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Uncontrived Messiah or Passover Plot? A Study of A Johannine Apologetic Motif

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In 1965 Hugh Schonfield wrote a book entitled *The Passover Plot*, in which he argued that Jesus did in fact ostensibly fulfill a number of important Old Testament prophecies. However, Schonfield suggested that this was the case not because of some divine plan being acted out in history, but precisely because Jesus believed himself to be the Messiah, and thus orchestrated events, with the help of certain disciples whom he could trust and a few influential friends, in such a way as to enable him to carry out actions and participate in events which would demonstrate his messiahship.

The aim of this article is not to weigh the merits of Schonfield's thesis in relation to the historical Jesus, but to suggest that the author of the Fourth Gospel was concerned to argue against similar claims being made by some of his Jewish contemporaries. John's arguments against such a view unfortunately will not (at least on their own) answer for us today the historical question of what actually happened, but a study of this theme can still be valuable in illuminating an important and frequently overlooked feature of the Johannine Gospel.

There can be little doubt that the Fourth Gospel reflects to a large extent the apologetic and polemical interests of the Johannine community. Throughout the Gospel one finds a conflict between Jesus and the Jews, primarily over christology, in the course of which the figure of Jesus is made to address the issues confronting the contemporary church.


2 The term 'Johannine community' as used in this paper does not imply the acceptance of a particular reconstruction of that community's history, but simply refers to the church of which the evangelist was a part and whose experiences are reflected in the Gospel.

3 Numerous studies have been made of the Fourth Gospel. See especially A. E. Evans, *Word and Glory. The Background of John's Polemic*. Academic Press, 1993 (esp pp. 149f).


McGrath, *Uncontrived Messiah or Passover Plot? A Study of a Johannine Apologetic Motif*

James F. McGrath

the contemporary church\(^3\). The focus of most recent studies has been John's 'high' christology, which is obviously one of the most fascinating and intriguing aspects of the Gospel. Yet it is important to recall that this christology is the end result of a long process of development, spurred on for the most part by the conflict in which the community was involved and their need to engage in apologetic. Within the Fourth Gospel we find evidence not only of this later stage in the development of the community and its beliefs, but also of earlier stages\(^4\). At first, the community's conflict with the Jewish leaders of the synagogue was not about the attribution of a high christology to Jesus, and the question of whether he was rightly attributed a status equal to God, but rather was about the attribution of any christology to the figure of Jesus of Nazareth, i.e., the claim that Jesus was in fact the Jewish Messiah\(^5\). Our study will

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\(^1\) McGrath, *Uncontrived Messiah*...


\(^3\) Martyn, "Glimpses into the History of the Johannine Community", in *L'Évangile de Jean. Sources, rédaction, théologie* (BETL, 44), edited by M.de Jonge, Leuven University Press, 1977, pp.149f, compares the Fourth Gospel to an archaeological tell, which contains different strata relating to different periods in the history of the one site. Similarly C.H.Talbert, *Reading John*, London: SPCK, 1992, pp.62f, points out that a Gospel (unlike an occasional letter) would contain material relating not only to the present concerns of the community, but also to past concerns as well, material which has become 'fossilized' in the tradition of the community.
focus on an aspect of John's Gospel which most likely relates to this earlier stage in the community's history, when it was concerned to defend the messiahship of Jesus and to convince other Jews to believe.

We may begin with the Johannine account of the 'triumphal entry' (John 12:12-19), since this provides a clear illustration of the aspect of John we are studying. John here is dependent on an early tradition which is found also in the Synoptics. The material probably for the most part reflects an earlier stage in the history of the Johannine community, since it mirrors the Synoptic accounts and is linked with the traditional understanding of messiahship found in Judaism and early Christianity, without any trace of the later 'high' christology. There is almost universal agreement that John is emphasizing Jesus as king and Messiah, and that as such he is a figure who comes in peace rather than as a warrior, an emphasis which is also present in the Synoptic versions, but which is perhaps enhanced in the Johannine version by presenting Jesus as mounting a donkey in response to the acclamation of the crowds. In the Synoptics the whole event could appear to have

5 See R.T. Fortna, The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988, pp.225-234 (Fortna is clearly right to discern differences between material formed at earlier and later stages of the community's history; whether the material was actually written down at the time when it was formed, or was crystalized as part of the tradition but written down much later, is another matter); John Ashton, Understanding the Fourth Gospel, Oxford:Clarendon Press, 1991, pp.246-251; Jack T.Sanders, Schismatics, Sectarians, Dissidents, Deviants. The First One Hundred Years of Jewish-Christian Relations, London: SCM Press, 1993, pp.40-46.


The most distinctive aspect of the Johannine form of this pericope is the author's note that "At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that they had done these things to him" (12:16). Most commentators have not shed much light on this verse: while they note the theme of scripture being fulfilled, something which obviously would have been an important aspect of the apologetic of any Jewish Christian group, this observation applies equally well to the Synoptic versions of the incident and does not explain the distinctive Johannine form. For what reason should the author emphasize the failure of the disciples to realize what they had done to Jesus? To suggest that this is simply a historically accurate record of what actually occurred does not solve the problem: John's Gospel emphasizes throughout Jesus' fulfillment of Messianic expectations, and his entry into Jerusalem on a donkey is presented as a clear illustration of the expected triumphal entry of the Messiah. However, the spontaneous acclamation of the crowds triggers a response from Jesus, designed, if anything, to dampen any nationalistic fervour that might be present.

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various Old Testament prophecies, Jewish feasts and the like, and thus for the author to emphasize the disciples' failure to recognize Jesus' fulfilment of one such prophecy, while in the process of emphasizing the obvious nature of that fulfilment for all to see, would not appear to add anything to the author's argument. Fortna thus considers that "The Evangelist strangely blunts the immediacy of this story" by his addition in v16, and Barrett goes so far as to write that, in suggesting that the crowds could perceive the Messianic implications of what Jesus did while his disciples could not, "The narrative is really self-contradictory". However, C. MacGregor has offered a plausible explanation of the function of this verse in the context of the Fourth Gospel. He thinks that this verse was "added apparently...in order to emphasize the fact that the Messianic entry was not stage-managed by Jesus and his disciples as might appear from the Synoptic account". This makes good sense of the differences between the Johannine account and that found in the Synoptics: whereas in the Synoptics one could get the impression that Jesus has already arranged for a donkey to be available for this event, in John Jesus is said simply to have 'found' a donkey (12:14), and the disciples are said to have been unaware until later that what transpired was actually the fulfilment of prophecy. In the context of the Johannine conflict with 'the Jews', this reading provides a plausible background against which to interpret this rather peculiar verse, and also other aspects of the Johannine portrait of Jesus as Messiah. The Jews, it may be

10 Fortna, op.cit. p.147.

11 Barrett, op.cit., p.419. D.A.Carson seeks to avoid the contradiction which Barrett detects by referring the 'these things' to the nature rather than the fact of Jesus' kingship (The Gospel According to John, Leicester: IVP, 1991, p.434).


13 This accusation occurring concerning Jesus (cf. e.g., our purposes in John 7:12,49).

14 The phrase is from such figures. For a revision to such figures were brought "Christ as brigand in ancient the Politics of His Day, ed. Cambridge University Press also the many descriptions of Ant.17; 20.97-99,171f, and War), and the useful discus S.Hanson, Bandits, Prophet; the Time of Jesus, Minneapolis.

15 So e.g. Brown, op.cit.
wish feasts and the like, and disciples' failure to recognize, while in the process of that fulfillment for all to see, the author's argument. Fortna angrily blunts the immediacy and Barrett goes so far as to suggest the disciples could perceive the did while his disciples could "dictory". However, G. H. explanation of the function of the Gospel. He thinks that this is to emphasize the fact that managed by Jesus and his Synoptic account. This between the Johannine account as in the Synoptics one could fairly arranged for a donkey to Jesus is said simply to have disciples are said to have been was actually the fulfillment Johannine conflict with 'the background against which and also other aspects of the Messiah. The Jews, it may be Carson seeks to avoid the referring the 'these things' to Jesus' kingship (The Gospel 91, p.434).

John, London: Hodder and

McGrath, Unconquered Messiah...?, JBS 19, Jan. 1997 suggested, dismissed Jesus as a deceiver, someone who was no different from other figures of the time who had made messianic claims for themselves. That this is a likely scenario is supported by the indicators that there were in fact quite a number of what we may broadly class as 'messianic claimants' in this period who appeared on the scene, 'claiming to be somebody'. That Jesus would be dismissed by Jewish opponents as simply another such figure seems a priori likely.

If the Johannine Christians were concerned to respond to accusations of this sort, we should expect to find this reflected elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel as well, and this is in fact what there is. In the Fourth Gospel we find a definite emphasis on Jesus being one who does not seek honour for himself, but for his Father (John 8:49f,54); indeed it is God who honours Jesus (5:41-44). The reference in this latter passage to others who 'come in their own name' is regarded by many as a reference to 'false messiahs', a reading which makes good sense in the setting which is generally thought to lie behind the Gospel of John, and which lends further

13 This accusation occurs frequently in the rabbinic material concerning Jesus (cf. e.g., b.Sanh.43a), and more importantly for our purposes in John 7:12,47.

14 The phrase is from Acts 5:36f, where Jesus is also related to such figures. For a review of some of the evidence that such accusations were brought against Jesus, cf. William Horbury, "Christ as brigand in ancient anti-Christian polemic", in Jesus and the Politics of His Day, edited by E.Bammel and C.F.D.Moule, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp.183-209, esp.191f,194. See also the many descriptions of such figures found in Josephus (e.g., Ant.17; 20.97-99,171f, and throughout his account of the Jewish War), and the useful discussion in Richard A.Horsley and John S.Hanson, Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs. Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus, Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985.

15 So e.g. Brown, op.cit., p.226; Carson, op.cit., p.265.
support to our argument above. In John 6:15 there is a reference to the desire of the crowds to make Jesus king by force; Jesus' response is not to accept their wishes, but rather to 'flee'. In a similar vein is John 18:36, where Jesus testifies before Pilate that he is a king, but one whose kingdom "is not of this world". This latter passage has recently been interpreted by David Rensberger as an apologetic aimed at proving to the Romans that Christianity was not a political threat. This is not impossible, but appears unlikely; The Fourth Gospel does not in any other passage appear to be concerned with the Romans for their own sake. Pilate is the only figure to make an appearance in the Gospel of John who is clearly a Gentile, and he is presented as relatively uninterested in what are to him simply irrelevant Jewish matters. It thus seems more likely that Jesus' affirmation to Pilate bears a message relevant to the conflict with 'the Jews', a supposition which appears to be confirmed by other elements of the Johannine presentation of this material.

The Jewish leaders are presented as the ones who are concerned with what the Romans will think: they classify Jesus as simply another Messianic pretender and conclude that, if they do not take fast action, the Romans will come and take away from them their temple and nation (John 11:48). Yet the Jews had, by the time John was written, fallen under a destruction which ended in the figures, whom even many Jews in the Fourth Gospel as one threat by the Roman governors; other words, John argues that one who did not seek after the chosen by God — for the one which had in fact been unchosen, to be the one we have found; Fourth Gospel: Jesus is not a political figures of the time.

It may be suggested that John 10:8. This verse is fraught with nothing to expedite interpreting reference to all previous leaders correct, since there is not Testament kings and leaders: God. Even Moses, who is of the Gospel, is still regarded as a figure to Jesus. Thus Barrett

16 Nestle-Aland26 prefers the reading ἀνέβημεν, since the reading πέφυκεν has little manuscript support. However, Barrett, op.cit., p.278; Brown, op.cit. p.235; and G.R.Beasley-Murray, John, Dallas: Word, 1987, pp.83f, and numerous other commentators accept 'fled' as the most likely original reading, which would have been softened to 'went away'. Whichever reading is accepted, the meaning is clear enough.

In 6:15 there is a reference to Jesus' king by force; Jesus' but rather to 'flee'. In a us testifies before Pilate that is not of this world. This reted by David Rensberger the Romans that Christianity not impossible, but appears in any other passage appear own sake. Pilate is the in the Gospel of John who is as relatively uninterested in wish matters. It thus seems to Pilate bears a message, a supposition which appears the Johannine presentation of presented as the ones who are I think: they classify Jesus as and conclude that, if they do come and take away from :48). Yet the Jews had, by the reading dve βασιλεύοντα, since the is support. However, Barrett, and G.R.Beasley-Murray, and numerous other most likely original reading, away'. Whichever reading is high.

McGrath, Uncontrived Messiah...?, IBS 19, Jan. 1997 time John was written, followed other leaders down the road to destruction which ended in the events of 70 C.E. In contrast to such figures, whom even many Jews would condemn, Jesus is presented in the Fourth Gospel as one who had not been perceived to be a threat by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate (18:38; 19:12). In other words, John argues that the Jews rejected their true king — one who did not seek after a worldly kingship but who had been chosen by God — for the sake of political expediency, something which had in fact been unnecessary. The key point thus appears to be the one we have found to underlie many other parts of the Fourth Gospel: Jesus is not a Messianic pretender like other purely political figures of the time.

It may be suggested that this approach also sheds light on John 10:8. This verse is fraught with textual difficulties which do nothing to expedite interpretation. Attempts to read it as a reference to all previous leaders of the Jewish nation can hardly be correct, since there is no indication in the Gospel that Old Testament kings and leaders were not in fact sent or approved by God. Even Moses, who is contrasted with Jesus throughout the Gospel, is still regarded as a positive figure, though one subordinate to Jesus. Thus Barrett regards the 'others' who came to be 18. And, going even further, they had very possibly contradicted the words of their own Passover liturgy and denied God himself: they asserted that they "have no king but Caesar", in contrast with the words of the Passover haggadah, "We have no King but thee, O Lord", words which may well have been used in John's time.

The omission of πάντες by a few manuscripts probably reflects a conviction that this would imply even OT figures. Nestle-Aland includes ποιέω in the text, but in square brackets. See the discussion in Brown, op.cit., p.386; Beasley-Murray, op.cit., pp.164f.

Messianic pretenders, and in this he is almost certainly correct. The imagery of the shepherd is used in the Old Testament for the king, and the term אֲרוֹן (in 10:8) would also be a poignant allusion to the Messianic claimants and political activists of the period, since the term is frequently found in Josephus to designate such figures in a disparaging way. One plausible explanation for the lack of 'before me' in many manuscripts may have been a desire, whether on the part of the author or of a later copyist, to allow this verse to include also such figures who appeared after the time of Jesus. Thus here too we find Jesus contrasted with other personages of the time who made messianic claims.

The same issue may be reflected in John 7:3-10. In this passage, Jesus' brothers urge him to go up to Jerusalem to the feast because they presume he desires to be a public figure. This assessment of Jesus and his work is classed by the author as unbelief (7:5). Jesus does go up to the feast, but in secret. The fact that the author repeats the very words (ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ) which were used by Jesus' brothers implies that Jesus has not been correctly understood by them, i.e., he does not desire to become a public figure of this sort. He is not a seeker of fame and honour, and for this reason he is frequently found working in secret, keeping out of sight. This emphasis on Jesus frequently keeping out of the public eye may also relate to the theme, which is so prominent in the Gospel in its present form, of the desire of the Jewish leaders to kill Jesus. However, this motif appears in at least part of its importance was in combating the idea that Jesus is simply a messianic pretender, one who is primarily a political figure and who desires power and glory for himself. Jesus will eventually be exalted ('lifted up') through his death and resurrection, according to ironically, the Jews will kill the Messiah, and perhaps did not.

21 It is also applied to God, but one should not read too much into this, since this appears to be the application of a well-known metaphor for kingship to God as Israel's true king.

22 Perhaps Bar Kochba was particularly in mind, if the verse was placed in this form after the second Jewish revolt.

23 So e.g. MacGregor, Carson, op.cit., p.151; See also Ashton, op. cit., p.305. See also.


25 Of course, in John's Gospel, Jesus' message is not repeated in the Synoptics, but with different emphasis by John. This omission is probably occasioned by the placement of the Johannine κύριον εἰσάγων (John 1:21). A more plausible explanation why John should have repeated this to the Jewish leaders, with Trypho, is that the author of this passage was emphasizing that he does not desire to become a public figure of this sort. He is not a seeker of fame and honour, and for this reason he is frequently found working in secret, keeping out of sight. This emphasis on Jesus frequently keeping out of the public eye may also relate to the theme, which is so prominent in the Gospel in its present form, of the desire of the Jewish leaders to kill Jesus. However, this motif appears in at least part of its importance was in combating the idea that Jesus is simply a messianic pretender, one who is primarily a political figure and who desires power and glory for himself. Jesus will eventu
almost certainly correct. The Old Testament for the (8) would also be a poignant and political activists of the world in Josephus to designate plausible explanation for manuscripts may have been a thorn or of a later copyist, to figures who appeared after the dead Jesus contrasted with other apocalyptic claims. Select in John 7:3-10. In this up to Jerusalem to the feast to be a public figure. This is classed by the author as the feast, but in secret. The fact (ἐκ πρώτου) which were used Jesus has not been correctly desire to become a public of fame and honour, and for keeping in secret, keeping out of publicly keeping out of the public which is so prominent in the role of the Jewish leaders to kill have a prehistory in which combating the idea that Jesus is who is primarily a political glory for himself. Jesus will) through his death and one should not read too much application of a well-known's true king. Particularly in mind, if the verse Jewish revolt.

McGrath, Uncontrived Messiah...?, IBS 19, Jan. 1997 resurrection, according to the plan and purpose of God, and, ironically, the Jews will help to accomplish this through the crucifixion. Jesus emphatically does not seek his own glory, but the Father who sent him will ‘lift him up’, the passive form indicating action by God.

Another passage which appears to be related to our theme is John 1:31 where John the Baptist emphasizes that he himself did not know Jesus prior to his baptism. Many commentators emphasize that the meaning here is not that John had never met Jesus, but that he did not know or recognize him as the coming one prior to the Baptism 23. This may be correct, but it remains to be explained why John should bother to mention this fact. John Ashton 24 relates this to the tradition preserved in Justin's Dialogue with Trypho (8:4), where his Jewish interlocutor is presented as saying: "Even if the Messiah is already born and in existence somewhere, he is nevertheless unknown; even he himself does not know about himself, nor does he have any kind of power until Elijah comes and anoints him and reveals him to all". This suggestion, however, appears to flounder on the fact that in the Fourth Gospel John the Baptist emphatically denies that he is Elijah (John 1:21). A more plausible explanation of the function of this statement may be proposed by following the suggestion of MacGregor in connection with the first passage we considered: Jesus, it is emphasized here, did not make his appearance at Jordan through prior arrangement with the Baptist, nor was the Baptist's testimony the result of a prior consultation or plan. Rather, the author of this passage asserts, John did not expect Jesus to be the Messiah, and perhaps did not even know him before the baptism25.

23 So e.g. MacGregor, op.cit., p.30; Barrett, op.cit., p.177; Carson, op.cit., p.151; See also Brown, op.cit., p.65.
25 Of course, in John's Gospel the same event is described as in the Synoptics, but without any mention of Jesus being baptized by John. This omission is presumably also motivated by apologetic,
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and made these startling assertions about Jesus only because he had received revelation from God concerning him.

Finally, we may consider the Johannine account of the resurrection of Jesus. We have evidence elsewhere in the New Testament, in Matthew 28:12-15, of what was apparently one of the earliest accusations of the Jews concerning the Christians' claims that Jesus had risen from the dead, namely the suggestion that the disciples had stolen the body. Matthew's solution is to describe these accusations as false, a scheme concocted by the Jews in order to discredit the testimony of the Christians. In the Fourth Gospel we perhaps find indicators that a similar issue was important to the Christians which produced it. For one prominent element in the Synoptics is missing from John, namely predictions that Jesus will rise from the dead. We do have references to the Son of Man being 'lifted up', a reference to his coming death and subsequent exaltation, but not giving any clear indication that anything along the lines of a physical resurrection will be a part of this process. In John 2:19 we have Jesus' promise that he will 'rebuild this temple' in three days, a saying which was understood only with hindsight to apply to the resurrection (2:22). Even after the event we do not find the disciples recalling words of Jesus which foretold these things (cp. Luke 24:6-8), but rather they are described as slowly coming to understand what had happened in light of the scriptures (cf. John 20:9). It is very possible that John is in fact close to the historical reality here: he expresses a conviction that Jesus had foreseen or foreknown these things, and yet also indicates that Jesus had said nothing which unambiguously promised that these things would happen. Yet the author's emphasis here on the failure of the disciples to understand these things bears such a resemblance to the passages which we have discussed above that it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that here too the evangelist wishes to avoid presenting the events in any way that might give the impression that they had been staged. Thus it is the followers of Jesus aims, presumably against a continuing group of disciples of John the Baptist who claimed the supremacy of the Baptist over Jesus.
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e Johanne account of the one elsewhere in the New hat was apparently one of the eming the Christians' claims namely the suggestion that the new's solution is to describe avocated by the Jews in order ians. In the Fourth Gospel we ir issue was important to the prominent element in the e predictions that Jesus will nces to the Son of Man being ning death and subsequent indication that anything along lll be a part of this process. In ut he will 'rebuild this temple' erstood only with hindsight to after the event we do not find s which foretold these things described as slowly coming to ht of the scriptures (cf. John in fact close to the historical on that Jesus had foreseen or indicates that Jesus had said ised that these things would here on the failure of the ars such a resemblance to the nve that it seems difficult to e evangelist wishes to avoid at might give the impression t is the followers of Jesus

McGrath, Uncontrived Messiah...?, BS 19, Jan. 1997...themselves, those who first found the empty tomb, who are fearful that someone has stolen the body. It is only after the event, after some reflection, that they understand that these things happened to Jesus because they had in fact been foretold in scripture. Far from having staged these events in order to be able to claim that Jesus had fulfilled certain Old Testament promises, they found these occurrences traumatic, and only came to see them in relation to the scriptures after the event.

It would seem that we have uncovered an important aspect of the Johanne community's apologetic, during at least one stage in the history of its conflict with those Jews who did not believe Jesus to have been the Messiah. These Jewish objectors, it appears, dismissed Jesus as simply one of the many figures to appear on the scene during these troubled, stress-filled years of Israel's history. In their view he claimed to be someone important, sought honour and power for himself, before finally meeting the end which awaited so many of those who sought to profit from the social and political unrest which plagued Israel in those times: death by crucifixion. The Johanne Christians responded by seeking to present Jesus as one who did not seek after his own honour, but only that of his Father, God. They stressed his secrecy and his rejection of any attempts to regard him as a figure of merely political significance. Jesus had been 'lifted up' by God in direct connection with his role as a suffering Messiah, the Son of Man who is 'lifted up' to be crucified. We see here a connection with the very early discussion within Christianity of the significance of Jesus' death. It is precisely as Israel's king that Jesus suffers, representing the nation in accepting God's judgement upon it. Again, what may have been in the mind of the historical Jesus, and what prior arrangements may have been made for various events in his career, it is impossible to say from a study of the Fourth Gospel alone. However, we can say what John thought of the suggestion that Jesus had aspired to greatness and, believing himself to be the Messiah, had orchestrated the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies in order to convince the world that he is who he says he is. As far as the Johanne Christians were concerned, Jesus lived as he did, in...
fulfilment of prophecy, for no other reason than that it was the plan and purpose of God that it should be so.

It would thus seem that we have uncovered an important aspect of Johannine apologetic at one stage in the community's history, and probably quite an early stage at that. However, it is important to ask also whether this study accomplishes anything beside the satisfaction of historical curiosity. I believe that it does. For one thing, we have seen a tendency to make certain material in the tradition more ambiguous, such as in the case of the predictions of the resurrection. This is important, since there is a tendency in the practice of redaction criticism for the assumption to be made that 'more fully developed' material, i.e., material which is more explicit or is expressed more clearly, is later: this is often the case, but in some instances an author or editor may have had reasons to make a clear statement appear more ambiguous. What are we to make of the unambiguous prediction found in Mark 8:31 that the Son of Man will be put to death, and then on the third day rise again, in comparison with the lack of any unambiguous prediction in John? Mark says that Jesus 'said these things openly/plainly' (Mark 8:32), which is quite different from the Johannine portrait. The main question is whether John knew a Markan type version of Jesus' predictions, but chose to play them down, or alternatively whether John preserves more accurately what actually was the case.

26 One may note the suggestion of John P. Meier, A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume I, New York: Doubleday, 1991, pp.128-134, that the author of the Gospel of Thomas knew the Synoptics, but made the meaning of the parables less explicit because he wished to present a collection of mysterious, enigmatic sayings. On the tendencies in the development of tradition see especially E.P. Sanders, The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition (SNTS Monograph Series, 9), Cambridge University Press, 1969.

27 As we have already noted above, John 2:29-22 is far from unambiguous.

28 An explanation of this earlier apologetic, other elements of this earlier apologetic, other tendencies in the community which produced a high christology, other elements of this earlier apologetic, other tendencies in the community which produced a high christology, other elements of this earlier apologetic, other tendencies in the community which produced a high christology, other elements of this earlier apologetic, other tendencies in the community which produced a high christology, other elements of this earlier apologetic, other tendencies in the community which produced a high christology, other elements of this earlier apologetic, other tendencies in the community which produced a high christology, other elements of this earlier apologetic, other tendencies in the community which produced a high christology, other elements of this earlier apologetic, other tendencies in the community which produced a high christology, other elements of this earlier apologetic, other tendencies in the community which produced a high christology, other elements of this earlier apologetic, other tendencies in the community which produced a high christology, other elements of this earlier apologetic, other tendencies in the community which produced a high christology, other elements of this earlier apologetic, other tendencies in the community which produced a high christology, other elements of this earlier apologetic,455

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McGrath, Uncontrived Messiah...? IJS 19, Jan. 1997
have uncovered an important stage in the community's history. However, it is study accomplishes anything important. I believe that it does. It is common to make certain material in the case of the predictions, since there is a tendency in the community to assume that what is more explicit is later: this is often the case, and it may have had reasons to be imprecise.26 What are we to find in Mark 8:31 that the assumption to be made i.e., material which is more explicit is later: this is often the case, is still obvious? The assumption to be made is that Jesus then on the third day rise any unambiguous prediction of these things openly/plainly' from the Johannine portrait? is now a Markan type version of them down, or alternatively what actually was the case,

26 An explanation of this development cannot be given here, but will have to await a future study.

McGrath, Unconvinced Messiah..., IBS 19, Jan. 1997 and was driven by apologetic reasons not to follow the path taken by Mark and the other evangelists in portraying Jesus' foreknowledge. It may prove impossible to settle the issue, but what is most important is the corollary which we have already noted, namely that apologetic motives can frequently explain not only the tendency to make Jesus' predictions more explicit, in order to demonstrate his power and supremacy through his detailed foreknowledge, but also to make the tendency less explicit, in order to avoid any suggestion that Jesus was staging or manipulating events in order to accomplish his purposes.

More importantly, an understanding of this earlier phase may help us to understand some of the reasons why later Johannine christology took the form that it did. As is well known, in the community which produced the Fourth Gospel a higher christology developed which regarded Jesus as a pre-existent divine figure. The author of the Gospel is concerned to present Jesus (or the pre-existent Word or Son of Man) as one who is rightly called God, and who is thus worthy of the exalted status and divine honours given to him by the Johannine Christians. Yet we still find within the Fourth Gospel in its present form an emphasis on Jesus' humility and his dependence on the Father. This combination of divinity and subordination is an aspect of the Gospel which has intrigued scholars for a long time. May it not be suggested that, when certain tendencies in the community's christology pulled them towards a high christology, other elements in their tradition, which were part of this earlier apologetic, could not be eliminated, and thus material with quite different emphases were combined to produce the distinctive and unusual Johannine portrait of Jesus? If such an explanation is plausible, then our study may be of more than merely historical interest after all: it may help to explain not only what was important at an early stage in the history of Johannine Christianity,
but also why the Fourth Gospel and its christology eventually took
the form that they did.

James F. McGrath

The study of the scale introduces a new term - a procedure and a scalometric
introduced in Irish Biblical Studies... and the 'prime patterns' [1] of the text
to be related through sharing patterns that have far been found in other authors'
graphs of Hebrews and 1 and 2 Peter. It is evident that the Paulines, it is evident
environment. It is also apparent that though the patterns do not agree
was noticed by the author in opportunity found to understand section by section.

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1 Barr, George K. PhD the to the New Testament and University of Edinburgh, 1959.
2 'Prime pattern' - a part Sentence sequence graphs length progressively from the sample. While these traits authors, they may also quotations etc. Prime pattern form and feature, and show that prime patterns reflect recitation and written out or dictated afterthoughts) are rare, but indication of authorship.