

An Analysis of the Relationship Between John and the Synoptics: Critiquing Percival Gardner-Smith's Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels

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ABSTRACT

Percival Gardner-Smith's *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* inspired a revolution among New Testament scholars by calling into question the existing findings of past scholars. According to Gardner-Smith, his "fresh examination" proves that there is no literary relationship between John and the Synoptics; instead, the relationship is better described as sharing attributes originating in a common "basin of oral tradition." To indicate what the primary evidence as a whole indicates regarding the relationship between John and the Synoptics, I examined the Greek text of each gospel, making note of distinctive overlaps that prove John's dependence on the Synoptics; simultaneously, I critiqued Gardner-Smith's handling of the primary evidence of the Greek text. Upon examination of Gardner-Smith's discourse on John and the Synoptics, problems arise at a rate that makes Gardner-Smith's *Saint John* unsuitable for use moving forward. Gardner-Smith grossly mischaracterizes the work of scholars before him, conducts an examination of primary evidence that overemphasizes minor differences as opposed to minor similarities, and fails to clearly define pieces of his argument (i.e., "oral tradition"). Ultimately, Gardner-Smith fills *Saint John* with generalizations that misrepresent the evidence that proves the literary relationship between John and the Synoptics. For the sake of those that subscribe to Gardner-Smith's theory of oral tradition, a more useful text to centralize the theory around is C.H. Dodd's *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*, which provides a more complete analysis of the question at hand.

INTRODUCTION¹

The so-called problem of the Fourth Gospel exists only when comparing the Fourth Gospel to another. As a result of the successive nature of the fourfold gospel, it is rather simple to point toward differences across them. Questions of chronology, authorship, and historicity all but raise themselves in great frequency. But, taken alone, the Fourth Gospel tells the story of the *same* man's ministry, trial, and crucifixion the Synoptics "see together" (σύνοψις). The ministry, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, as described by John, form a coherent narrative that the reader easily follows, just as the other gospels. Therefore, in isolation, the "problem" of the Fourth Gospel does not exist; it is only when one places the Fourth Gospel against the Synoptics that problems arise.

¹ This paper would not have been possible without the endless support of my father, mother, and grandparents. Additionally, I wish to express my thanks to Dr. Mark Goodacre for his useful and constructive guidance.

Percival Gardner-Smith's landmark text *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (hereafter *Saint John*) effectively dissolved what seemed to be a near-unanimity regarding John's knowledge and use of the Synoptics. The traditionalist view before *Saint John* is effectively characterized by B.W. Bacon's argument which advocates for John's knowledge of all three Synoptics.² B.H. Streeter championed what Gardner-Smith considers a "more cautious view" within his conclusion that John knew both Mark and Luke.³ In the end, however, Gardner-Smith finds these arguments "unconvincing."⁴ Prior to the writing of *Saint John*, Gardner-Smith considered said view to be lacking in consideration of the dissimilarities between John and the Synoptics.⁵ Gardner-Smith advocated for equal treatment of similarities and differences within the texts across the Gospels;⁶ according to Gardner-Smith, prior to *Saint John*, the "small minority" of similarities were given greater weight than the discrepancies across texts which compose "far more numerous passages."⁷ As a result, a "fresh examination"⁸ is warranted.

For Gardner-Smith, a fresh examination yields a relationship between John and the Synoptics within which there are no direct points of contact between the written texts. In other words, to Gardner-Smith, *no* overlaps between the texts of John and the Synoptics prove strict literary dependence. John has used the texts of the Synoptics in no capacity; instead, John overlaps with the Synoptics only because he drew from the centralized basin⁹ of oral tradition

² "...(1) Matthew is practically ignored; (2) Mark is made the basis; (3) supplements and changes are made with large use of Luke both as to motive and material." (Benjamin W. Bacon. 1910. *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*. Moffat, NY: Yard and Company. 368.)

³ "The Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John form, it would seem, a series – Luke being dependent on Mark, and John on both the others." (Burnett Hillman Streeter. 1964. *The Four Gospels*. 7th ed. London: Macmillan and Co. 424-25.) Ironically, Streeter eliminates the possibility that John knew Matthew for the same reason B.W. Bacon believes John ignores him: the lack of significant textual overlap of M material and John.

⁴ Percival Gardner-Smith. 1938. *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. xii.

⁵ Percival Gardner-Smith. 1938. *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels*. xii.

⁶ Andrew Lincoln would agree with this sentiment, stating that "any comparison of John and the Synoptics needs to do justice to both the similarities and the differences." (Andrew T. Lincoln. 2005. *The Gospel According to Saint John*. Vol. 4. Black's New Testament Commentaries. New York, NY: Continuum. 27.)

⁷ *ibid.* 92.

⁸ *ibid.* 97.

⁹ My selection of the word "basin" places itself within a discussion of oral tradition which often includes metaphors of water. See Mark S. Goodacre. May 2, 2017. Speaker's Lecture. "'I believe in Dodd': John, Jesus, and Historical Tradition." *Oxford Biblical Studies*.

which the church was “largely dependent upon... for its knowledge of the life of Christ.”¹⁰ Ultimately, Gardner-Smith seeks to prove that no more familiarity is proven through the overlaps between John and the Synoptics than shared access to collective oral tradition.

Gardner-Smith’s fresh examination, although succinct, contains numerous mistakes and mischaracterizations that deplete its effectiveness to the reader. First, Gardner-Smith mischaracterizes the research of opposing scholars before him through his characterization of their work as *assuming* John’s dependence on the Synoptics; that is, scholars such as BW. Bacon and B.H. Streeter argued for John’s dependence on the Synoptics only *after* the evidence led them to do so. Second, the authority Gardner-Smith bestows to minor differences greatly outweighs that of minor similarities, begging the question of the importance of the minor differences. Third, Gardner-Smith shapes facets of his argument to what is necessary for the time being; indeed, a word such as “tradition” can mean a vast selection of things for Gardner-Smith. This does not become an issue until Gardner-Smith assigns opposing traits to pieces of his argument, which occurs several times in *Saint John*.

FINDING THE SHORTCOMINGS OF GARDNER-SMITH

In his conclusion, Gardner-Smith writes, “agreement between two documents can nearly always be explained as due to the use of a common source, whether oral or written; but if literary dependence is assumed it is extremely difficult to explain pointless contradictions.”¹¹ This mischaracterization of the work of scholars which pre- and post-dates *Saint John* leads to an understatement of the evidence at hand, suggesting John’s dependence on the Synoptics. Such evidence has been carefully handled by scholars to obtain the view that John knew the Synoptics. To frame what became the most-followed solution to the problem of the Fourth Gospel more effectively than Gardner-Smith, it is necessary to consider the works of earlier scholars whose opinions helped shape the majority view prior to *Saint John*. Starting with

¹⁰ Percival Gardner-Smith. 1938. *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels*. x. Further, Gardner-Smith deems the outline of Jesus’ life within the gospels as something that could have very likely changed over time, since “the outline of any written Gospel was determined not only by the natural sequence of history, but also by the form of the Preaching of the Apostles and their immediate followers.” (*ibid.* 89.) Thus, it is important to view the centralized locus of oral tradition as something ever-changing, often being shaped by the individuals who took part in it.

¹¹ *ibid.* 92.

scholars such as Bacon, Streeter, and Stanton will allow an examination of the evidence at hand that suggests John’s literary dependence on the Synoptics.

Benjamin W. Bacon argues for John’s knowledge of all three Synoptic gospels.¹² Beginning with Matthew, Bacon questions the amount of discussion revolving around the verbatim parallels between John 12:8 and Matthew 26:11, which he finds suitable for those attempting to find a literary relation between Matthew and John.¹³

<p>Matthew 26:11 πάντοτε γὰρ τοὺς πτωχοὺς ἔχετε μεθ' ἑαυτῶν, ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ πάντοτε ἔχετε</p>	<p>Mark 14:7 πάντοτε γὰρ τοὺς πτωχοὺς ἔχετε μεθ' ἑαυτῶν καὶ ὅταν θέλητε δύνασθε αὐτοῖς εὖ ποιῆσαι, ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ πάντοτε ἔχετε</p>	<p>John 12:8 τοὺς πτωχοὺς γὰρ πάντοτε ἔχετε μεθ' ἑαυτῶν, ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ πάντοτε ἔχετε</p>
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Perhaps in an attempt to save himself from an extensive discussion regarding the very few points of contact between John and Matthew, Bacon states that “the only Synoptic writer from whom he [John] quotes verbatim is Mark, and that quite rarely.”¹⁴ Of course, what distinguishes Bacon’s argument from Streeter’s “more cautious view”¹⁵ is Bacon’s confidence that John was dependent on Matthew. The signs of dependence are scarce, and the few examples Bacon cites seem insignificant.¹⁶ However, Bacon deems John’s few correspondences with Matthew to be expected, since Matthew is the most “anti-Pauline of the Gospels.”¹⁷ The verbatim John/Matthew overlap and the reasoning that declares Matthew to be anti-Pauline combine to create what stood as a convincing argument for John’s dependence on Matthew. While Bacon’s argument may weaken over 100 years removed from its writing, what Gardner-Smith considers an “assumption” of John’s dependence can be effectively defended through the scarce correspondences between Matthew and John.¹⁸

¹² See no. 2.

¹³ Benjamin W. Bacon. 1910. *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*. 366-367.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Percival Gardner-Smith. 1938. *Saint John*. xii.

¹⁶ Bacon further argues that John’s correction to the “misstatement” of Luke 3:2 in John 18:13 directly matches the same correction in Matthew 26:57, thus signaling John’s dependence. (Benjamin W. Bacon. 1910. *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*. 367.)

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Gardner-Smith writes an indirect and short response to what Bacon would consider highly appropriate John 12:8 / Matthew 26:11 parallel. After stating that the quote attributed to Jesus is “of a kind very easily

Streeter's more cautious view includes a lengthier discussion of the correspondences between Matthew and John as compared to Bacon.¹⁹ Streeter's arguments regarding the minor agreements between John and Matthew against Mark becomes greatly useful for examining why Streeter's view is more cautious.²⁰ Streeter considers these minor agreements non-substantive; for example, Streeter makes note of the verbal agreement of Matthew and John's use of σταδίους (which Streeter translates "furlongs;" Matthew 14:24 and John 6:19) against Mark's simpler ἐν μέσῳ τῆς θαλάσσης ("in the midst of the sea;" Mark 6:47) in their respective depictions of the walking on the water.²¹ Of course, one may believe that such a parallel would solidify John's dependence on Matthew. But, after noting the perceived importance of the verbal parallel, Streeter then argues *against* John's knowledge of Matthew's version of the story, due to "John's ignoring of the striking addition" of Peter meeting Jesus through walking on the water.²² Thus, what one sees upon examination of Streeter's analysis is a greater amount of evidence for Bacon's point of view; however, Gardner-Smith's characterization of Streeter's argument as cautious appears true on account of Streeter's unwillingness to stand behind John's dependence on Matthew.

As mentioned above, Bacon argues that John holds Mark in high regard. One can see this through Bacon's more thorough discussion on John/Mark overlaps that contrasts directly with his lackluster discussion of John/Matthew overlap. Bacon argues that "Mark is made the basis"²³ of John's gospel, noting that John's conglomeration of pieces from the Markan outline

remembered," Gardner-Smith attributes the overlap to its placement within a shared system of oral tradition, stating that "verbal correspondences are only demonstrative of literary connexion if they cannot be explained in any other way; here they are very easily explained by reference to oral tradition..." Of course, Gardner-Smith refuses to consider that John's dependence on the Synoptics is more sound of a theory, especially for the case at hand (Percival Gardner-Smith. 1938. *Saint John*. 49.) C.H. Dodd does not mention the overlap, but instead compares John 12:8 to its less direct overlap of Mark 14:7 to argue for John's independence from the Markan account (C.H. Dodd. 1963. *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*. Cambridge University Press. 163-165.)

¹⁹ To Bacon's point, Streeter discusses the verbatim agreement of John 12:8 / Matthew 26:11. Streeter may have considered the parallel to be of "a material character," placing it within his discussion accordingly. (Burnett Hillman Streeter. 1964. *The Four Gospels*. 410-411.)

²⁰ Streeter considers the analysis of minor agreements to be "...the highway to the recovery of the purest text of the Gospels." (*ibid.* 331.)

²¹ Matthew 14:24; Mark 6:47

²² *ibid.* 410.

²³ See no. 2.

is "...explicable by the recognized and characteristic motives of our evangelist."²⁴ Bacon includes a substantive exploration into the prologues of Mark and John, inferring that John *needed* a prologue to parallel Mark and to correct the inadequate attempts of Matthew and Luke written prior.²⁵ Bacon further drives the point that John's mission was to replace the prior gospels, stating that John most likely saw Mark 1:21-45 (beginning of miracles) as "peculiarly unsatisfactory," leading to John's "recasting" of the narrative.²⁶ Bacon's discussion ends with respect to the drastically different Passion and Resurrection (Mark 11-16), which "is needless to compare."²⁷

Streeter's discussion on Mark, in contrast to Bacon, is notably shorter than his discussions on Matthew and Luke. Streeter's argument begins with an observation that Matthew and Luke, in their use of Mark, reproduce over 50% of the words used by Mark; on the other hand, John reproduces less than 20% of Mark's words. However, this is "precisely what makes it specially significant that he often reproduces some of the more out-of-the-way phrases of Mark."²⁸ Streeter's most notable "out-of-the-way-phrase" is that of John 5:8-9 / Mark 2:11-12.²⁹ Mark and John overlap in their use of κράββατον. Κράββατον, according to Streeter, is categorized as a vulgarism; as a result, Matthew and Luke either replace it or remove it from their texts entirely.³⁰ This feeds directly into what Streeter sees as the significance for the

²⁴ Benjamin W. Bacon. 1910. *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*. 373. Identically, in his consideration of Johannine changes to the Markan outline, C.K. Barrett states they are "...adequately accounted for by John's peculiar interests and presuppositions, and therefore do not invalidate the literary conclusions that have been drawn." (C. K. Barrett. 1978. *The Gospel According to Saint John: An Introduction With Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press. 45.) Gardner-Smith would ask Bacon to reconsider, deeming it necessary to "ask whether such conflation is more likely to have taken place during the stage of oral transmission, or in the mind of a skilled writer who had other documents to work on, documents in which these incidents were entirely distinct." (Percival Gardner-Smith. 1938. *Saint John*. 27.)

²⁵ Benjamin W. Bacon. 1910. *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*. 373.

²⁶ *ibid.* 376-377. "Doctrinally, however, such a 'beginning of miracles' was open to the gravest objections from the fourth evangelist's point of view." (*ibid.*)

²⁷ *ibid.* 383.

²⁸ Burnett Hillman Streeter. 1964. *The Four Gospels*. 397.

²⁹ λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἔγειρε ἄρον τὸν κράββατόν σου καὶ περιπάτει. καὶ εὐθέως ἐγένετο ὑγιῆς ὁ ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἤρην τὸν κράββατον αὐτοῦ καὶ περιεπάτει / σοὶ λέγω, ἔγειρε ἄρον τὸν κράββατόν σου καὶ ὑπάγε εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου. καὶ ἠγέρθη καὶ εὐθὺς ἄρας τὸν κράββατον ἐξῆθεν...

At this point, it is useful to note that Bacon simply mentions the κράββατον overlap and saves himself from the discussion surrounding it (Benjamin W. Bacon. 1910. *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*. 379.)

³⁰ Luke uses κλινίδιον (as well as ὁ κατέκειτο) while Matthew replaces it with κλίνην (Matthew 9:6; Luke

John/Mark overlaps: in Streeter's six "hardly accidental" noted cases where John seems to take from Mark, Matthew and Luke notably diverge from Mark. Thus, for Streeter, it is the dichotomy of John's allegiance to Mark against Matthew and Luke's disloyalty that gives the "out-of-the-way" phrases their significance.

Stanton's discussion of synoptic material differs from that of both Streeter and Bacon on account of Stanton's focusing on shared material between *all* synoptic gospels. Stanton notes 16 distinct overlaps between material shared by the three Synoptics and John:

(1) Testimony of John the Baptist: sign at the Baptism of Jesus (2) Allusion to John the Baptist's imprisonment (3) Andrew Simon's brother and the name Cephas, i.e., Peter, given to Simon (4) Feeding the five thousand (5) The crossing of the lake which followed upon the feeding of five thousand (6) The demand for a sign like "the bread from heaven" which Moses gave (7) "The twelve" (8) The anointing at Bethany (9) The foreknowledge and prediction of the betrayal (10) Jesus withdraws after the Last Supper beyond the brook Kedron (11) The arrest (12) Peter obtains admission into the high priest's house, and his denials of Jesus (13) The trial in the high priest's house (14) The trial before Pilate (15) The Crucifixion (16) The body of Jesus is obtained from Pilate by Joseph of Arimathea and the Burial.³¹

This is not to say that Stanton lacks in discussion regarding distinct traditions (i.e., κράββατον); however, the greater majority of his discussion around "John and the Synoptics" becomes "John and the Synoptic tradition." Although several of these overlaps are *necessary* for one to write Jesus of Nazareth's biography, several effectively raise questions for the reader. In an analysis of Stanton's first and second overlaps,³² one must ask why John and the Synoptics agree numerous across the four accounts of John the Baptist and the allusion to his imprisonment. On the other hand, providing a comprehensive list of significant overlaps between John and the Synoptics does not keep one from considering Stanton's discourse to be

5:24-25). Κράββατον appears a total of 12 times within the New Testament and is found in the four gospels in frequencies of 0/5/0/6. We find it used in Acts twice in different contexts (Acts 5:15 and 9:33). A further look is warranted if one considers Acts and Luke to share an author. Why would the author omit it from his first writing (Luke), but not the second (Acts)?

Further, Gardner-Smith responds in a way characteristic of himself, simply stating that "...a sentence of seven words would not impose any great tax on the memory." (Percival Gardner-Smith. 1938. *Saint John*. 26.) For Gardner-Smith, it can be assumed that the overlap is due to nothing more than oral tradition.

³¹ Vincent Henry Stanton. 1903. *The Gospels as Historical Documents*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 215-217.

³² See previous note.

quite underwhelming.³³ In the end, one may find Streeter's paraphrase of a portion of Stanton's work to be most helpful:

Another point on which Stanton lays special stress is the fact that, whereas both Matthew and Luke (and therefore Q) have much fuller accounts than Mary of the teaching of John the Baptist, the only instance here of verbal resemblance between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptists is in a sentence where John agrees with Mark *against* the other two.³⁴

Bacon's discussion on the points of contact with Luke and John highlights Bacon's former arguments on John's focusing on Mark since Bacon believes "in its general structure the outline of the Fourth Gospel is simple and clear, and reproduces that of Mark *as modified by Luke*."³⁵ Bacon believes that John "scattered" the overlapping parables with Luke in mind since he does so similarly.³⁶ Like the other gospels, Bacon argues that John deviates from Luke when he feels Luke's writing is inadequate. For example, the fact that the prologues of Mark and John correspond³⁷ is due to the "inadequate Christology" of Matthew and Luke.³⁸ Bacon's discussion of the most notable overlap between Luke and John (the introduction of Bethany as "the village of Mary and her sister Martha" with no prior mention of these two) does not apply to the discussion at hand.³⁹ Overall, Bacon's discussion of Luke is dwarfed by his extended discussion on the relationship between Matthew and John.

Streeter's discussion on Luke and John is much more suitable for the discussion at hand.

³³ Stanton's work is filled with weak statements that never truly reach the essence of his argument. For example, Stanton states "the fourth evangelist, no less than the Synoptics, introduces the Gospel-history by treating of this subject." (Vincent Henry Stanton. 1903. *The Gospels as Historical Documents*. 221.) He further states "presented in the manner that is in the Synoptic Gospels, the Baptism of Jesus forms a dramatic close to the Ministry of John, as well as the beginning of that of Jesus." (*ibid.* 222.) Stanton, as is shown in the two examples above, merely indicates the overlap between John and the Synoptics, feeling no sense of urgency to argue for a position of literary dependence.

³⁴ Burnett Hillman Streeter. 1964. *The Four Gospels*. 399. As a result, the fact that "the common factor is Mark... demands the most careful examination." (*ibid.* 396.)

³⁵ Benjamin W. Bacon. 1910. *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*. 368.

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ See no. 25.

³⁸ Benjamin W. Bacon. 1910. *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*. 373.

³⁹ Bacon's discussion leads him to state that in the Fourth Gospel there are "two Bethanies, between which Jesus oscillates in the last weeks of his life, 'Bethany nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off,' where Jesus stays with the sisters Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus (from Lk. 16:19-31), and a 'Bethany beyond Jordan,' elsewhere unheard of, whence Jesus comes to them for the purpose of raising Lazarus from the dead (10:40; 1:28)" (Benjamin W. Bacon. 1910. *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*. 368.) For discussion on the "Bethany beyond Jordan" see J. Carl Laney. 1977. "The Identification of Bethany Beyond the Jordan" from *Selective Geographical Problems in the Life of Christ*.

Streeter begins his discussion with a mention of the “remarkable point of contact” of the mentioning of Martha and Mary in John, stating that “too much stress ought not to be laid on the fact that the two sisters are suddenly named, xi. 1, as if they were well-known characters, though that is not without significance.”⁴⁰ The significance lies within the fact that Luke leaves Bethany unnamed (a village; κώμην τινά) in his account of the anointing; Streeter further states the “elaborate cross-identification of persons, places, and incidents” is significant in itself, and indirectly addresses Gardner-Smith’s theory of oral tradition: “it is not equally natural if the Mary and Martha story was merely extant in floating tradition.”⁴¹ Streeter considers the conflation of Markan and Lucan details of the anointing to be an explanation to the “phenomena” at hand; he applies the same theory to the prophecy of Peter’s denial, since John’s prophecy is highly similar to Luke’s, but includes the Markan ἀμῆν that is absent in Luke.⁴² Streeter’s confidence in John’s dependence on Luke is great enough for his discussion to continue into the significance of the literary relationship between the two. Streeter, then assuming John’s literary dependence on Luke, explains that John gives a new significance to several events within Mark and Luke “derived either from the author’s own reflection or from independent tradition.”⁴³

Thus, for the scholars whose work predates the writing of *Saint John*, Gardner-Smith’s attack on the “assumption” of John’s knowledge of the Synoptics is nothing short of ill-fitting. The majority view that Gardner-Smith attempts to dismantle did not exist for the sake of simplicity; instead, it is *concrete evidence* across the Synoptics that led major scholars of the early 20th-century to argue for John’s knowledge of the Synoptics. In examining Gardner-Smith’s incorrect statement of assumed knowledge, it is important to realize that the theory of John’s dependence on the Synoptics came out of a necessity created by a lack of a strong theory. Addressing this necessity, scholars such as Bacon, Streeter, and Stanton examined the relationship between John and the Synoptics with an outlook filled with a rationality that revolves around a thought process well explained by Andrew Lincoln, who states

While there are some instances of similarities with Synoptic material, where an equally strong case for John’s use of Synoptic-like independent tradition might be made, this

⁴⁰ Burnett Hillman Streeter. 1964. *The Four Gospels*. 401-402.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² *ibid.* 404-405.

⁴³ *ibid.* 405.

commentary argues that the much stronger case is that John knows the Synoptic Gospels themselves. The case becomes even stronger when not simply isolated pericopes are compared, as is frequently done, but when whole units of material or whole motifs are also taken into account, as will be indicated below.⁴⁴

In short, an assumption of John's knowledge of the Synoptics did not create a necessity for work like that of Streeter, Bacon, and Stanton; rather, it was the lack of a truly *coherent* theory that created the necessity for one more appropriate. This directly resulted in the theory Gardner-Smith finds unsuitable: John's dependence on the Synoptics.

DISCUSSION OF MINOR AGREEMENTS

In a field such as New Testament, where great emphasis is placed on word choice across writings, minor differences can play major roles in discussions of literary dependence. Knowing this, Gardner-Smith attempts to frame the minor *disagreements* between John and the Synoptics as being greater in significance than minor *agreements*. For the sake of his argument, Gardner-Smith assigns a significance to "important divergences that are everywhere apparent"⁴⁵ that far outweighs that which he assigns to notable agreements. Of course, the assignment of "major" and "minor" to (dis)agreements within texts is nothing short of an arbitrary process; however, this does not mean one can carelessly assign these labels to overlaps of varying significance. After all, it is somewhat ironic for Gardner-Smith to unequally assign significance across (dis)agreements between John and the Synoptics, since "surely the proper method is to take the Gospel as it stands, and, by noting both the similarities and the dissimilarities simultaneously, seek to determine on which side the balance of probability inclines."⁴⁶

Gardner-Smith falls victim to "the plagiarist's charter," a concept applied recently to biblical studies by Dr. Mark Goodacre.⁴⁷ Goodacre states that "I vary the analogy by appealing to Judge Learned Hand's famous ruling that 'no plagiarist can excuse the wrong by showing how much of his work he did not pirate.'"⁴⁸ Similarly, Gardner-Smith cannot attempt to defend a theory of oral tradition through fixating on the parts where John and the Synoptics do not

⁴⁴ Andrew T. Lincoln. 2005. *The Gospel According to Saint John*. 32.

⁴⁵ Percival Gardner-Smith. 1938. *Saint John*. 88.

⁴⁶ *ibid.* xii.

⁴⁷ Mark Goodacre. "Did Thomas Know the Synoptic Gospels? A Response to Denzey Lewis, Kloppenborg and Patterson." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36, no. 3 (March 2014): 282–93. doi: 10.1177/0142064X14523523

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

overlap. Gardner-Smith fixes his focus on the minor differences rather than observing John's relationship to the synoptic gospels as entire documents. Differences as minor as John's "plenty" grass in contrast to the synoptic "green" grass holds great weight in Gardner-Smith's eyes.

Gardner-Smith's analysis of the feeding of the five thousand is a great case study for noting his careless assignment of significance to minor disagreements. Gardner-Smith initially states that "...if our author derived his knowledge of [the feeding] from them the fact should be unmistakably apparent."⁴⁹ Why it must be unmistakably apparent is left unexplained by Gardner-Smith.⁵⁰ This statement has implications for Gardner-Smith's remaining argument since the sentiment that dependence should be unmistakably apparent skews the argument toward assuming John's independence from the Synoptics. Of course, this is the exact charge Gardner-Smith places against the scholars whose work predates *Saint John*. But, as one can see, it is characteristic of Gardner-Smith to continually adapt ungrounded sentiments to his argument, despite how contradictory they may be.

Gardner-Smith begins his examination of the feeding of the five thousand by noting that "the introduction is quite different from that of Mark."⁵¹ Gardner-Smith mentions the geography layout of the two accounts and ultimately decides that it is unlikely for John to be dependent on Mark's account.⁵² John's account stating that Jesus went up on the mountain (ἀνῆλθεν δὲ εἰς τὸ ὄρος Ἰησοῦς)⁵³ directly contrasts with Mark's account that Jesus ἐξελθὼν⁵⁴ from his prior location in the water. This fact is undeniable and deserves a place in the discussion at hand; however, Gardner-Smith nearly ignores the parallels between John's feeding of the five thousand and Matthew's feeding of the four thousand, dismissing the idea that John's feeding of the five thousand is dependent upon the Matthean and Markan feedings of the four thousand. Ironically, Gardner-Smith's discussion of the possible relationship between John's five thousand and Matthew/Mark's four thousand begins and ends with an observation by Gardner-Smith that "it has been noted that Matthew places the feeding of the four thousand on a hill, and he says

⁴⁹ *ibid.* 27.

⁵⁰ After all, if any literary dependence or lack thereof among the writings of the New Testament was unmistakably apparent, there would be no field for his book to attempt to reach!

⁵¹ Percival Gardner-Smith. 1938. *Saint John*. 27.

⁵² *ibid.* 28.

⁵³ John 6:3

⁵⁴ Mark 6:34

that Jesus sat down...”⁵⁵ The parallel of Matthew’s four thousand and John’s five thousand is increasingly notable when placed successively:⁵⁶

Matthew 15:29 ...καὶ ἀναβὰς εἰς τὸ ὄρος ἐκάθητο ἐκεῖ	John 6:3 ἀνῆλθεν δὲ εἰς τὸ ὄρος ἐκάθητο ἐκεῖ
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Gardner-Smith then goes on to state that “John’s account of the miracle differs in almost every possible way from that of Mark.”⁵⁷ While in Mark (and the other synoptic accounts), the disciples interject to tell Jesus “send the crowd away” (Mark 6:36), John 6:6 depicts Jesus asking Peter, “how are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” One may consider this a deviation from the Markan account of the feeding until recognizing that John often gives identities to unnamed characters in accounts he shares with the Synoptics. For example, John identifies the otherwise unknown slave of the high priest (τὸν δοῦλον τοῦ ἀρχιερέως in all three synoptic accounts) as Malchus.⁵⁸ John goes on to identify Philip and Andrew as the successive speakers to Jesus in the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:7-8). Thus, for John, this “deviation” from the main text is nothing more than a common Johannine edit. Alternatively, one may realize that in the feeding of the four thousand in Matthew and Mark, Jesus is the first to speak to his disciples, just as in John’s feeding of the five thousand. In either situation, there are more probable explanations for the supposed dissimilarities that Gardner-Smith blows greatly out of proportion.

In line with his over-assignment of significance to minor differences, Gardner-Smith notes that the synoptic accounts use δύο ἰχθύας in opposition to John’s δύο ὀψάρια. As a result, it can be decided that John’s account is completely independent of the Synoptics.⁵⁹ Gardner-Smith did not address the possibility of John being dependent upon the feeding of the four

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ In his consideration of the overlap, Steven A. Hunt states “John replaces the Matthean καὶ with δὲ in order to draw a contrast between the movements of the crowd and those of Jesus.” (Steven A. Hunt. 2011. *Rewriting the Feeding of the Five Thousand: John 6:1-15 as a Test Case for Johannine Dependence on the Synoptic Gospels*. New York: Peter Lang, 242.) Perhaps the translation of Kurt Aland’s *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* would benefit from a “but”: “And a multitude followed him, because they saw the signs which he did on those who were diseased. **But** Jesus went up on the mountain, and there sat down with his disciples.” (see pg. 135.) Matthew’s account simply continues Jesus’ movement from “along the sea of Galilee” (παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας) to “up on the mountain.”

⁵⁷ *ibid.* 29.

⁵⁸ John 18:10

⁵⁹ *ibid.* 30-32.

thousand on account of comparably significant textual agreements. More specifically, Gardner-Smith draws importance from the Synoptics using εὐλόγησεν as compared to John's εὐχαριστήσας in the description of the meal.⁶⁰ John's dependence upon the feeding of the four thousand becomes increasingly more likely when one notices that *both* Matthew and Mark's accounts of the feeding of the four thousand use εὐχαριστήσας in their respective descriptions of the meal. Also, just as in John, both the Markan and Matthean accounts of the feeding of the four thousand include Jesus speaking initially.⁶¹ So, Gardner-Smith's sentiment that "a close study of the four Gospels suggests that John knew a popular story, a story probably familiar to all Christians at the time when he wrote, but there is no evidence to prove that he had read it in Mark or Luke and considerable reason for concluding that he did not" considerably weakens when examining the gospels completely rather than compilations of pericopae; that is, Gardner-Smith fails to see the parallels John has with the synoptic gospel tradition in cases of crossing pericopae. Gardner-Smith's ignorance of John's literary dependence on the feeding of the four thousand becomes clearer when one examines Gardner-Smith's ending argument on the subject:

4. The description of the meal is no closer to John's supposed source. According to Mark, Jesus commanded ἀνακλιθῆναι πάντας συμπόσια ἐπὶ τῷ γλωρῶ χόρτῳ, and all the Synoptists use some compound of κλίνω. John mentions the grass, but in a different way 'There was much grass in that place,' and he renders the command of Jesus ποιήσατε τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀναπεσεῖν.⁶²

Gardner-Smith's over-assignment of significance on the minor differences between Johannine and synoptic episodes of the feeding of the five thousand inhibited Gardner-Smith from noticing that both the Matthean and Markan feedings of the four thousand use ἀναπεσεῖν, parallel to John's rendering of Jesus' command.⁶³ Such is characteristic of Gardner-Smith; that is, Gardner-Smith's over-assignment of significance on the minor differences between John and the Synoptics hinders him from providing a well-based, complete analysis of John's literary dependence on the Synoptics.

Gardner-Smith's discussion of the healing of the centurion's son is nothing short of underwhelming, most likely due to the lack of striking differences among the four accounts.

⁶⁰ Matthew 14:19, Mark 6:41, Luke 9:16; John 6:11

⁶¹ Matthew 15:32; Mark 8:1

⁶² Percival Gardner-Smith. 1938. *Saint John*. 32.

⁶³ Matthew 15:35; Mark 8:6

Gardner-Smith includes his overview of the Matthean account in relation to the Lukan account and ultimately decides (with the help of Streeter⁶⁴) that the Johannine account cannot be dependent upon the Matthean and Lukan accounts. Notably, Gardner-Smith fails to consider the Greek for the passages in question. Upon examination, one finds that the three descriptions of the post-healing vary greatly:

Matthew 8:13 ...καὶ ἰάθη ὁ παῖς αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐκείνῃ	Luke 7:10 καὶ ὑποστρέψαντες εἰς τὸν οἶκον οἱ πεμφθέντες εὗρον τὸν δοῦλον ὑγιαίνοντα	John 4:52 ἐπύθετο οὖν τὴν ὥραν παρ αὐτῶν ἐν ἣ κομψότερον ἔσχεν· εἶπαν οὖν αὐτῷ ὅτι ἐχθὲς ὥραν ἐβδόμην ἀφῆκεν αὐτὸν ὁ πυρετός
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The Johannine statement that “the fever left him” (ἀφῆκεν αὐτὸν ὁ πυρετός) is truly significant in the relationship between John and the Synoptics due to its occurrence only once outside of John’s gospel: Matthew. Matthew, in his episode of the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law, states that following Jesus’ touching, “the fever left her” (ἀφῆκεν αὐτὴν ὁ πυρετός; Matthew 8:15). Of course, any student of Greek can see that these two statements are verbatim agreements since the change of the pronoun is necessary; the parallel is all the more striking when it is considered that word order and cases are *identical*.

Gardner-Smith includes a lengthy discussion on the parallels of the raising of Lazarus, an often-visited pericope in the discussion of Johannine dependence. As stated above, the Fourth Gospel does not mention Mary and Martha prior to its account of the raising of Lazarus; when this occurs, the Evangelist assumes the reader’s knowledge of Mary and Martha and their connection to Luke’s unnamed “village” (κώμην τινά; Luke 10:38) of Bethany. To Gardner-Smith, this is to be expected, since first-century Christians involved in the basin of oral tradition would have certainly known Mary and Martha and their connection to Bethany.⁶⁵ He continues his discussion through making two separate lists: one composed with overlaps which “critics”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Gardner-Smith makes note that Streeter argues John’s centurion episode “is a version preserved in a different line of tradition.” Percival Gardner-Smith. 1938. *Saint John*. 24.

⁶⁵ *ibid.* 43.

⁶⁶ Gardner-Smith notes Streeter as a critic who “ha[s] appealed with so much confidence to this passage as proving that John knew Mark and Luke that it is worth while to set forth at some length the references in the four Gospels to Martha, Mary, and the women who ministered to Jesus while He sat at meat.” (*ibid.*)

use to argue for John’s dependence on Mark and Luke’s Mary and Martha story, and another composed to differences between the accounts.⁶⁷

Similarities	Differences
<p>“1. He represents the meal as held at Bethany, as do Matthew and Mark. Luke omits.</p> <p>2. He says that ‘Martha served’ (cp. Luke. X. 38ff.).</p> <p>3. He describes the action of a woman who anointed the Lord with ointment (μύρον).</p> <p>4. He uses Mark’s exact phrase μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς</p> <p>5. He uses the word πολυτίμου to describe its value, which is reminiscent of Mark’s πολυτελοῦς and of Matthew’s βαρυτίμου</p> <p>6. He records a protest that the ointment might have been sold and given to the poor, and he has Mark’s phrase to describe its value τριακοσίων δηναρίων though he omits Mark’s ἐπάνω, and transposes the words.</p> <p>7. He records the reply of Jesus’ Ἄφες αὐτήν, which is very near to Mark’s Ἄφετε αὐτήν</p> <p>8. He goes on to refer to the entombment (ἐνταφιασμός), of which the woman’s action is in some sense anticipatory.</p> <p>9. He quotes the saying τοὺς πτωχοὺς γὰρ πάντοτε ἔχετε μεθ’ ἑαυτῶν, ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ πάντοτε ἔχετε, and his words are in almost exact agreements with Mark, although the latter interpolates a sentence (“and whensoever ye will ye can do them good”) which does not appear in Matthew.”</p>	<p>“1. John makes no mention of Simon the Leper, and he does not make it clear in whose house the feast was held, although, since Martha served, we may perhaps presume that the house was hers.</p> <p>2. The mention of Lazarus explains the medieval identification of Lazarus with Simon, and hence the belief that Lazarus was a leper. Only on an uncritical view of the Gospels is the identification justified.</p> <p>3. John says that it was Mary, sister of Martha, who anointed the Lord. This is not suggested in any of the synoptic accounts.</p> <p>4. The amount of ointment implied by John is very large, a pound in weight. An ἀλάβαστρον strong enough to contain such a quantity could not have been crushed in a woman’s hand (Mk. συντρίψασα)</p> <p>5. John says that Mary anointed <i>the feet</i> of Jesus (ἤλειψεν τοὺς πόδας), whereas Mark has κατέχεεν αὐτοῦ τῆς κεφαλῆς, and she wiped his feet with her hair (ἐξέμαζεν ταῖς θριξίν αὐτῆς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ). We are reminded of Lk. vii. 38: καὶ ταῖς θριξίν τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς ἐξέμασεν.</p> <p>6. According to John, it is Judas who protests, not the τινες of Mark, nor the ‘disciples’ of Matthew.”</p>

Ironically, Gardner-Smith’s assumption that the latter list is “at least as impressive as the former list, and yet critics ignore it”⁶⁸ simply proves his over-designation of significance to minor differences. Gardner-Smith’s discussion of the above similarities gives results that are

⁶⁷ *ibid.* 45-46

⁶⁸ *ibid.* 47.

not indicative of the evidence as a whole; Gardner-Smith devotes a mere two sentences to affirming the sanity of critics for clutching to the overlaps. On the other hand, Gardner-Smith's discussion of the differences continues for pages, as it is his mission to prove that his six differences are greater in significance than the nine overlaps. Gardner-Smith entirely disregards the second-largest overlap between John and the Synoptics (τοὺς πτωχοὺς γὰρ πάντοτε ἔχετε μεθ' ἑαυτῶν, ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ πάντοτε ἔχετε; Mark 14:7 and John 12:8)⁶⁹ through stating this statement is "of a kind easily remembered," and is suitable to "become stereotyped in oral tradition."⁷⁰ However, John's simple designation of the name Mary to the unnamed woman who anointed Jesus' feet in the synoptic accounts holds more significance to Gardner-Smith. Gardner-Smith fails to see this is simply another example of Johannine specification of unnamed characters, as mentioned above. The designation of names to unnamed characters in past synoptic and Johannine accounts is a repeat offense by the writer of the Fourth Gospel.⁷¹ The designation of the name Mary by John the Evangelist is an aspect of his writing style, and should be seen as an edit to the gospels he knew before him, not a "confusion of distinct traditions!"⁷² Further, Gardner-Smith's point regarding the shattering of the ἀλάβαστρον in a woman's hand quickly collapses upon examination of the Greek text (Mark 14:3). Gardner-Smith takes Mark's use of the participle συντρίψασα (from συντρίβω) to mean crushing in one's hand as he states in "difference" number four (above). However, συντρίβω is more accurately rendered as "shatter" or "shiver."⁷³ This more accurate translation would rid the necessity of the woman's hand breaking the ἀλάβαστρον, and brings many more likely actions into the argument. For example, a woman *shattering* an ἀλάβαστρον of such size is highly more likely than the same woman *crushing* it. Gardner-Smith's fifth point is easily solved when one realizes that John's account of the anointing of Jesus is a conflation of the Lukan and Markan accounts. Gardner-Smith makes note that John's account includes Mary anointing the feet of Jesus (ἤλειψεν τοὺς πόδας) (John 12:3) while Mark says she poured it over his head (κατέχεεν αὐτοῦ τῆς κεφαλῆς; Mark

⁶⁹ The longest consecutive overlap between gospels is Matthew 26:21 // Mark 14:30 // John 13:21 – "ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι εἷς ἐξ ὑμῶν παραδώσει με." If the sequence of τοὺς πτωχοὺς was changed, the overlap would be 12 consecutive words.

⁷⁰ *ibid.* 49.

⁷¹ i.e. The slave in the Garden at Gethsamane becoming "Malchus" in John (John 18:10).

⁷² *ibid.* 47.

⁷³ LSJ, s.v. "συντρίβω." Additionally, in the majority of cases, a dative of instrument/means was also absent, removing the needed instrument for one to "crush" something rather than "shatter."

14:3). This is overshadowed by Luke and John's very similar structuring of the anointing itself, where they overlap in Mary's use of her hair for the anointing of Jesus' feet.⁷⁴ A few verses after this, Mark and John have a notable overlap not present in Luke: ἄφετε αὐτήν / ἄφες αὐτήν.⁷⁵ Additionally, John has decided to name the city (Bethany), matching Mark rather than leaving the city unnamed/unmentioned, as does Luke. Thus, Gardner-Smith's questionable designation of significance in his discussion of the minor agreements and differences directly leads to an unsatisfactory analysis of the relationship between John and the Synoptics.

Gardner-Smith's examination of the cleansing of the temple begins with rightful criticism regarding John's placement of this pericope at the beginning of his gospel, directly contrasting with the chronology that the Synoptics seemingly agree to follow.⁷⁶ However, as Streeter notes, the concept of the "synoptic chronology" does not exist within the synoptic gospels, nor does the "synoptic chronology" exist outside the gospels.⁷⁷ While the Synoptics do agree in the order of many pericopae, there is no *exact* sequence of events that the Synoptics follow without fail. In consideration of the sequence that events occur across John and the Synoptics, since there is no synoptic chronology, no "key" exists suitable for gauging John's accuracy. This is an act Streeter finds "really unmeaning," since there is at least one suitable explanation for the placement of John's cleansing near the beginning of his gospel.⁷⁸ In short, there are serious implications for Gardner-Smith to falsely allude to a synoptic chronology when it is nonexistent. Such an act only exhibits Gardner-Smith's over-designation of significance to minor differences and deserves no place in the discussion at hand. However, even without the synoptic chronology's existence, the question of John's placement of the cleansing of the temple near the beginning of his gospel pleads to be answered, as he is outnumbered three-to-one in his lone placement of the pericope. For the time being, Streeter's answer to the above question fails to draw criticism from Gardner-Smith, perhaps because Gardner-Smith finds no way to

⁷⁴ Luke 7:38 -- καὶ στᾶσα ὀπίσω παρὰ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ κλαίουσα τοῖς δάκρυσιν ἤρξατο βρέχειν τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ καὶ ταῖς θριξίν τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς ἐξέμασσεν καὶ κατεπίλει τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἤλειπεν τῷ μύρῳ; John 12:3 -- ἡ οὖν Μαριὰμ λαβοῦσα λίτραν μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς πολυτίμου ἤλειπεν τοὺς πόδας τοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ ἐξέμαξεν ταῖς θριξίν αὐτῆς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ

⁷⁵ Mark 14:6; John 12:7

⁷⁶ Percival Gardner-Smith. 1938. *Saint John*. 12-13.

⁷⁷ Burnett Hillman Streeter. 1964. *The Four Gospels*. 394. Streeter then says, "to speak, then, of a Synoptic chronology, as though there were a three-to-one agreement against John, is quite misleading." (*ibid.* 424.)

⁷⁸ *ibid.* 423.

fault it:

Exact chronology is not a matter in regard to which popular local tradition is apt to be concerned; nevertheless the Johannine chronology may be based on a conscientious attempt by the author to piece together scattered bits of information picked up in Jerusalem. If the visits of our Lord to Jerusalem were connected in the minds of his informants with His appearances to feasts, the imperfect recollections of two different persons might easily connect the same visit with two different feasts; one visit might then be counted twice in John's chronology.⁷⁹

A look into Gardner-Smith's handling of minor differences and similarities yields results that show Gardner-Smith's handling to be inherently unfair. Gardner-Smith's over-designation of significance to minor differences paints a narrative inaccurate to the evidence at hand. Even though there is ample evidence to suggest John knew and used the synoptic gospels (as shown above), Gardner-Smith handles the evidence in such a way that misrepresents the body of evidence as a whole; that is, Gardner-Smith's handling of the gospel texts makes it seem as if there is a severe lack of evidence for John's dependence on the Synoptics, even though there is no such narrative present in the scholarly community.

CONTRADICTIONS IN GARDNER-SMITH'S ARGUMENT

Throughout his writing of *Saint John*, Gardner-Smith assigns contradictory identities to facets of his argument. In short, Gardner-Smith fails to create a single, stand-alone definition for any substantial part of his argument. For example, Gardner-Smith's description of "tradition" and its tendencies never seems to approach a single definition. Of course, putting the tendencies of oral tradition into definable boundaries is an overwhelming task in itself; however, this is no excuse for one's description of tradition and its tendencies to have contradictions within them. For example, Gardner-Smith finds oral tradition to be responsible for changes in the telling of the same story across time and people, since "in public assembly the accepted account might be read, but in oral teaching variants would long survive, and there would be a natural tendency for every man to tell a story in the form in which he had learnt it."⁸⁰The previous quote describes oral tradition as approaching variance, considering that Gardner-Smith describes the stubbornness of humanity to tell oral tradition in the way he/she sees fit. Further, Gardner-Smith makes clear that one should expect local traditions to survive; as a result, we should expect

⁷⁹ *ibid.* 420.

⁸⁰ Percival Gardner-Smith. 1938. *Saint John*. xi.

differences in John's independent gospel.⁸¹ But, in his conclusion, Gardner-Smith changes this concept, only to state that "...but as time passed the general tendency would be towards uniformity in the sequence of the sections."⁸² Gardner-Smith feels the need to adopt a sense of uniformity for his oral tradition in order to strengthen his argument on the cleansing of the temple and other pericopae he argues were told together.⁸³ Gardner-Smith, although he aims for a uniform definition of oral tradition that benefits his argument, fails to create such a definition, instead providing the reader with a definition that contradicts itself.

Gardner-Smith attempts to utilize each contradictory aspect of his definition of oral tradition at different times throughout *Saint John*. In his discussion of the feeding of the five thousand, a "trivial agreement" between the Marcan and Johannine accounts is easily explained through oral tradition. Thus, Gardner-Smith identifies oral tradition as a force that spreads similarities over time and space. Gardner-Smith, as shown above, believes that this will approach "...uniformity in the sequence of the sections."⁸⁴ Simultaneously, Gardner-Smith places the blame on oral tradition when speaking of John's breaking off from the Synoptics in John 7:1-13, where what Gardner-Smith coins an "exceptional" trip to Galilee is described. This piece of oral tradition executed a process exactly opposite of the approaching of "uniformity" described above. Instead, this piece of oral tradition "...branched off from the mainstream at quite an early period when stories had not yet been set in any general framework."⁸⁵ After this description, oral tradition has a dual meaning that, although contradictory, can benefit Gardner-Smith in different contexts within his argument for oral tradition in *Saint John*. In reality, oral tradition cannot have both a tendency to approach uniformity and a tendency to approach variance. Unfortunately, for Gardner-Smith, there is no "triple point"⁸⁶ of oral tradition where it can possess all the attributes he needs it to. In the end, the attributes Gardner-Smith assigns at different times are mutually exclusive and cannot coexist rationally.

⁸¹ *ibid.* xi.

⁸² *ibid.* 90.

⁸³ See *ibid.* 89. No. 1 "For instance, it may have been customary at quite an early period to relate the story of Christ's walking on the water immediately after the story of the feeding of the five thousand."

⁸⁴ *ibid.* 90.

⁸⁵ *ibid.* 37.

⁸⁶ See no. 9.

CONCLUSION

Gardner-Smith's work sparked a revolution in the scholarly community and led many to reconsider the relationship between John and the synoptic gospels. But, upon examination of Gardner-Smith's work as a whole, one can find many weaknesses within Gardner-Smith's argument for a "type of first-century Christianity which owed nothing to the synoptic elements" that exists inside the bounds of the Fourth Gospel.⁸⁷ Due to the volume of these weaknesses, those who subscribe to Gardner-Smith's idea of an independent Fourth Gospel may reconsider the central text they cling to. *Saint John's* calling for a "fresh examination" is unpolished, leaving drastic statements that misinterpret the evidence at hand within the text. Those who cling to *Saint John* must seriously consider adapting C.H. Dodd's *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* as the new central text for the theory of John's independence from the Synoptics. Dodd's work undeniably makes great advancements for the theory, rebutting many of the issues Gardner-Smith either addresses poorly or fails to address. Dodd's more comprehensive work dwarfs Gardner-Smith's, all to arrive at the same conclusion: "The above argument has led to the conclusion that behind the Fourth Gospel lies an ancient tradition independent of the other gospels, and meriting serious consideration as a contribution to our knowledge of the historical facts concerning Jesus Christ."⁸⁸ Ultimately, work such as Gardner-Smith's aims to challenge the majority view; while the evidence at hand indicates a literary relationship between John and the Synoptics, Dodd's work provides a better rebuttal and unquestionably challenges the traditionalist view to a higher degree than *Saint John*. Challenging the current majority view requires refinement on all ends of the spectrum, and leads to the development of more suitable theories to answer the questions at hand. Dodd recognized *Saint John's* need for refinement; as a result, he created a more suitable answer to the question at hand. There is no justification for forgetting the initial work that Dodd refined. However, Gardner-Smith falls short where Dodd exceeds.

Unfortunately, both works fall short when taking the evidence as a whole. The literary relationship between John and the Synoptics makes itself clear when taking into consideration a larger body of evidence than that of Dodd or Gardner-Smith. Dodd and Gardner-Smith beg

⁸⁷ *ibid.* 96.

⁸⁸ C.H. Dodd. 1963. *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 423.

the question, and both fail to provide an effective rebuttal to those defending the relationship between John and the Synoptics. An effective rebuttal would be tasked with identifying the most probable outcome from the entire collection of evidence while identifying possible shortcomings and addressing them. While such a task sounds daunting, that is just what the traditionalist school has done.

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