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CHICAGO
THE MONIST
A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
Devoted to the Philosophy of Science

DR. PAUL CARUS
EDITOR

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"The Monist" also Discusses the Fundamental Problems of Philosophy in their Relations to all the Practical Religious, Ethical, and Sociological Questions of the day.

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SPECIMEN COPIES ON APPLICATION.
A PAGAN NUN.

Portrait bust of a vestal virgin found at Rome, now in the National Museum at Naples.

Frontispiece to The Open Court.
ONE who is familiar with the New Testament cannot engage in this study without feeling, in increasing measure, the sharp contrast between the representations of the Synoptics and those of the Fourth Gospel. The difference is not merely one of degree; it is a difference of kind. In passing from the former to the latter, we pass into another atmosphere, deal with different personalities, though some of them bear the same names, and, for the most part, find ourselves in the midst of other scenes.

As a preliminary to our study, it will be well for us to note some of the more striking differences. In the Fourth Gospel the scene of action, with slight exceptions, is Jerusalem and its vicinity; in the Synoptics the scene of action, almost entirely, is Galilee. In the Fourth Gospel there are prominent persons who do not appear in the Synoptics, namely, the woman of Samaria, Nicodemus and Lazarus; and places which have no mention in the Synoptics, namely, Enon, Salim, Ephraim and Bethany across the Jordan (in the Common Version, Bethabara). In the Fourth Gospel the baptism, the temptation and the transfiguration are not mentioned. Still more notable omissions are those of the last supper, and the agony in Gethsemane.

The difference in both the substance and the form of Jesus’s teaching is even more striking. In the Fourth Gospel there are long mystical and metaphysical discourses which are wholly absent from the Synoptics, and it conspicuously lacks the Sermon on the Mount and all the parables. Moreover, in this Gospel, Jesus is almost if not quite devoid of a quality which is felt on every page of the
Synoptics, namely, pity. He is wanting even in sympathy. If the case of his emotion at the grave of Lazarus be cited, it must be said that in this case his grief, which is mingled with indignation, is aroused rather by the unbelief of the Jews than by the affliction of the sisters.

In the Synoptics Jesus’s mission as teacher and helper of men is central and dominant: in the Fourth Gospel it is himself and his relation to the Father that are central and dominant. In the Synoptics Jesus is the sympathizing man; in the Fourth Gospel he is the calm yet intense, the dignified yet polemical, representative and vice-gerent of God. In the Synoptics he does many miracles of service to the sick, the tormented and the needy; in the Fourth Gospel he does a few representative deeds of power, in which the power rather than the beneficence is magnified. In the Fourth Gospel only seven miracles are recorded, preceding the crucifixion, and of these only two are identical with those reported in the Synoptics. These are the feeding the five thousand and the walking on the water.

A remarkable linguistic difference between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics appears in the omission from the former of the following words which are frequently used in the Synoptics and contribute much to the conception of Jesus which they present:

μετάνοια, μετανοεῖ, ἄφεσις, πίστες, (the verb πιστεῖν is used by the Fourth Gospel many more times than by all the Synoptics together) βάπτισμα, κηρύσσω, ἐπιτιμῶ, ἀμαρτολός (in the Fourth Gospel this word is used only in the ninth Chapter, and there it is applied to Jesus), τελώνης, νόσος, δαιμονίζωμαι, ἐκβάλλω, (used with δαμάσκει in the Synoptics), ἀκώλυτος, λεπρός, ζώμη, ἔχθρος, ὑποκρίτης, ἀσωτάσιον (for divorce in Matt. and Mark), μοιχεύω, ὁνάλ, πλούσιος, πλούτος, δύναμις, παραβολή, βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, or βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ (used in the Synoptics over eighty times; in the Fourth Gospel βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ is used twice).

A little space may be given to a comparison of the two miracle stories which are common to the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics. John vi. 5-15 gives an account of the feeding of the five thousand. A comparison of the accounts shows a marked difference of motive. In the Synoptic story Jesus says to his disciples: “Give ye them to eat.” In the Fourth Gospel he asks Philip, “Whence are we to buy bread that these may eat?” and the evangelist adds, “this he said to prove him; for he himself knew what he would do.” Philip answers, apparently in astonishment, “Two hundred denaries’ worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little.”
Andrew remarks, “There is a lad here, who has five barley loaves and two fishes; but what are these among so many?” In Mark, when Jesus says, “Give ye them to eat,” the disciples ask, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denaries’ worth of bread?” Then Jesus asks, “How many loaves have ye?” and bids them go and see. In the Fourth Gospel the story is told in a way to emphasize the self-consciousness of Jesus and to magnify the wonderfulness of the miracle.

Verses 16-21 of this chapter give the incident of Jesus walking on the sea. The story is shortened here, as compared with the Synoptics, but it is implied that Jesus walked across the sea and did not enter the boat; while, in the Synoptics, he walked to the disciples from the shore and entered the boat, and afterwards they crossed the sea to the other side.

The five other miracles related in the Fourth Gospel are peculiar to that Gospel and are as follows: The water turned to wine (ii. 1-11); The nobleman’s son healed (iv. 46-54); The man healed by the pool of Bethesda (v. 1-16); The man born blind healed (ix): The raising of Lazarus (xi. 1-44). The miraculous draught of fishes (xxi. 6-8) belongs to the period after the resurrection and, indeed, does not form a part of the original Fourth Gospel. I therefore omit it. All of these miracles are of an astounding character; in all of them the thing magnified is not the beneficence of the deed, but the power of the doer. Evidently they are meant to exalt Jesus in the minds of readers and to support the main thesis of the Gospel, which is the divinity of Jesus. In this respect they are in entire harmony with the idea which Jesus is represented as having of himself.

The Fourth Gospel has the unity and coherence of a strictly literary document. It begins with a prologue, which announces the thesis of the author, and ends with an epilogue, which avows his motive in writing. The epilogue is found in chapter xx, verses 30 and 31, of the present Gospel: “Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name.” Chapter xxi is an appendix to the original document by a later hand. This is evidenced by grammatical and verbal differences, and by traces of the same hand in editorial touches in the body of the work.*

Apparently we have in this Gospel a theological thesis, in illustration and proof of which comparatively little use is made of the tradition that lies at the base of the Synoptics and furnishes their main biographical material, and the author freely modifies this tradition. The thesis is that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, pre-existent and eternal, and therefore the sole true object of saving faith. This conception of Jesus is put into the mind and elaborated in the words and deeds of Jesus by the author of the Fourth Gospel.

In proof of this statement I propose to examine in detail practically all of the passages which represent Jesus as speaking of himself in such a way as to disclose his conception of himself. The chief passages (briefly discussed by Schmiedel in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, Vol. II, column 2533) are iii. 13; viii. 58; xii. 45 (cf. x. 30); and xiv. 6, 7, 9. These I shall consider by themselves later. For the present I shall notice some seventy-five or more passages, covering the ground of nearly the whole Gospel.

Chapter i. 47-51. This gives the story of Jesus's meeting with Nathanael. Here we have the implied avowal by Jesus of supernatural power of vision, which draws from Nathanael the immediate confession, “Teacher, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel!” This is at the very beginning of Jesus's public ministry. The words with which Jesus concludes the interview show a conception of himself unparalleled in the whole synoptic story, save by a single doubtful example (Matt, xi. 27), “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God, ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” There is a reminiscence here of Genesis xxviii. 12. Jesus likens himself to the ladder which Jacob saw, and tells Nathanael that upon him, that is, Jesus, as upon the ladder, angels of God shall be seen ascending and descending. The figure is not quite intelligible, but the conception of Jesus which its use expresses is that of a unique and transcendent being who mediates between God and man, between heaven and earth.

According to the Synoptics, very early, if not at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus goes to Nazareth and preaches; but he is rejected by his fellow-townsmen because he is a carpenter and well known to them all, so that they look on him as an upstart. In that incident Jesus speaks of himself as a prophet, and not at all as the unique Son of God.

Chapter iii. 14-16. In this passage Jesus makes himself, thus early, the proper and sole object of saving faith. This position is maintained throughout the Fourth Gospel with increasing clearness and emphasis. Here he declares the necessity of his being lifted
up like the brazen serpent of the wilderness, an evident forecast of his crucifixion, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ἐν ἀυτῷ ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον, which may be rendered, "in order that every one who believes in him may have eternal life," or, "in order that every one who believes may have in him eternal life." In either case Jesus makes himself the object of saving faith. It should be observed, however, that in this Gospel it is sometimes impossible to discriminate the words of Jesus from the words of the evangelist. This is especially true of chapter iii.

Chapter iv. 10 ff. In the words, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water," Jesus implies that he, himself, is the source and giver of the living water. Verses 13 and 14, "Every one that drinketh," etc., reinforce the implication of verse 10 by the positive expression, "I shall give him," etc. This means, of course, that Jesus claims to be himself the dispenser of salvation. In verse 26 he distinctly avows that he is the Messiah. There is no such avowal in the Synoptics, but here it is not strange. In the Fourth Gospel, from the moment when Jesus appears on the stage of action, at least from the moment when he begins to speak, he is consciously the Messiah. A comparison of the first three chapters of Mark with the first three of John discloses a difference between them that is not one of degree but one of kind.

Chapter v. 17. "My Father works even until now, and I work." In these words Jesus co-ordinates himself, in working, with the Father. This, in connection with passages of like tenor, shows that Jesus means much more than that he is the instrument of the divine activity; he also exercises divine power. The following verse shows that the Jews understood Jesus as co-ordinating himself with God—"For this cause therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath, but also called God his own father, making himself equal with God." Jesus's reply, while it confesses his dependence on God, affirms even more explicitly that relation to deity the mere intimation of which aroused the wrath of his hearers—"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father doing: for what things soever he does, these the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all things that himself does: and greater works than these will he show him, that ye may marvel."

In verses 21, 25, 26, 28 and 29 he claims power to give life to the dead; in 22 and 27 he claims authority to judge and to execute judgment; in 23 he assumes equality with the Father in the right
to receive honor; in 39 and 46 he affirms that the Scriptures, that is, the Old Testament, bear witness of him, and he makes Moses explicitly testify concerning him.

Chapter vi. In verse 27 he asserts that he is able to give to men "the food which abides unto eternal life." In 29 he makes belief in him the supreme engagement of the soul.—"This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he sent." In 35 he declares that he is the bread of life; in 40 he again makes belief in himself the source of eternal life; in 44 he claims power to raise the dead; in 46 he affirms that he has seen God, though "not any man has seen the Father." Again, in 51 and 53-58, he is the bread of life; in 62 he implies his pre-existence and, in 64, his foreknowledge of human action. Thus he assumes to share with God not only omnipotence but also omniscience.

Chapter vii. In verse 29 he assumes a unique, pre-temporal, relation to God,—"I know him, because I am from (παρά) him, and he sent me." In 37 and 38 he is the source of spiritual life,—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," etc.

Chapter viii. In verse 12 he calls himself "the light of the world." Compare this with Matthew v. 14, where he says to his disciples: "Ye are the light of the world." In verse 19 he implies his identity with the Father. In verse 23 he declares that he is not of this world, where the implication is, not that he, in contrast with his antagonists, is of heavenly mind, while they are of the earth, earthy; but that he is of a different sphere and quality of being. In verse 42 he again implies his pre-existence,—"I came forth and am come from God."

Chapter ix. 35-39. In his colloquy with the man whom he had cured of congenital blindness (a cure wrought by an exercise of purely miraculous power, for no one can think that there was any causal connection between washing in the Pool of Siloam and recovery from congenital blindness), Jesus avows himself to be the Son of God,—"Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaks with thee," and he accepts worship. In verse 39 he again declares his prerogative of exercising judgment on men.

Chapter x. In the curious and perplexing eighth verse, Jesus seems to brand all his predecessors as false leaders—"All that came before me are thieves and robbers." Whom does he mean? If he means the pseudo-Messiahs, there is no indication of this in his words. The expression implies, at least, so absolute a pre-eminence of himself over all law-givers, prophets and saints who preceded
him, that he alone is to be considered the representative of God and the Saviour of men.

In verse 11 he calls himself "the good shepherd," an evident reminiscence of the Twenty-third Psalm—"The Lord is my Shepherd." In verse 18 he claims power over his own life; in verse 28 he gives his followers eternal life; and in verse 30 he claims oneness with the Father. This is not the unity of the creature with the creator, as in the case of man's union with God in faith and obedience; but oneness of knowledge, purpose and power. It is tantamount to a claim of co-partnership with God. When the Jews accuse him of blasphemy, he repels the charge by quoting from Psalms lxxxii, 6, "I said ye are gods"; but the answer is not quite adequate, and is scarcely germane. This appears more clearly when we consider his succeeding question and statement,—"Say ye of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world (note the sequence—sanctified, or consecrated, and sent), Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." The way in which the Jews understood this is apparent from their attempt to arrest him.

Chapter xi. In verse 4 he declares that the sickness of Lazarus is for the glory of God and to glorify the Son, implying that these are identical. In 25 and 26 he again avows himself to be the origin and effective power of the resurrection—"I am the resurrection and the life"—and makes belief in him the source of eternal life—"He that believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die."

Chapter xiv. In verses 1-4 and 18-21 he speaks of himself as the welcoming host in the heavenly mansions and sharing, if not chiefly administering, the hospitality and providence of God. Contrast this with the severe reticence concerning the hereafter which he maintains in the Synoptics. In verses 13 and 14 he makes himself the prevailing cause of answer to prayer—"Whatever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do." A little farther on he speaks of his commands as supreme law for his disciples; for example: verse 21, "He that has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him; verse 23, "If a man love me, he will keep my word; and
my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

In chapter xiv, and elsewhere in this Gospel, Jesus manifests a sense of unity with God which is that of a familiar and essentially co-equal being. If any one demur to this last statement, I will add that he also manifests, sometimes, an entire dependence on the Father, and often a certain lofty subordination to Him. For example, v. 30, “I can of myself do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is righteous; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” In vi. 38 he says: “I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” In vii. 16 and 28, in defence of his teaching, he says: “My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me,” and “I am not come of myself.” Again, in viii. 28 and 29, “I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak these things.....I do always the things that are pleasing to him.” Verse 40 of this chapter is remarkable as the only instance in this Gospel in which Jesus calls himself “man,” although eleven times he speaks of himself as “the Son of man.” Here he says: “Ye seek to kill me, a man, that has told you the truth which I heard from God.” Sometimes a certain aloofness from mankind is suggested in his statements, as in verse 54 of this chapter, “It is my Father that glorifies me; of whom ye say that he is your God.” In xii. 44 he asserts his subordination—“He that believes on me, believes not on me, but on him that sent me;” but in the following verse he asserts his identity with the Father—“He that beholds me behaves him that sent me.” In verse 49 he reaffirms his subordination—“I spoke not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he has given me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak.” Again, in xiv. 10,—“The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself; but the Father abiding in me does his works”—he sounds the composite note of subordination and identity; while in verse 28 we have the pure note of subordination—“I go unto the Father: for the Father is greater than I.”

But with all allowance for the confessions of dependence and subordination, his claim is such as no man could make without being guilty, in the minds of Jews, if not strictly of blasphemy, at least of sacrilegious assumption, and implies a relation to God which lies beyond the realm of human knowledge and experience. It is practically a claim of identity of essence with the deity.

Chapter xv. 1-10. Here Jesus calls himself the vine; the disciples are the branches. They are joined to him in a relation of utter dependence, like that of the twig to the stock. Separate from him
they can have no fruit, nor even life. In verses 23 and 24 there is
an even more remarkable identification of himself with God—"He
that hates me hates my Father also. Now have they both seen
and hated both me and my Father."

Chapter xvi. In verses 13-15 he makes the Holy Spirit sub-
ordinate to himself—"He shall not speak from himself: but what-
ever things he shall hear, these shall he speak; . . . He shall glorify
me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you." In 23
and 24 he again makes himself the prevailing cause of answer to
prayer—"If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you
in my name. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and
ye shall receive." This thought is further expressed and developed
in 26 and 27—"In that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not
unto you that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself
loves you, because ye have loved me." In 28 he once more implies
his pre-existence.

Chapter xvii. This chapter, as a whole, involves all that has
preceded. Jesus expresses himself as the messenger of God, and yet
as in such relation to God that they share in life, in power, and in
glory, not only in the present and the future, but also in the past—
"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the
glory which I had with thee before the world was" (verse 5). He
conceives himself as the saviour of all whom the Father had given
him, and only those—"I pray not for the world, but for those whom
thou hast given me" (verse 9); these are equally his and the Father's
—"for they are thine: and all things that are mine are thine, and
thine are mine" (verse 10); and these he would have share with him
the glory which he had "before the foundation of the world."

Chapter xx. In verse 28 he receives without rebuke the ascrip-
tion of the divine name from Thomas, who addresses him as "my
Lord and my God," and pronounces a blessing on those who, though
not seeing, yet have believed, as apparently Thomas does, that he is
divine.

Now let us turn, for a few moments, to the four outstanding
passages which were left for closer scrutiny. The first is iii. 13—
"No man has ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of
heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven." Here Jesus affirms that
he has descended from heaven, and that he is now in heaven. The last
clause—ο ὁν τ ὤν ὁνταν, "who is in heaven"—is given in the Amer-
ican Revised Version with the marginal note, "Many ancient author-
ities omit 'who is in heaven.'" Westcott and Hort omit the clause.
It is retained by Tischendorf because it is in δ. It remains in the
Syriac of the Sinaitic Palimpsest. Weizsaecker retains it bracketed. Reuss retains it, as do Meyer and others. On the whole, there seems no sufficient reason for omitting it, especially when we consider that it is in perfect accord with the whole tenor of the Johannine thought. Here, then, we have Jesus speaking of himself as exceptional in this sense that, whereas "no man has ascended into heaven," he has done so, for he descended out of heaven, and even now is in heaven. This is the affirmation, not merely of an exalted state of mind, but of an essentially transcendent, superhuman quality of being and experience. It may be added, by way of a note, that, though the words are ascribed to Jesus, they are undoubtedly reminiscent of the ascension story.

The second passage is viii. 58—"Before Abraham was born, I am," πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ ἦμι. Here Jesus distinctly predicates of himself pre-existence. More than that, he predicates of himself eternal being. This appears from the use of the present, "I am," where, if only pre-existence were meant, the natural term would have been the past, "I was." Such expressions as this and iii. 13, with many others, show that the body of the Fourth Gospel is in strict accord with the fundamental conception of the prologue. In i. 18 we read, "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has revealed him." The prologue is the work of the writer of the Gospel, and not the preface of a later hand.

The third passage is xii. 45—"He that beholds me, beholds him that sent me." This, taken in connection with x. 30—"I and the Father are one," verse 38—"The Father is in me, and I in the Father," xiii. 20—"He that receives me receives him that sent me," and xiv. 9—"He that has seen me has seen the Father," shows that Jesus is thinking, not merely of a moral oneness with the Father, achieved by the utter subjection of his will to God, but of an essential consubstantiality with God.

The fourth passage is xiv. 6, 7, 9. Here Jesus declares himself to be "the way, the truth, and the life," and that no one comes unto the Father except through him. He is the avenue and means of approach to God, because he and the Father are one—"If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye know him and have seen him."

Throughout the Fourth Gospel Jesus is represented as conceiving himself to be absolutely unique. He begins his mission with the fully developed consciousness of his divine nature and function. It is more than the Messianic consciousness: that would not identify
him with God as he identifies himself with the Father. The Jewish Messiah was an exalted and marvelously endowed man, but not at all divine; the representative and servant of the Most High God, but not one with him. This consciousness Jesus maintains throughout his career from the beginning. His public life is a continual conflict with the Jews, and the great point of contention is his primacy as the revelation and embodiment of God. Men can be saved only by believing in him. They cannot draw near to God except through him. In receiving him they receive God.

In the Synoptics Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist, but not clearly recognized by him as the Messiah; and the heavenly authentication, at the time of the baptism, is for Jesus and not for John. In the Fourth Gospel the baptism of Jesus by John is not affirmed; it is not even distinctly implied. The heavenly sign of the dove is for John, and not for Jesus. The Baptist recognizes Jesus by this sign, and repeatedly points him out as "the Lamb of God."

In the Synoptics, especially in Mark, Jesus does not use, and for a time declines, any Messianic title. Not till near the end of his life does he accept the Messianic designation from his disciples, and then he enjoins silence—"He charged them that they should tell no man." In the Fourth Gospel he is known from the beginning as the Messiah. Immediately after the first interview with him, Andrew tells Simon, "We have found the Messiah." Shortly after this Jesus distinctly avows his Messiahship to the woman of Samaria.

To summarize: In the Fourth Gospel Jesus begins his public career with the full and clear consciousness that he is the Messiah. This consciousness rapidly develops, if it does not at once leap, into a sense of such a relation to the supreme God as amounts to equality with him. It is only by considerable license that he can be said to fulfil the prophetic Hebrew conception of the Messiah, for, as I have already pointed out, the Hebrews did not think of their expected Messiah as participant in the divine nature. To the Pharisees this was the very gravamen of Jesus's offence, that he made himself equal with God. Even the question of the high-priest, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" does not imply a relation to God such as Jesus repeatedly claims in the Fourth Gospel. Of this question by the high-priest there is no mention in the Fourth Gospel; the nearest approach to it is Pilate's question, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" But throughout the Gospel Jesus again and again testifies of himself as the Son, the intimate and the equal of the Father. The entire Gospel is organized about this conception, and is, indeed, not a Gospel, in the sense in which the term may be properly applied
to the Synoptics. It is a theological treatise, using real or assumed biographical material for the development, illustration and enforcement of its argument. Its conception of Jesus is strikingly Pauline. The biographical form was used probably because thus the writer could gain a readier hearing than would have been accorded him if he had set forth his teaching in philosophical form.

Whatever value the Fourth Gospel may have as a religious document, and its value confessedly is great, the Jesus whom it presents to us cannot be harmonized with the Jesus of the Synoptics, except by a process which does violence alike to language and to logic. The former is the idealized and glorified creation of the Christian imagination of the second century, inspired by the Pauline Christology, and not the man of Nazareth of the Synoptics who went about among the people in a ministry of instruction and comfort and help—"doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil."

Thus far I have not raised, and it is not in my province now to discuss, the question: Which gives us the truer representation of the real Jesus, the Fourth Gospel or the Synoptics? The Markan tradition, if we disregard later modifications, has all the appearance of a simple, objective report. That tradition is the substantial basis, as far as events are concerned, of the whole synoptic story. Matthew and Luke are much richer in logia, and for the most part, these have the same air of verisimilitude which characterizes the fundamental narrative. On the other hand, the Fourth Gospel is manifestly an interpretation. Facts are used solely for their didactive, illustrative or polemical value. Obviously the knowledge of the real personality of Jesus which the Synoptics had, if genuine, was yet superficial. The spiritual penetration of the writer of the Fourth Gospel was much deeper. It is a fair question whether he has left to the world a truer as well as profounder conception of that man who changed the current of human progress and created a new era in the history of the world. If idealization, in the case of Jesus, is interpretation, then there is some ground for those who hold the Johannine Christ to be the true Son of Man and Saviour of the world.