

## The Gospel of John – Introduction.

### Authorship

Until 1820, when Bretschneider published his arguments against the authenticity of the Gospel, it was universally accepted that the author was John, Apostle, brother of James and son of Zebedee. The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a further assault on the genuineness of the Gospel suggesting that it was written for a post-apostolic community, sometime in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century, struggling with the Gnostic heresy. The hypotheses of the scholars is in direct conflict with the established historical evidence. It is quite clear that all four Gospels were in the form that we know them now well before the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The historical evidence is unassailable.

**The Muratorian Canon** (c180 Papias has been put forward as a possible author)

*The fourth gospel is that of John, one of the disciples. . . . When his fellow disciples and bishops exhorted him he said, 'Fast with me for three days from today, and then let us relate to each other whatever may be revealed to each of us'. On the same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the Apostles, that John should relate all things in his own name as they remembered them. . .*

**Irenaeus** – born c. 130 but some say much earlier. His bishop was Pothinus whom he succeeded and who was ninety years of age when martyred and who must have known many hearers of the Apostles. Irenaeus must have received information concerning the first century Church from his bishop and was witness to the early traditions in Asia Minor, Rome and Gaul. Irenaeus' teacher was Polycarp the disciple of John the Apostle. This personal link with Irenaeus amounts to, practically, conclusive evidence

ἔπειτα Ἰωάννης, ὁ μαθητῆς τοῦ κυρίου, ὁ καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ στήθος αὐτοῦ ἀναπεσὼν, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐξέδωκεν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, ἐν Ἐφέσῳ τῆς Ἀσίας διατρίβων.

*Then John, the disciple of the Lord, the one who also leaned upon the chest of Him, also himself produced the Glad Tidings while living in Ephesus of Asia.*

**Clement of Alexandria** (before 215, 16, and teacher of Origen)

Ἥ ὅπερ ἐπιγνόντα τὸν Πέτρον προτρεπτικῶς μήτε κωλύσαι μήτε προτρέψασθαι. τὸν μέντοι Ἰωάννην ἔσχοντο, συνιδόντα ὅτι τὰ σωματικὰ ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις δεδήλωται, προτραπέντα ὑπὸ τῶν γνωρίμων, πνεύματι θεοφορηθέντα πνευματικὸν ποιῆσαι εὐαγγέλιον.

*when Peter found out about it, he did not actively discourage or encourage it; but John, last, aware that the physical facts were disclosed in the gospels, urged by friends, and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual gospel.*

**Origen** (d. 254)

Ἔ καὶ τρίτον τὸ κατὰ Λουκᾶν, τὸ ὑπὸ Παύλου ἐπαινούμενον εὐαγγέλιον τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ἔθνῶν πεποιηκότα· ἐπὶ πᾶσιν τὸ κατὰ Ἰωάννην.

*Ἔ and third, Luke, who has composed for those from the Gentiles the gospel praised by Paul; after all of them, the one according to John.*

Bishop Westcott (whose Greek text we are now using) considered that the writer of the Gospel was

- A Jew
- A Palestinian Jew
- An eyewitness
- One of the Twelve Disciples
- The Disciple John.

As can be deduced from the text John the Apostle had all these requirements.

Further in all the ancient sources containing titles, lists of contents, tables etc, when this gospel is included John is given as the author.

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### The Text

The Greek text of the gospel is highly repetitive and relatively simple in structure – the author, for the most part, using words from the common stock of vocabulary of the evangelists – he uses only around 90 words specific to himself. Nevertheless he is able to generate the most profound ideas and describe events in vivid detail (the detail of an eyewitness). A parallel in English would be John Bunyan who, similarly, could produce an intensity of emotion using a minimal vocabulary – one would never develop a great English vocabulary from reading Bunyan, nor can one gain a substantial Greek vocabulary from John. However, although John's vocabulary is not distinctive his use of certain pronouns, verbs, prepositions and particles, combined with such stylistic characteristics as parataxis (coordinated clauses), asyndeton (the omission of conjunctions), epexegetis (addition of words to clarify a sentence), repetitions and reduplications make John's Greek quite specific to him.

1. He tends to use the Historic Present Tense for dramatic effect – very much as does Mark – 1 : 51 καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ἄμην ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὄψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεωγῶτα καὶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.
2. Although he uses καὶ least of the gospel writers – he characteristically employs it to join sentences together :- 2:1 Καὶ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ γάμος ἐγένετο ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, καὶ ἦν ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐκεῖ· 2 ἐκλήθη δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν γάμον. 3 καὶ ὑστερήσαντος οἴνου λέγει ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν, Οἶνον οὐκ ἔχουσιν. 4 [καὶ] λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὐπω ἦκει ἡ ὥρα μου
3. As the table shows he makes a somewhat eccentric use of particles and often there is no connecting particle – making the text have something of a staccato sound when read as clauses burst out unannounced.

### Relative Frequencies of Particles in the New Testament

<i>Particle</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
ἀλλά	37	39	38	102
ἄρα	7	2	6	0
γάρ	127	72	92	62
δέ	433	182	484	221
καὶ	721	503	850	545
ὅπως	18	2	7	1
οὐδέ	24	11	17	13
οὔτε	3	2	4	6
οὖν	55	11	44	198
που	4	3	7	18
ὥς	30	23	52	24

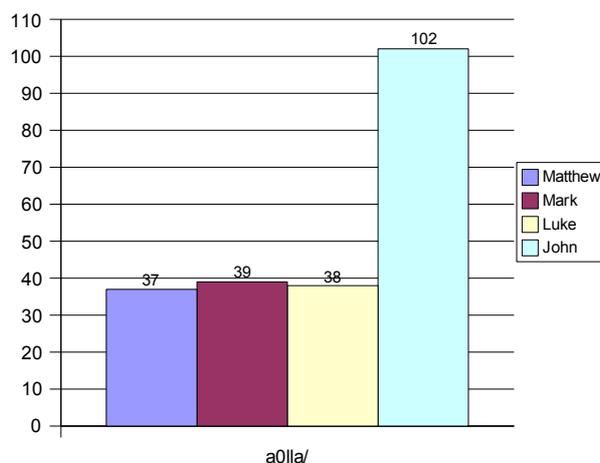
4. It is noted that John makes excessive use of οὖν when compared with the other gospel writers and he does not use it in its usual sense of what follows is a consequence of what has preceded, but to indicate a transition to something new :- 1:22 εἶπαν οὖν αὐτῷ, Τίς εἶ; ἵνα

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ἀπόκρισιν δώμεν τοῖς πέμψασιν ἡμᾶς· τί λέγεις περὶ σεαυτοῦ; 2:18 ἀπεκρίθησαν οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ, Τί σημεῖον δεικνύεις ἡμῖν, ὅτι ταῦτα ποιεῖς; It must be noted too that John utilizes ἀλλά much more than the other evangelists and in a specific Johannine way in which the parts contrasted are not necessarily of the same grammatical standing – 1:8 ἢ οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ' ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός.

5. A further Johannine eccentricity is his use of ἐκεῖνος very often not as a demonstrative pronoun meaning 'that' (by him, you) but used as a personal pronoun – 'he', 'she' or 'it' and referring back to a word immediately preceding :-5:37 καὶ ὁ πέμψας με πατὴρ ἐκεῖνος μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ ἐμοῦ. οὔτε φωνὴν αὐτοῦ πώποτε ἀκηκόατε οὔτε εἶδος αὐτοῦ ἐώρακάτε,

ekeinos in the Gospels



6. A quite exceptional characteristic of John's writing is his emphasis of the person by his use of ἐγώ which occurs no less than 130 times! It appears 6 times in chapter 1 alone in relation to John the Baptist – once at least without a verb - 1:23 ἔφη,

Ἐγὼ φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, although that is not the norm as in 1:26 ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰωάννης λέγων, Ἐγὼ βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι· μέσος ὑμῶν ἕστηκεν ὃν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἴδατε, and 1:30 οὗτός ἐστιν ὑπὲρ οὗ ἐγὼ εἶπον, Ὁπίσω μου ἔρχεται ἀνὴρ ὃς ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν. Much has been made of the 'I am' sayings of Jesus, now ἐγὼ εἶμι appears as many as 40 times in the gospel most times said by Jesus, so one wonders why those particular 'I am' sayings should be picked out and related to the solemn saying in Plutarch's report of an inscription in the temple of Athena-Isis in Sais in his *Isis and Osiris*? Here Isis says 'I am Isis' and the German commentators have seized on this and for some reason related it to certain of the 'I am' phrases in John's gospel – they claim that the 'I am' sections are, in fact, comparable with Isis' self revelation in the Greek version of Egyptian mythology (however, the Greeks confused Isis with the Greek god Demeter – goddess of corn). In verbs of incomplete predication – as is εἶμι (and γίνομαι, ὑπάρχω) the predicate nominative describes the category or class to which the subject belongs – that is a grammatical norm and so such phrases as '*recognition formulae*' or '*qualification formulae*' to describe these 'I am . . . .' sayings do seem to be redundant. One notices that the fashion for special attention to certain of the sayings has occurred in the last 40 or 50 years and that earlier commentators respect all the 'I am' sayings. Here are a few:- 6:35 εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἐγὼ εἶμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς· ὁ ἐρχόμενος πρὸς με οὐ μὴ πεινάσῃ, καὶ ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ μὴ διψήσῃ πώποτε 6:48 ἐγὼ εἶμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς. 8:18 ἐγὼ εἶμι ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ ἐμαυτοῦ καὶ μαρτυρεῖ περὶ ἐμοῦ ὁ πέμψας με

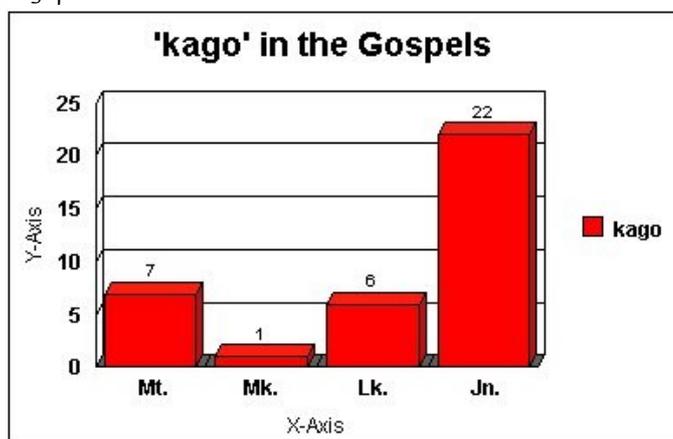
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πατήρ. 8: 58 εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Ἰησοῦς, Ἄμην ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί. 17: 14 ἐγὼ δέδωκα αὐτοῖς τὸν λόγον σου, καὶ ὁ κόσμος ἐμίσησεν αὐτούς, ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου καθὼς ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμί ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου.

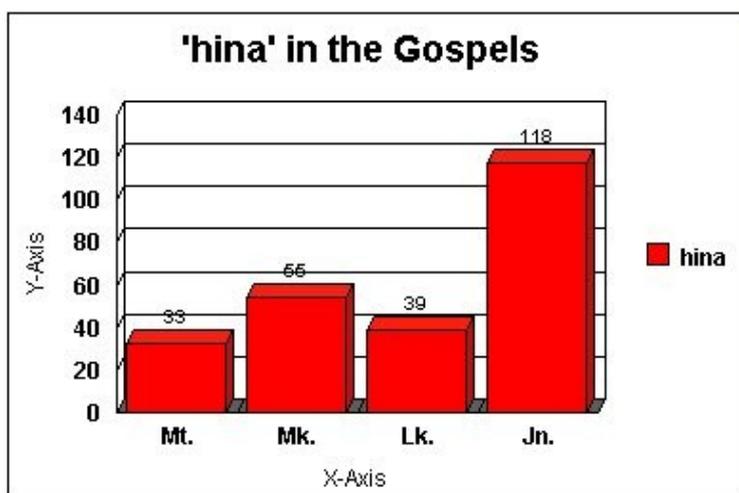
	<i>Mt.</i>	<i>Mk.</i>	<i>Lk.</i>	<i>Jn.</i>
ego	30	18	22	130

The relative frequencies of ego in the Gospels

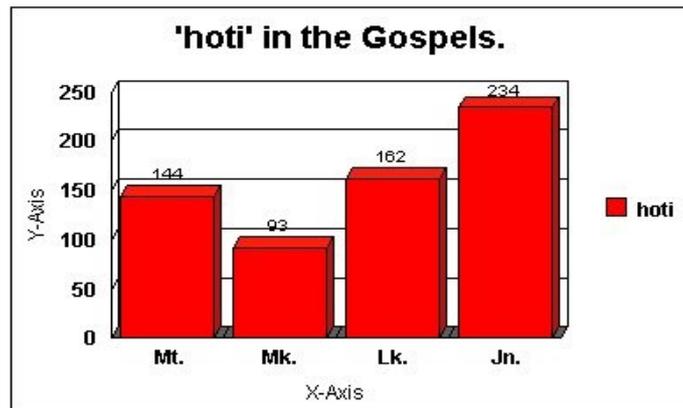
7. John's predilection for parataxis (sentences joined by 'and') and periphrastic ways of expressing the present and imperfect tenses (using more words than the Greek requires) is exemplified by his extended use of *καὶ γὰρ* – 'and I' 1:31 *καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ᾔδειν αὐτόν, ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῇ τῷ Ἰσραὴλ διὰ τοῦτο ἦλθον ἐγὼ ἐν ὕδατι βαπτίζων.* 10:28 *καὶ γὰρ δίδωμι αὐτοῖς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, καὶ οὐ μὴ ἀπόλωνται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, καὶ οὐχ ἄρπάσει τις αὐτὰ ἐκ τῆς χειρὸς μου.*



8. Very commonly John adds words to clarify sentences (epexegetis) with the conjunctions *ἵνα* and *ὅτι* used slackly to introduce them and as though they (*ἵνα* and *ὅτι*) could replace each other.



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9. We have seen that, for the most part, ἐγώ is not necessary for the first person singular of verbs, similarly, John often makes the imperfect with ἦν and a participle eg. 1:28 Ταῦτα ἐν Βηθανίᾳ ἐγένετο πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, ὅπου ἦν ὁ Ἰωάννης βαπτίζων. 3:23 ἦν δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἰωάννης βαπτίζων ἐν Αἰνῶν ἐγγὺς τοῦ Σαλείμ, ὅτι ὕδατα πολλὰ ἦν ἐκεῖ, καὶ παρεγίνοντο καὶ ἐβαπτίζοντο. 13: 23 ἦν ἀνακείμενος εἰς ἓκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς. This seems to be a very modern way of effecting the imperfect, but, in Greek, completely unnecessary.
10. Inconsistencies (which geologists would call 'unconformities') exist in the gospel where text that is physically sequential cannot have been sequential in time. For example in 5:1 Jesus appears to be in Jerusalem - **5:1** Μετὰ ταῦτα ἦν ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων, καὶ ἀνέβη Ἰησοῦς εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα. but in 6:1 the text would suggest that Jesus crosses the Lake of Galilee (from Jerusalem) **6:1** Μετὰ ταῦτα ἀπῆλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Γαλιλαίας τῆς Τιβεριάδος. At the end of 14:31 Jesus says; Rise, let us go hence - 31 ἀλλ' ἵνα γινῶ ὁ κόσμος ὅτι ἀγαπῶ τὸν πατέρα, καὶ καθὼς ἐνετείλατο μοι ὁ πατήρ, οὕτως ποιῶ. Ἐγείρεσθε, ἄγωμεν ἐντεύθεν. and then speaks until 18:1 - **18:1** Ταῦτα εἰπὼν Ἰησοῦς ἐξῆλθεν σὺν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ πέραν τοῦ χειμάρρου τοῦ Κεδρῶν ὅπου ἦν κῆπος, εἰς ὃν εἰσῆλθεν αὐτὸς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ. There are many other instances in chapters 3, 6, 12, 18 where text needs to be rearranged to make chronological sense. There are a number of theories to explain these inconsistencies -
- That the text was in codex form which fell apart but not returned in the correct order.
  - That the gospel was never completed and its various drafts drawn together by an editor with less than perfect knowledge of topography or of sequence of events.
  - That the original text was arranged by John to suit his peculiar needs – perhaps he preached to the Jewish calendar.
  - That John did not think sequentially in time but perhaps in terms of subject.

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### **Outline of the Gospel**

The contents of the Gospel can be divided into a prologue, two principal sections, and an epilogue.

#### The Prologue, 1:1-18

- The Incarnation of the Word

#### Part one – The public ministry of Jesus from His baptism to the beginning of His Passion

- The Testimony of John the Baptist, 1:19-34.
- The first disciples called, 1:35-51.
- **The first sign** – the wedding at Cana, 2:1-12.
- The Temple cleansed, 2:13-22.
- Jesus instructs Nicodemus, 3:1-21.
- Further testimony from the Baptist, 3:22-36.
- Jesus with Samaritans, 4:1-42
- **The second sign** – the healing of the official's son, 4:43-54.
- **The third sign** - the healing at the pool of Bethesda, 5:1-16.
- Life through the Son, testimonies concerning Jesus, 5:17-47.
- **The fourth sign** – the feeding of the multitude, 6:1-13.
- **The fifth sign** – Jesus walks on water, 6:14-21.
- Jesus the Bread of Life, 6:22-7:1.
- Jesus attends the Feast of the Tabernacles and teaches, 7:2-8:59.
- **The sixth sign** – the healing of the man born blind, 9:1-41.
- The Shepherd and His flock, 10:1-21.
- Jesus at the Feast of Dedication, 10:22-42.
- **The seventh sign** – Lazarus raised from the dead, 11:1-44.
- The plot to kill Jesus, 11:45-57.
- Jesus anointed at Bethany, 12:1-11.
- The triumphal entry, 12:12-19.
- Jesus predicts his death, 12:20-36.
- The unbelief of the Jews, 12:37-50.

#### Part two – Jesus' Passion and Resurrection.

- The Last Supper, 13:1-30.
- Extended farewell sermons, 13:31-16:33.
- Jesus prays for himself, his disciple and all those who believe, 17:1-26.
- Jesus arrested, tried, sentenced and crucified, 18:1-19:42.
- The Resurrection of Jesus, 20:1-29.
- The purpose of the book, 20:30.

#### The Epilogue – 21:1-25.