Lazarus's graveclothes and the *sudarium* that was bound round his power of sight (ὄψις) needed to be removed (John 11:44). The separate position of the facial towel suggests a separate, distinctive action by which this towel was removed in order to end the obstruction of Jesus' restored sight. The *sudarium* separately positioned in Jesus' own tomb is Jesus' sign (σημεῖον) to his beloved disciple (cf. John 12:17–18), offering him the insight that Jesus has been resurrected, too: Why would one remove the *sudarium* from a corpse other than because this human being is no longer dead, but is able to see again? Although both the beloved disciple and Peter "as yet did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead" (John 20:9), the author of the Gospel (John 21:7, 20, 24), the beloved disciple, distinguishes himself from Peter by surmising and believing this to be the case.

The whole episode is thus an expression of the cooperation and competition between Peter and the beloved disciple, which leads to a dramatic increase in the latter's understanding of the situation: the two leave together, and the beloved disciple is the fastest runner, the best observer, and the most discerning disciple—he is the first to arrive at the tomb, outrunning Peter, and the first to recognize the sign that Jesus had been resurrected, whereas Peter is the first to enter the tomb and hence the first to see everything inside the tomb, but without apprehension. In this dynamic of movement, the two set out together, alternate in taking the lead, and finally return together.

This extraordinary Johannine episode appears to be modelled on the well-known passage in Homer's *Iliad* in which another two men set out together, one going "before" the other, and eventually return together. John's acquaintance with Homer is not surprising: in antiquity, still under the Roman Empire, one learned Greek through Homer; James Aitken has also shown that Sirach's grandson, who translated his grandfather's work into Greek, Homerized his Greek translation and had in all likelihood learned his Greek in Jerusalem.[17] The passage John uses is the episode in which one of the Greek heroes, Diomedes, volunteers to spy on the Trojan camp and asks that someone accompany him on his reconnaissance:

> but if some other man also were to follow with me,
> greater comfort would there be, and greater confidence.
> When two go together, one discerns before the other (σύν τε δύ' ἐρχομένω καί τε πρὸ ὃ τοῦ ἐνόησεν)
> how profit may be had; alone, if one discerns anything,
> yet is his discernment the shorter, and but slender his device.
>
> HOMER, *Iliad* 10.222–226[18]

Both the phraseology and the contents of this passage shine through in the Gospel of John. Just as "two go together (δύ' ἐρχομένω)" and "one discerns before (πρό) the other," so the two disciples—Peter and the beloved disciple—go together to the tomb, one running before (πρό-) the other and hence coming upon the tomb first (πρῶτος):

> Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went (ἤρχοντο) towards the tomb. The two (οἱ δύο) were running together, but the other disciple outran (προ-έδραμεν, lit. "ran before") Peter and reached the tomb first (πρῶτος).
>
> JOHN 20:3–4

And it is the beloved disciple, the one "who reached the tomb first" (ὁ ἐλθὼν πρῶτος εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον, 20:8), who is the first to discern—before Peter—that

17 J.K. Aitken, "Homeric Rewriting in Greek Sirach," *VT* 70 (2020) 521–552, passim, and 551: "Even someone who does not appear to have been born in the diaspora but grew up in Palestine, has a sophisticated command of Greek and a knowledge of Greek literary traditions."

18 A.T. Murray, *Homer: Iliad, Books 1–12, with an English Translation*, revised by W.F. Wyatt (LCL; Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1999; reprinted with corrections, 2003).

Jesus has been resurrected and is alive. The whole Johannine passage thus reads as a consistent elaboration of the Homeric episode narrating the two who go to the Trojan camp and are expected to profit from their teamwork by going together. In Homer it is Odysseus who joins Diomedes. Many are eager to accompany Diomedes (10.226), but from all of these volunteers Diomedes selects

> godlike Odysseus …,
> whose heart and gallant spirit are beyond all others eager
> in all manner of toils; and Pallas Athene loves him (φιλεῖ δέ ἑ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη).
> If he follows with me, even out of blazing fire
> we might both return, for wise above all is he in discernment.
>
> HOMER, *Iliad* 10.243–247

Odysseus gladly accepts Diomedes's choice and leaves with him while the night is waning and dawn draws near (10.248–253); the two will eventually return together from a successful mission (10.540–542). Interestingly, in the Gospel of John it is the beloved disciple, the one "whom Jesus loved" (ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς, 20:2), who is cast in the role of Odysseus, whom Pallas Athena loves (φιλεῖ δέ ἑ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη, *Iliad* 10.245). Just like Odysseus, whom Athena loves, accompanies Diomedes, so the pupil whom Jesus loves goes with Peter when the latter departs for the tomb (John 20:3) and will return with him at the end, after their joint mission (20:10).

In the Gospel of Luke it is not the two who go together, but Peter alone who makes his way to the tomb, in response to Mary Magdalene's report (and that of other women; see Luke 24:10) that the tomb is open and empty. This is narrated in Luke 24:12, which is one of Westcott's and Hort's so-called non-Western interpolations and is omitted in Western manuscripts. I need to be brief here, and so I will simply state that I follow the view held by the majority of the editorial committee of the United Bible Societies that the non-Western interpolations have no categorical value.[19] Moreover, for a reason which I will mention below, I regard Luke 24:12 as authentic. According to Luke 24:12, Peter runs to the tomb (24:12a), and in the Lukan version, it is Peter—not the beloved disciple—who stoops in front of the entrance to the tomb in order to look inside: "stooping for the purpose of looking, he saw the linen cloths alone (καὶ παρακύψας βλέπει τὰ ὀθόνια μόνα)" (Luke 24:12b).

19 B.M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1994) 164–166, esp. 165. Cf. Matson, *In Dialogue*, 170, 179–180.

But whereas in the Johannine account "the linen cloths" (τὰ ὀθόνια) are distinguished from the *sudarium* that Peter, having entered the tomb, saw "not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself" (John 20:7), in the Lukan account it is "the linen cloths *alone*" (τὰ ὀθόνια μόνα, Luke 24:12) that Peter sees, as distinct from "the body" (τὸ σῶμα), which Mary Magdalene did not find in the tomb (Luke 24:3).[20] This is a new, explicit Lukan antithesis, as the "body" is not explicitly mentioned in either of the other Synoptic accounts of the empty tomb—neither in Mark nor in Matthew.

The question arises as to why Luke was interested in taking up John's narrative of the male visit to the tomb, and the answer seems simple. In the narrative of John 20:3–10, the Gospel of John offers him the only report of a male visit to the tomb, which is absent from the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, and which Luke now uses in his own Gospel to confirm the truth of the women's report, narrated in the Synoptic Gospels—that the tomb was open, and that one or more angels had announced that Jesus was alive (Luke 24:2–7). It is only Luke who explicitly says that when Mary Magdalene (and the other women) gave this account to "the apostles," the latter did not believe the women because they regarded their tale as "humbug" (λῆρος, Luke 24:11). In the Lukan narrative, the reason Peter, alone among the apostles, sets out for the tomb is to check whether their story is indeed fantastical (Luke 24:12). Luke uses the Johannine account of the male visit to the tomb, unparalleled in the Synoptic Gospels of Mark and Matthew, and adds it to his own narrative in order to have a male apostle prove that the women's report about the open tomb and the missing body is not ridiculous, but correct. Perhaps he finds this important in a work that has been commissioned by and/or is addressed to Theophilus, a Graeco-Roman benefactor (Luke 1:3; cf. Acts 1:1), because it solves the problem of the dubious status accorded to female eyewitness statements. Not only in the Jewish Mishnah,[21] but also under Roman law, the validity of female witnesses was severely restricted, although not entirely denied. According to the Roman jurist Papinian (fl. 202–212 CE), "There are many points in our law in which the condition of females is inferior to that

20 Cf. Shellard, "Relationship," 95; Shellard, *New Light*, 256–257.

21 See S.J.D. Cohen, R. Goldenberg, and H. Lapin, eds., *The Oxford Annotated Mishnah: A New Translation of the Mishnah with Introductions and Notes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022) 2:600: "Women [...] are not allowed to testify in rabbinic courts and their testimonial oaths have no legal standing ([Shevu'ot] 4:1)." See also Rosh Hashanah 1:8: "These are disqualified [from bearing witness]: a dice player, and those who loan on interest, and pigeon flyers, and those who sell Seventh-Year produce, and slaves. This is the general rule: [With respect to] any evidence which a woman is disqualified [from bringing], these too are disqualified."

of males" (*in multis iuris nostri articulis deterior est condicio feminarum quam masculorum*, *Digest* 1.5.9). And according to his colleague Ulpian (fl. 202–223 CE), "We always prefer the elder to the younger, the higher in rank to the lower, male to female, and freeborn to slave-born" (*semper seniorem iuniori et amplioris honoris inferiori et marem feminae et ingenuum libertino praeferemus*, *Digest* 22.4.6) and "greater dignity inheres in the male sex" (*maior dignitas est in sexu virili*, *Digest* 1.9.1 prologue).[22] It seems that in such a juridical climate, Luke presents what he believes to be the "best" possible evidence for Jesus' resurrection (1) by having Mary Magdalene's report (John 20:1–2, 11–13; Mark 16:1–8; Matthew 28:1–8; Luke 24:1–11) about the empty tomb confirmed by a male disciple (John 20:3–10; Luke 24:12); (2) by omitting Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene (John 20:14–18; Matthew 28:9–10); and (3) by including his appearance to his male disciples (John 20:19–23; Luke 24:36–40). In the Gospel of John, however, the episode concerning the male visit to the tomb is not about the credibility of female eyewitnesses,[23] but constitutes the elaboration of a Homeric motif.

Yet since Luke's reason for including this Johannine material is the independent validation of female reports by a male, he is uninterested in the distinctively Johannine features of the episode as narrated in the Gospel of John. Out goes the figure of the beloved disciple, because the figure of Peter suffices, and therefore he also jettisons the entire Homeric teamwork (and competition) between them. Out goes the reference to the *sudarium*, which is an integral part of the Johannine Gospel, because it plays an important role in the resurrection narratives of both Lazarus and Jesus in John's Gospel (11:44; 20:7) but is irrelevant for Luke.[24] Its omission distorts the carefully developed contrast in John's Gospel between the linen cloths (τὰ ὀθόνια) on the one hand and the *sudarium* that was "not lying with the linen cloths but separately, wrapped up into one place" (οὐ μετὰ τῶν ὀθονίων κείμενον ἀλλὰ χωρὶς ἐντετυλιγμένον εἰς ἕνα τόπον, 20:6–7) on the other. This requires Luke to develop a new contrast: that between "the linen cloths alone" (τὰ ὀθόνια μόνα, Luke 24:12) and the body

22 See U. Babusiaux et al., eds., *Handbuch des Römischen Privatrechts* (3 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023) 1:741–767; E. Höbenreich, § 29: "Rechtsstellung der Frauen," 741–767, at 752, with reference to Ulpian, *Digest* 22.4.6 and 1.9.1 prologue. For the ideology of "female weakness," see pp. 754–756. Cf. L. Peppe, "Women and Civic Identity in Roman Antiquity," *Austrian Law Journal* 1 (2017) 23–38, at 32, with reference to Papinian, *Digest* 1.5.9. English translation derived from *The Digest of Justinian*, edited by A. Watson (4 vols.; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998) 1:16 (Papinian), 26 (Ulpian); 2:191 (Ulpian). With thanks to David Ibbetson (Cambridge) for his kind assistance.

23 Cf. Matson, *In Dialogue*, 401.

24 Cf. Shellard, "Relationship," 95; Shellard, *New Light*, 256–257.

that Mary Magdalene (and the other women) could not find (Luke 24:3). This contrast is less obvious, however, and various important manuscripts (including the Codex Sinaiticus, in its original reading, and the Codex Alexandrinus) therefore omit the adjective "alone" (μόνα) from the phrase "the linen cloths alone" (τὰ ὀθόνια μόνα), as it seems to make little sense unless one realizes the contrast with the body mentioned more than 130 words prior. Indeed, it seems that, although Luke forges a new contrast, he is inadvertently guided by his reading of John and is still responding to the Johannine combination of linen cloths and *sudarium*; by omitting the distinctively Johannine *sudarium*, which is irrelevant for him, he feels that he is talking about "the linen cloths *alone*"—that is, without the *sudarium*. In this sense he gives himself away as a reader of John. Although he forges a new contrast between the linen cloths and the body, and thus intends the phrase "the linen cloths *alone*" to mean "the linen cloths *without the body*," this contrast is so vague—thanks to the long interval between his mention of the body (24:3) and of the linen cloths (24:12)—that scribes get confused and omit the adjective "alone," probably because they think the phrase "the linen cloths alone" unduly contradicts the Johannine parallel account, with its references to linen cloths *and* a *sudarium*.

That Luke gives himself away as a reader of John is further confirmed when, directly after the current episode in the Gospel of Luke, and in material entirely unique to his gospel, Luke relates an episode that takes place later that day, when travellers to Emmaus tell their unrecognized fellow traveller, Jesus, how early that morning women had visited the tomb but had not found Jesus' body and had understood from the angels that he was alive (Luke 24:13–23). These travellers go on to tell their travel companion that after the women had reported this to the disciples, "*Some* of those who were with us went to the tomb (καὶ ἀπῆλθόν τινες τῶν σὺν ἡμῖν ἐπὶ τὸ μνημεῖον) and found it just as the women had said" (Luke 24:24). As Shellard and Matson have also noted, this is a clear flashback to Peter's visit, when he "ran to the tomb" (ἔδραμεν ἐπὶ τὸ μνημεῖον) and did not find the body (24:12). This flashback in Luke 24:24, voiced by the Emmaus travellers, shows two things.

Firstly, it strongly suggests that Luke 24:12, with its narration of Peter's visit to the tomb, is not a non-Western interpolation, but is text-critically authentic. Based on the previous Johannine–Lukan parallels, we already know that Luke is a reader of John. But with Metzger, who reports the majority view of the editorial committee of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament, we can also say that Luke 24:12 is the "natural antecedent to verse 24."[25] Without Luke 24:12, the flashback in Luke 24:24 hangs in the air.

25 Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 157–158.

Secondly, at the same time, the differences between Luke 24:12 and 24:24 demonstrate Luke's modus operandi. In the flashback in Luke 24:24, the Emmaus travellers use the plural, saying that "*some*" (τινές) went to the tomb. This fully accords with John's narrative, in which Peter and the beloved disciple go to the tomb together, so that—once again, and here even more conclusively—Luke unintentionally exposes himself as a reader of John.[26] Luke's reference to "some" (τινές) in 24:24 is in full agreement with his Johannine source, as the Johannine duo of Peter and the beloved disciple constitute a plurality of "some" disciples, but it contradicts his own prior adaptation of this Johannine episode in Luke 24:12, where he reduces the Johannine duo to the figure of Peter alone by omitting the beloved disciple. The reason why Luke 24:12 has been omitted in Westcott's and Hort's Western texts may be to resolve the contradiction between Luke 24:12 and John 20:3–10. Alternatively, as Matson has suggested, the omission may be due to the anti-Johannine circles of the Alogoi in the second century CE. Gaius of Rome and others were concerned about the fact that the chronology of John's Gospel seems to contradict the chronology of the Synoptics, and they therefore criticize John's Gospel; recognizing the similarity between Luke and John in the current passage, they omit Luke 24:12 and so remove Luke's dependence on what they regard as the unreliable, uncanonical Gospel of John.[27] The opposite view, that John's chronology is better than that of the Synoptics, is probably found in a reference Papias of Hierapolis (early second century CE) makes to John the Elder, according to whom Mark's Gospel, although accurate in its contents, is "not in order" (οὐ μέντοι τάξει) chronologically.[28] This remark seems to imply that the chronologically correct Gospel he has in mind is neither Matthew's nor Luke's Gospel, as they largely adopted Mark's chronology, but rather the Gospel of John.[29] In the second half of the second century CE, in his *Diatessaron*, Tatian harmonized the chronologies of John and the Synoptics.[30]

26 Cf. Shellard, *New Light*, 257; Matson, *In Dialogue*, 405.

27 Matson, *In Dialogue*, 198–206, 223.

28 Papias, frag. 3.15 LCL (2.15 TLG) = Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15.

29 Cf. A. Wright, "τάξει in Papias," *JTS* 14 (1913) 298–300, at 300: "if the Synoptics were wrong, as Papias probably believed, the fault lay with St Mark, whom the others had taken as their guide. […] He [Papias] upholds St John by declaring St Mark to be wrong." Cf. M. Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (London: SCM Press, 1989) 157 n. 118.

30 J.W. Barker, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Composition, Redaction, Recension, and Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021) 6, 29, 44–45, 50–51, 52, 57, 122–123.

2.4 *The Post-Resurrection Presentation of Jesus' "Hands" and His "Feet" or "Side": The Death and Resurrection of the Incarnate Logos* (*John*) *or Male Testimony Concerning the Resurrection* (*Luke*)

The fourth and final extensive Johannine–Lukan parallel concerns the episode exclusive to John and Luke in which, after his resurrection, Jesus suddenly appears indoors among his disciples and shows them his body. According to Luke, Jesus shows them his hands and *feet* (Luke 24:39), whereas in the Johannine account Jesus shows his disciples his hands and his *side* (John 20:20).[31] However, only in the Gospel of John (and not in the Gospel of Luke) does this display of Jesus' body, specifically showing his hands and his side, make sense. This confirms Johannine priority. In the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, the way in which Jesus is crucified remains unspecified; these gospels do not mention the piercing of Jesus' hands or feet, or any other parts of his body (Mark 15:24–25; Matthew 27:35). Consequently, in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew Jesus take no initiative to show his hands and feet; this only occurs in the Gospels of John (John 20:20, 25, 27) and Luke (Luke 24:39, 40). Yet the Gospel of Luke makes no mention of Jesus' body being nailed to the cross, but simply says: "they crucified Jesus there with the criminals" (Luke 23:33). John, however, explicitly mentions the piercing of Jesus' side: "one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out" (19:34). This has particular significance (19:35). Here again we have a Homeric motif in John:[32] in Homer, during the battle around Troy in which the gods participate, when Aphrodite's hand is injured, what comes out is not normal, human blood, but ichor—divine blood (*Iliad* 5.330–342). In the logic of John's incarnationalism, however, according to which the divine Logos became flesh, if the incarnate Logos is pierced, then human blood comes out. Unlike John, Luke's Gospel contains no narratival preparation for Jesus to show his hands and feet. Luke is again dependent on John's account, but he replaces "the side," which has no specific meaning for him, with "the feet."

Thus we have seen that, given John's priority, many of the Johannine–Lukan parallels in John are part of the fabric of John's argumentation, whereas Luke's apologetic and juridical interests, which characterize both his Gospel and his Acts, also guide his use of John: he reinterprets the anointing of Jesus' feet by a woman as an act that is inappropriate for Jesus' pre-burial preparations

31 Also previously noted in Cribbs, "St Luke," 447; and subsequently in Shellard, "Relationship," 74, 92–93; Matson, *In Dialogue*, 422–434.

32 Cf. G. van Kooten, "Bleeding Blood, Not Ichor—Christ the 'Gottmensch': A Comparison of the Johannine Incarnate God of Love with Homer's Aphrodite, Plato's Daimōn of Love, and Modern Discourse," in *Über Gott* (ed. J. Dochhorn, R. Hirsch-Luipold, and I. Tanaseanu-Döbler; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022) 631–671, at 632–644.

but typical of a (contrite) prostitute; he shows particular interest in Pilate's handling of the court case against Jesus; and he renders the evidence for the empty tomb and Jesus' resurrection more acceptable for his readership by selecting male witnesses. Meanwhile, from his reading of John he also (inadvertently) picks up two distinctive details from John's Gospel: the specification that it was the slave's right ear that one of Jesus' disciples cut off during Jesus' arrest (John 18:10; Luke 22:50),[33] and the fact that no one had ever been laid in the tomb in which they placed Jesus (John 19:41; Luke 23:53).[34]

3 Outlook: The Implications for Mark's and Matthew's Place within the Chronological Framework of an Early John and a Late Luke

If a late Luke, writing between 93/94 and 130 CE, is making use of an early Gospel of John (65 CE) as one of the "polloi" he refers to in the preface to his Gospel (Luke 1:1–4), then what are the implications for the likely place of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark within this new chronological framework? I will briefly indicate what this means for the relations between (1) Luke and Matthew; (2) Matthew and John; and (3) Mark and John, respectively.

First of all, regarding the relation between Luke and Matthew, I will briefly refer to the increasing criticism of the presumption that an otherwise unknown source called Q existed. According to the proponents of Q, Matthew and Luke did not know each other's Gospels but instead independently appropriated both the Gospel of Mark and the Q source. However, the assumption of Matthew and Luke's mutual independence is seriously challenged by the existence of minor verbatim agreements between Matthew and Luke in their incorporation of the Gospel of Mark. If Matthew and Luke are mutually independent, then such agreements ought not to occur. The Q proponents therefore need to make a second presumption, namely the so-called "Mark–Q overlap." For this reason, Frans Neirynck ascribes several passages to his Q Synopsis and at the same time to his Minor Agreements Synopsis.[35] Others

33 Also noted previously in Cribbs, "St Luke," 444; Shellard, "Relationship," 73.

34 Also noted previously in Cribbs, "St Luke," 445.

35 For F. Neirynck's synopses, see *The Minor Agreements in a Horizontal-Line Synopsis* (Leuven: Peeters, 1991); and *Q-Synopsis: The Double Tradition Passages in Greek* (rev. ed.; Leuven: Peeters, 1995). The following passages in his *Q-Synopsis* are also ascribed to his Minor Agreements Synopsis [MAS]: (1) *Q-Synopsis*, 6–7: Matthew 3:11–12 = Luke 3:16–17 (cf. Mark 1:7–8) = MAS, 12, §§ 2.6–2.7; (2) *Q-Synopsis*, 8–9: Matthew 4:2b–11b = Luke 4:2c–13b (cf. Mark 1:12–13) = MAS, 14, §§ 4.5–4.7; (3) *Q-Synopsis*, 32–33: Matthew 12:22–23a, 26b–28, 30 = Luke 11:14, 18b–20, 23 (cf. Mark 3:22–27) = MAS, 28–29, §§ 22.1–22.3, 22.10–22.12, 22.14; (4) *Q-Synopsis*, 48–49: Matthew 13:32b, d, f = Luke 13:19c, e, g (cf. Mark 4:30–32) = MAS,

explain the minor agreements between Matthew and Luke with reference to an alternative presumption, namely the existence of a Proto- or Deutero-Mark which is either earlier or later than the canonical Gospel of Mark.[36] Yet all of these presumptions become superfluous when we argue that a late Luke is acquainted with the Gospel of Matthew and simply makes use of Matthew's modifications of and additions to Mark's Gospel.[37]

Secondly, regarding the relation between Matthew and an early John, we do indeed have indications that Matthew knew John's Gospel. If John is early (65 CE), then the famous so-called "thunderbolt from the Johannine sky" that appears in Matthew 11:27 (John 3:35, 13:3, and 10:15; cf. Luke 10:22) is no longer a surprise.[38] We need no longer regard the passage in Matthew as too "Johannine" (thus Adolf von Harnack) and therefore as an interpolation.[39] The passage is not an unexpected, startling thunderbolt out of the blue, but the rumbling echo in Matthew of a severe Johannine thunderstorm, which is consonant with Matthew's own divine Christology (1:23; 28:18–20). Moreover, Matthew also seems to have used John to provide him with a "better" conclusion to Mark's Gospel, which originally finished with the visit Mary Magdalene and other women paid to the tomb and their subsequent flight from it (Mark 16:1–8). According to John, however, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and tells her not to fasten herself to him,[40] but to share with his "brothers" the news that he is ascending to the divine Father (John 20:14–18).

35, §§ 29.3–29.4; and (5) *Q-Synopsis*, 60–61: Matthew 25:14b–15a,16b–25b = Luke 19:13a–b, 15b–21b (cf. Mark 13:34) = MAS, 75, §§ 88.3–88.5. For a critique of the attribution of such passages to the Mark–Q overlap, see also M. Goodacre, *The Case Against Q* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2002) 52–54, and for a critique of the very notion itself, 163–165.

36 See, for example, D. Burkett, *The Case for Proto-Mark* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018).

37 For a consistent reading in this vein, see G. van Kooten, *Reverberations of Good News: The Gospels in Context, Then and Now* (London: SCM Press, forthcoming 2026), chap. 3 on the Gospel of Luke.

38 Not mentioned in J.W. Barker, *John's Use of Matthew* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015) 14 and 113, tables 1.1 and 6.1. Cf. D.C. Allison, Jr., "Reflections on Matthew, John, and Jesus," in *Jesus Research: The Gospel of John in Historical Inquiry* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth and J.G.R. Pruszinski; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2019) 47–68, 52–53 on John 10:15 and Matthew 11:27. For a history of the Johannine thunderbolt, see B. Pitre, "From Reimarus to Allison: The Quest for Jesus and the Christological 'Thunderbolt' (Matt 11:25–27// Luke 10:21–22)," in *"To Recover What Has Been Lost": Essays on Eschatology, Intertextuality, and Reception History in Honor of Dale C. Allison Jr.* (ed. T.S. Ferda, D. Frayer-Griggs, and N.C. Johnson; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2021) 373–404.

39 For von Harnack, see Pitre, "From Reimarus to Allison," 383 n. 40, with reference to A. von Harnack, *The Sayings of Jesus: The Second Source of St Matthew and St Luke* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1908) 302: "the canonical version in both gospels [i.e., in Matthew and Luke] is 'Johannine' in character and indefensible."

40 LSJ ἅπτω II.

The same narrative, with the same (or modified) elements, occurs in Matthew: Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, who is accompanied by "the other Mary" (Matthew 28:1); they both touch Jesus, as they "took hold of his feet and worshipped him"; and Jesus instructs them to "go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee" (Matthew 28:9–10).[41] Matthew omits the typically Johannine issue of "to touch or not to touch"[42] and replaces it with the typically Matthean issue of prostration (προσκύνησις, first performed by the magi),[43] in which, by falling down before a person, one can touch that person's feet.[44] Furthermore, rather than maintaining John's reference to Jesus ascending to the Father, Matthew follows Mark in his narration of the command to meet Jesus in Galilee (Mark 14:28 = Matthew 26:32; Mark 16:7 = Matthew 28:7). Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene (which is absent from Luke) was eventually also taken up in the longer ending to Mark's Gospel (Mark 16:9).

Other echoes of John in Matthew's Gospel include the following: Jesus makes two statements at the last supper in John, to the effect that "a servant is not greater than his master" (John 13:16; 15:20), and that "whoever receives me receives him who sent me" (John 13:20), both of which closely resemble statements in Matthew (Matthew 10:24,[45] 40).[46] In the episode in which Jesus is mocked by the Roman soldiers (which is absent from Luke), John (19:2) and Matthew (27:29) agree in their precise terminology ("a crown of thorns").[47]

41 Cf. Allison, "Reflections," 49–50; Barker, *John's Use*, 14 and 113, tables 1.1 and 6.1, with discussion on pp. 24–25, 33; F. Neirynck, "John and the Synoptics: The Empty Tomb Stories," *NTS* 30 (1984) 161–187, at 166–172; K.P.G. Curtis, "Three Points of Contact between Matthew and John in the Burial and Resurrection Narratives," *JTS* 23 (1972) 440–444, 444; F. Neirynck, "Les Femmes au Tombeau: Étude de la rédaction Matthéenne," *NTS* 15 (1969) 168–190, at 184–190; and P. Benoit, "Marie-Madeleine et les disciples au tombeau selon Joh 20.1–18," in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche: Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias* (ed. W. Eltester; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1960) 141–152, arguing at 144–145 and 150–152 that the traditions underlying John 20:14–18 are more authentic than their adaptation in Matthew 28:9–10.

42 Cf. Thomas in John 20:24–29.

43 Matthew 2:2, 11, and subsequently in 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 18:26; 20:20; 28:9, 17.

44 Josephus, *Ant*. 6.240; Chariton, *Callirhoe* 2.2.7; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 59.27.1, 68.18.2; and Aelian, *Historical Miscellany* 1.21.

45 Cf. Allison, "Reflections," 47–50; H.F.D. Sparks, "St John's Knowledge of Matthew: The Evidence of John 13, 16 and 15, 20," *JTS* 3 (1952) 58–61; and G. Van Belle and D.R.M. Godecharle, "C.H. Dodd on John 13:16 (and 15:20): St John's Knowledge of Matthew Revisited," in *Engaging with C. H. Dodd on the Gospel of John: Sixty Years of Tradition and Interpretation* (ed. T. Thatcher and C. Williams; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 86–106.

46 Cf. Allison, "Reflections," 51.

47 Cf. M. Goodacre, "Parallel Traditions or Parallel Gospels? John's Gospel as a Re-imagining of Mark," in *John's Transformation of Mark* (ed. E.-M. Becker, H.K. Bond, and C.H. Williams; London: Bloomsbury, 2021) 77–90, at 80–81.

And in the narrative of Jesus' burial, the following details occur only in John and Matthew: Joseph of Arimathea is already referred to as a disciple of Jesus (John 19:38; Matthew 27:57),[48] and Jesus' body is placed in "a new tomb" (John 19:41; Matthew 27:60).[49] Although Matthew clearly remains focussed on upgrading the Gospel of Mark and supplementing it with his own material (such as the sayings of the Sermon on the Mount) and his own contextualization (in the relations between the Romans and the Parthian magi),[50] he seems to be acquainted with John's Gospel and to use it where it is helpful in his revision of Mark.

Thirdly, regarding the relation between Mark and John, it is of course still possible to maintain that John is a commentary on Mark, as some scholars propose,[51] but only if one is prepared to date Mark considerably earlier, far prior to 66 CE—in the 40s CE, for instance. Some scholars have indeed argued that the statement in Mark 13:14 concerning the threat of a "desolating sacrilege" in Jerusalem refers to the threat of Caligula's desecration of the Jerusalem temple in 38–41 CE.[52] However, to me Mark does not read as an effective response to this event, but rather as an apologetic biography that addresses the First Jewish Revolt against Rome and was finalized between the suppression of the revolt in Galilee and Judaea in 67–68 CE (cf. Mark 13:14) and the circumvallation of Jerusalem in mid-June 70 CE.[53] Regarding the parallels between John and Mark,[54] I believe that they need not be explained through literary dependence. Firstly, verbal similarities between their narratives about the same themes, events, or episodes are often very limited and

48 Cf. Allison, "Reflections," 55; Curtis, "Three Points," 442–443.

49 Cf. Allison, "Reflections," 55; Curtis, "Three Points," 443.

50 Cf. G. van Kooten, "Matthew, the Parthians, and the Magi: A Contextualization of Matthew's Gospel in Roman-Parthian Relations of the First Centuries BCE and CE," in *The Star of Bethlehem and the Magi* (ed. P. Barthel and G. van Kooten; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015) 496–646.

51 E.-M. Becker, H.K. Bond, and C.H. Williams, *John's Transformation of Mark* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021); W.E.S. North, *What John Knew and What John Wrote: A Study in John and the Synoptics* (Lanham: Lexington/Fortress, 2020).

52 G. Theissen, *The Gospels in Context* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992) 125–166; N.H. Taylor, "Palestinian Christianity and the Caligula Crisis," *JSNT* 61 (1996) 101–124, and *JSNT* 62 (1996) 13–40; J.G. Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004) esp. 29–37.

53 G. van Kooten, "The Jewish War and the Roman Civil War of 68–69 CE: Jewish, Pagan, and Christian Perspectives," in *The Jewish Revolt against Rome: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (ed. M. Popovic; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011) 419–450, at 439–444.

54 For the parallels between John and Mark, see the charts in H.W. Attridge, "John and Mark in the History of Research," in *John's Transformation*, 9–22, at 10–12.

concern the same basic, small factual agreements.[55] Secondly, however, where more significant verbal similarities occur, it is typically in Jesus' sayings—which can be explained as deriving from the pre-Johannine and pre-Markan oral traditions.[56] The noted critical relationship between John and Mark with regard to the narrative of Jesus in Gethsemane (John 12:27 and 18:11; Mark 14:35–36) or Jesus carrying the cross (John 19:17a; Mark 15:20b–21) need not indicate a direct critical relation between the two either, but could rather reflect their stance within the traditions. The Gospels of John and Mark therefore seem to be contemporary, mutually independent writings, with their anchor points in different relative chronologies—in Galilee (Mark 8:15) or in Jerusalem (John 2:20)—indicating that one of them emerged from Galilean, the other from Judaean circles around Jesus.[57]

4 Concluding Reflections

The description of the colonnaded Pool of Bethzatha in the present tense in John 5:2 offers an Archimedean point for dating the Gospels. The Gospel of John comes first, before the First Jewish Revolt, around 65 CE, and is closely and independently followed by the Gospel of Mark, which is finalized in 67–70 CE. Here begins the confusion that has occupied us until today—the confusion of the so-called Synoptic Gospels. As Robert Morgan stated in his 2002 support for the Cribbs-Shellard hypothesis of John's priority over Luke: "The formulation 'John and the synoptics,' understandable and even justifiable in certain contexts, has done more harm than good in New Testament theology."[58] It is Matthew who, after 70 CE, decides to upgrade Mark's Gospel and rewrite it with a more positive, constructive Christology, now that Mark's negative Christology—which, in the context of the First Jewish Revolt,

55 See, for instance, the episodes of the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1–15; Mark 6:32–44) and the pre-funerary anointing (John 12:1–8; Mark 14:3–9).

56 See, for instance, the sayings in John 5:8//Mark 2:11; John 6:20//Mark 6:50; John 12:25//Mark 8:35; John 13:20//Mark 9:37; John 12:8//Mark 14:7 (together with the question in John 12:5//Mark 14:5 that prompted this saying); John 13:21//Mark 14:18; and John 14:31d–e//Mark 14:42a. There is a small window in which the authors of a Gospel of John-in-progress (finished in 65 CE) and a Gospel of Mark-in-progress (finished in 67/68–70 CE) might have interacted with one another. Cf. van Kooten, *Reverberations*, chap. 5.

57 On the revealing nature of the use of relative chronologies, see D. Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) esp. 12, 15, 221–222 n. 35.

58 R. Morgan, "The Priority of John over Luke," in *Für und wider die Priorität des Johannesevangeliums* (ed. P.L. Hofrichter; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2002) 195–211, at 211.

apologetically emphasized what Jesus was not—is no longer what is required. Thus, Matthew is focused on enhancing Mark after 70 CE, is familiar with John, and makes use of John's positive Christology and Jesus' post-resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene. Luke also uses John for his own apologetic and juridical purposes, but with Mark and Matthew as his main sources, John's chronology becomes for Luke the outlier, which he tries to reconcile with what are for him becoming the Synoptic Gospels of Mark and Matthew. Luke does what he claims to do, namely integrating the Synoptic Gospels with John's Gospel, where this serves his purposes—especially when it comes to the independent male confirmation of the women's nonsensical report about the empty tomb and Jesus' post-resurrection appearance to his male disciples. Luke omits Matthew's report about Jesus' appearance to the women (Matthew 28:9–10), which Matthew had taken from John (John 20:14–18). Instead, after his uniquely Lukan narrative of Jesus' appearance to the Emmaus travellers (Luke 24:13–35), he adds Jesus' appearance to the disciples, taken from John (Luke 24:36–43; John 20:19–23), while omitting Matthew's account of Jesus appearing to the disciples on the mountain in Galilee (Matthew 28:16–20), because Luke keeps his narrative centred on Jerusalem (Luke 24:44–53). This order of the four gospels seems to me the easiest explanation of their interrelation. Yet in the history of its reception, the Gospel of John has been sidelined and construed in opposition to the Synoptic Gospels.

This was first attempted in the second century CE by the Alogoi, for whom—as Epiphanius makes clear (*Panarion* IV.51; transl. F. Williams, 2012, 26–68), and as is consistent with Gaius of Rome's evidence[59]—the differences between John and the Synoptics constitute a *biblicist* problem of conflicting chronologies, which the Alogoi seek to solve by removing John. Subsequently, however, in the nineteenth century, the differences between John and the Synoptics constitute a *liberal* problem of seemingly conflicting Christologies, which David Friedrich Strauss in particular seeks to solve by declaring John late. Between the 1830s and the 1870s, Strauss constructs a historiography of primitivism and development, in which he identifies the Synoptics as simple, historical, and Palestinian, and John as developed, philosophical, and therefore unhistorical, and as originating outside Palestine.[60] For Strauss, the antithesis between the Synoptics and John is the antithesis between

59 E. Prinzivalli, "Gaius," *BEEC Online*, *pace* S. Manor, *Epiphanius' Alogi and the Johannine Controversy: A Reassessment of Early Opposition to the Johannine Corpus* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2016).

60 D.F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (3 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1835]) §46 (1:333 n. 33); §80 (2:153); §83 (2:188); §100 (2:371); §116 (3:111); *Das Leben Jesu für das deutsche Volk bearbeitet* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1864) 79.

the historical Jesus of Nazareth presented in the Synoptic Gospels and the church's dogmatic, Johannine Christ. As he ultimately says in his *The Old Faith and the New: A Confession* (1873 [1872]): "The veritable Christ is only to be found, if at all, in the first three Gospels. There we have no figure tortured into accordance with Alexandrine speculation, we have reminiscences of the very man, gathered and garnered on the very spot."[61] Strauss's notion of a development from the simple Synoptics to the sophistication of John is rooted in an uncomfortable antisemitic historiography. Commenting on "the then state of the people to which Jesus belonged," Strauss writes:

> Still less, under such circumstances, was there any prospect of a higher culture [...]. The Jews, in the first place, had less natural capacity for these, not only than the Greeks and Romans, but less even than many other oriental nations; in the second place, the nation in Jesus' time [...] had, especially in its native country, declined to the lowest point of prosperity and culture.

For Strauss, writing in 1872, immediately after the Franco–German War, the Darwinian progress from lower to higher forms of culture reaches its climax in the unification and triumph of the German nation.[62]

It is very clear how deeply problematic Strauss's historiography is, yet the results of his thinking are still (knowingly or unknowingly) maintained in the current antithesis between John and the Synoptics. What we have seen here, however, is that Matthew and Luke use John's Gospel as one of their sources, although its importance is only secondary. Matthew's prime focus was on the Gospel of Mark, which he upgraded for a Jewish readership after 70 CE and supplemented with his own material and contextualization. Similarly, Luke's prime focus was on the Gospel of Matthew, yet he deemed the Gospel's embeddedness in Roman–Parthian relations no longer wise in the increasingly anti-Parthian atmosphere of the time between 93/94 and 130 CE, and therefore decided to transpose Matthew's narrative entirely into a Roman imperial context, with Quirinius's census and the beginning of direct Roman rule over Judaea. Although John's role as a source was secondary in this development, it was not unimportant, as it provided Matthew with his "Johannine thunderbolt" and with Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene, and Luke with the male testimonies he needed in his Roman legal context.

61 D.F. Strauss, *The Old Faith and the New: A Confession* (transl. M. Blind; London: Asher, 1873) 57. Cf. D.F. Strauss, *The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History: A Critique of Schleiermacher's The Life of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977 [1865]) 169.

62 Strauss, *The Old Faith and the New*, 74–75; cf. 84, 344–345, 296–302.