

# Richard Bauckham's *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*

## Summary and Short Critical Reflection

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### 1. Introduction

Without a doubt, Richard Bauckham's book, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006) is a major contribution to New Testament scholarship, a bomb thrown into the playground of 'historical Jesus' scholarship. His thesis is twofold, both historical as well as a theological. As he wrote in an interview with Chris Tilling:

The historical argument (most of the book) is that the eyewitnesses of the events of the Gospel history remained, throughout their lives, the authoritative sources and guarantors of the traditions about Jesus, and that the texts of our Gospels are much closer to the way the eyewitnesses told their stories than has been generally thought since the rise of form criticism. I also argue that the Gospels have ways, largely unnoticed before now, of indicating their own eyewitness sources, and I present new evidence for believing Papias' claim that Mark's Gospel was based on Peter's preaching'.

The theological argument:

... is that the category of testimony offers a category for the Gospels that is both historiographically and theologically appropriate, and a way beyond the dichotomy of the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. Jesus as presented by eyewitnesses participants in his history, for whom empirical fact and meaning were interrelated from the beginning, are the kind of access to Jesus that Christian faith requires.<sup>1</sup>

The following summary of Bauckham's book is naturally no substitute for the monograph itself, but it will hopefully help orientate the uninitiated into his subtle and complex detective work, and thereby perhaps further underscore the massive potential of his book to shake 'historical Jesus' scholarship right at its foundations.<sup>2</sup>

### 2. Summary

#### 2.1. *From the Historical Jesus to the Jesus of Testimony*

Bauckham's opening discussion concerns the question as to what one means by the term 'historical Jesus'. One option is to understand 'historical Jesus' to mean 'Jesus insofar as his historical reality is accessible to us'. But, and this leads one to the key dilemma involved in 'historical Jesus' questing, what counts as accessible evidence? Christian faith has traditionally trusted *the texts of the Gospels* to give us reliable knowledge of Christ and so 'it is hard to see how Christian faith and theology can work with a radically distrusting attitude to the Gospels'.

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1. <http://www.christilling.de/blog/2006/11/richard-bauckham-on-jesus-and.html>

2. An earlier form of much of the material below has appeared on my internet blog. This genre has facilitated considerable discussion with responses supplied by Bauckham himself. To access this, cf. <http://www.christilling.de/blog/2006/11/jesus-and-eyewitnesses-outline-of.html>, which provides links to all of the relevant discussions.

But is this so, and is this dilemma real? Cannot one simply apply critical scrutiny to the Gospels and seek external verification in order to recover the 'historical Jesus' from the picture presented in the Gospel narratives? Bauckham argues that the result of all modern 'historical Jesus' research 'is a Jesus reconstructed by the historian, a Jesus attained by the attempt to go back behind the Gospels and, in effect, to provide an alternative to the Gospels' constructions of Jesus'. Indeed, given that every portrait of the 'historical Jesus' is as much a construction as the Jesus of the Gospels, enquiring from the perspective of Christian faith:

'[W]e must ask whether the enterprise of reconstructing a historical Jesus behind the Gospels, as it has been pursued through all phases of the quest, can ever substitute for the Gospels themselves as a way of access to the reality of Jesus the man who lived in first-century Palestine'.

Thus, whether we like it or not, the central importance of the credibility of the Gospel witness is thrust onto centre stage. This is not to insist that historical research doesn't have an important place in informing our understanding of Jesus, but any attempt to 'do all over again what the evangelists did, though with different methods' will inevitably lead to a reductionist Jesus. So what is the way forward? Should one resign to the fact that there will always be those who simply trust the Gospels as reliable access to Jesus, and always those who will attempt a historical reconstruction based on their own methods? Bauckham's answer to this question involves the programmatic statement that shall be, in one way or another, the concern for the rest of the volume:

'I think there is a better way forward, a way in which theology and history may meet in the historical Jesus instead of parting company there. In this book I am making a first attempt to lay out some of the evidence and methods for it. Its key category is testimony'.

In the following sub-section, Bauckham thus develops what he means with this key category of 'eyewitness testimony'. In insisting the sense in which the Gospels should be understood as testimony, he argues that testimony asks to be trusted, not uncritically, but neither solely upon independent verification. While 'trusting testimony' is often regarded 'a stumbling-block in the way of the historian's autonomous access to truth that she or he can verify independently', Bauckham correctly notes 'all history, like all knowledge, relies on testimony'. This leads him to his first claim: 'We need to recognize that, historically speaking, testimony is a unique and uniquely valuable means of access to historical reality'. His second claim is no less insignificant: 'Testimony is the category that enables us to read the Gospels in a properly historical way and a properly theological way. It is where history and theology meet'.

However, how is one to understand the Gospels in light of this 'eyewitness testimony' category? Bauckham now sets forth the inevitably controversial agenda of the book:

'In general, I shall be arguing in this book that the Gospel texts are much closer to the form in which the eyewitnesses told their stories or passed on their traditions than is commonly envisaged in current scholarship. This is what gives the Gospels their character as testimony. They embody the testimony of the eyewitnesses, not of course without editing and interpretation, but in a way that is substantially faithful to how the eyewitnesses themselves told it, since the evangelists were in more or less direct contact with eyewitnesses, not removed from them by a long process of anonymous transmission of the traditions'.

The upshot of this thesis, if correct, is that form criticism and its modern legacy of the supposition of long periods of anonymous oral transmission – together with various theories as to how oral tradition was transmitted (cf. e.g. Gerhardsson's suggested parallel with folklore 'material extending over centuries and widely different geographical areas') – are misleading. Indeed, Bauckham is right to press the question: what is one to do with the disciples and the many eyewitness participants in the events narrated in the Gospels? For all intents and purposes, in traditional models they simply vanished from the scene without shaping the developing tradition. Against this, Bauckham aims to demonstrate that there existed a 'personal link of the Jesus tradition with particular tradents'. This is an important claim that will be necessary to return to as Bauckham's argument is traced throughout the volume. Indeed, it needs to be remembered that:

'The Gospels were written within living memory of the events they recount. Mark's Gospel was written well within the lifetime of many of the eyewitnesses, while the other three canonical Gospels were written in the period when living eyewitnesses were becoming scarce, exactly at the point in time when their testimony would perish with them were it not put in writing'.

This leads to the conclusion: '[I]n imagining how the traditions reached the Gospel writers, not oral tradition but eyewitness testimony should be our principal model'.

To close the first chapter, Bauckham turns to analyse the contribution of the Swedish scholar, Byrskog, and his thesis concerning the place of eyewitness testimony and the transmission of the Gospel traditions. Byrskog maintains, first, that eyewitness testimony played a crucial role in ancient historiography. As Bauckham summarises: 'Thucydides, Polybius, Josephus and Tacitus - were convinced that true history could be written only while events were still within living memory, and they valued as their sources the oral reports of direct experience of the events by involved participants in them'. Also desirable was to participate within the narrated events themselves (as did e.g. Josephus) and it was not considered a hindrance if the eyewitness source was personally and passionately involved in the events detailed. All the better, actually! For as Byrskog argues, a 'person involved remembers better than a disinterested observer'. Greek and Roman historians such as Thucydides and Polybius hence set a standard such that '[g]ood historians were highly critical of those who relied largely on written sources'.

Second, Byrskog maintains that eyewitnesses played a similar role in the transmission and formation of the Gospel traditions. Bauckham summarises that Byrskog 'attempts to identify such eyewitnesses and to find the traces of their testimony in the Gospels, stressing that they, like the historians and their informants, would have been involved participants who not only remembered facts but naturally also interpreted in the process of experiencing and remembering'. Such eyewitnesses were people who could be consulted regarding the traditions they testified to, and testify not just the bare facts but also 'the perspective and experience of oral informants'.

However, while Byrskog's work is a highly significant one, critics have suggested a few problems. In the historical argument of this book (chapters 2-17!), Bauckham will take up the challenge of critically assessing such challenges and testing and developing Byrskog's line of reasoning.

## 2.2. Papias on the Eyewitnesses

Papias was a third-generation Christian, and therefore belonged to 'a generation that had been in touch with the first Christian generation'. The passage Bauckham analyses is from the prologue to his major work, *Exposition of the Logia of the Lord*, as recorded in Eusebius (of Caesarea), *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.3-4. His argument involves analysis of:

- 1) The categories of people mentioned in the material (suggesting four groups, building on the work of Schoedel),
- 2) The date about which the material testifies (arguing that it speaks *about* a period around the 80s – even if it were written much later). This dating has the consequence that ‘what Papias says in this passage can be placed alongside Luke’s reference to the eyewitnesses (Luke 1:2) as evidence for the way the relationship of the eyewitnesses to Gospel traditions was understood at the time when the Gospels were being written’. Of course, the immediate upshot of this line of reasoning is clear: ‘The oral traditions had not evolved away from [the eyewitnesses] but continued to be attached to them, so that people like Papias wanted to hear specifically what any one of them said’.
- 3) The authenticity of the material. Not only does the geographical location of Papias (Hierapolis) suit very comfortably a collection of Jesus traditions, but the tone of the passage is quite modest, and is therefore unlikely a mere apologetic exaggeration.
- 4) The phrase, ‘a living and surviving voice’. This is not evidence of a prejudice against written materials in preference of oral tradition as many have supposed, but rather is alluding to a common proverb which meant to indicate that ‘what is preferable to writing is not a lengthy chain of oral tradition, but direct personal experience of a teacher’ - a typical piece of wisdom reflected in Graeco-Roman historians such as Polybius.

To appreciate Bauckham’s argument that Papias prefers not oral tradition to books ‘but access, while they are still alive, to those who were direct participants in the historical events - in this case “disciples of the Lord”’, it is necessary to understand that his reading of Papias is set against a historiographical background. While ‘a living and surviving voice’ points in this direction, Bauckham wants to argue that ‘Papias deliberately uses the terminology of historiographical practice’. Thus he also notes the significance of Papias’ use of the verb *anakrinein*, a word appearing in Lucian of Samosata’s historiographical work and prominently in that of Polybius. Furthermore, the first sentence of the Prologue, accepting Kürzinger’s revised translation, indicates that ‘Papias is describing the stages of producing an historical work precisely as Lucian, in his book on how to write history, describes them’.

However, it is to be noticed that Papias adds his own words (‘and surviving’) to this proverbial historiographical wisdom (‘living voice’). Given the time concerning which Papias reminisces, and that the ‘voice’ refers to the very real voices of eyewitnesses associated with specific groups of people, the words ‘and surviving’ can be better appreciated. What Papias ‘seeks are the reminiscences of those who knew Jesus and in which the passage of time has now been such that few of those people are still alive’. Not only is this how Jerome understood Papias, but this would then make sense of the immediate context of the Prologue in which Papias mentions that which ‘Aristion and the elder John ... *were saying (legousin)*’ (italics mine). The ‘surviving voices’ here are thus like those mentioned in 1 Cor 15:6 (and cf. Joh 21:22, 23).

The final section of this chapter concerns an analysis of the difference between the scholarly understanding of ‘oral tradition’ and ‘oral history’. Part of the importance of the association of Papias’ statement with Luke’s Prologue is that ‘these informants - whether the Twelve or other disciples - were not only eyewitnesses but also prominent teachers in the early Christian movement’. However, the assumption in most scholarly discussion concerning the transmission of Jesus traditions orally is that this took place in collective groups, in the collective memories of anonymous communities, rather than with individual carriers of tradition, and thus ‘*presupposes* that the origins of the traditions were far removed, by many stages of transmission, from the form the traditions would have taken by the later first century’ (italics his). Bauckham’s analysis of Papias’ statement is thus clear evidence against this assumption.

Furthermore, and building on the work of Jan Vansina, Bauckham's exegesis of Papias stresses the difference between what may be called oral tradition and oral history. And later on, through an analysis of material in Josephus (*C. Ap.* 1.49-50 and *Life* 361) and the use of the word *paradosis*, Bauckham will point out that association of 'oral tradition' with cross-generational distance and orality to the exclusion of written records is an anachronism. Essentially, and citing Vansina, the difference may be understood as follows:

'The sources of oral historians are reminiscences, hearsay, or eyewitness accounts about events and situations which are contemporary, that is, which occurred during the lifetime of the informants. This differs from oral tradition in that oral traditions are no longer contemporary'.

While it is clear that Papias was collecting sayings at a time 'oral history' as defined above was becoming impossible, and thus dealt with traditions that were being transmitted beyond the lifetime of the original eyewitness, 'we can certainly suppose that Papias, with his aspirations to best historical practice, would have valued particularly those traditions that the Elders had received directly from named disciples of Jesus'. Papias was concerned to hear what the elders said the disciples said/were saying, and not what surfaced in the collective memory of churches. While such community tradition certainly existed, this did not, and this is Bauckham's argument in a nutshell, exclude or take the place of individual carriers of tradition.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the general scholarly presuppositions about oral transmission neglect the role played by often very mobile individual leaders.<sup>4</sup>

Through a brief analysis of Irenaeus' recollection of Polycarp, Bauckham can also claim that the model of tradition transmission pursued in his thesis – through named individuals – is one 'with which later second-century Christian writers worked', a model also shared by second-century Gnostic teachers. But of course the important question is whether the analysis of the handling of tradition by Papias is really applicable to the Gospels:

'We might well ask why, if Gospel traditions were known as the traditions told by specific named eyewitnesses, they are not attached to such names in the Gospels themselves? Perhaps they are. Perhaps we need to look at the names in the Gospels more carefully and with fresh questions'.

In the following chapters Bauckham will address just such concerns.

### 2.3. *Names in the Gospel Traditions*

The thesis to be pursued in this chapter is very simple yet at the same time bold and highly original: 'many of these named characters [in the Gospels] were eyewitnesses who not only originated the traditions to which their names are attached but also continued to tell these stories as authoritative guarantors of their traditions'. While it is perfectly intelligible why some persons in the Gospels are named, with others *an explanation is necessary*. For example, why is it that Luke only names one of the disciples in the Emmaus road story (cf. Luke 24:18)? Other related questions shall be dealt with

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3. Hence contra Dunn (J. D. G. Dunn, "On History, Memory and Eyewitnesses: In Response to Bengt Holmberg and Samuel Byrskog," *JSNT* 26 [2004]: 483–84 and James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, Christianity in the Making [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 198–99 n. 138).

4. Cf. the book edited by Bauckham in which it was argued that 'the Gospels were written with the intention that they should circulate around all the churches', and not simply for a specific church or group of churches such as the so-called Markan community, Johannine community etc. (Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Gospels for All Christians* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998], 1).

in chapters 5 and 8, but this chapter analyses ‘the presence in the Gospel traditions of names other than those of members of the Twelve and other than those of public persons’.

If one assumes Markan priority, then ‘material common to the three Synoptic Gospels ... shows an unambiguous tendency towards the elimination of names’. The Johannine material adds a few names additional to those appearing in the Synoptics, and also identifies some left anonymous in the Synoptics. However, this should not be seen as a Johannine novelistic tendency for it cannot answer why John would leave quite a number of characters anonymous, especially when some of these characters are more prominent than those he names. Even in the extra-canonical Gospels there are only a few examples ‘of invented names for anonymous characters in the Gospels before the fourth century’ (though this argument assumes that one must not include the naming of characters that have been freshly invented within a narrative).

Given the common Jewish practice of giving, within ‘rewritten biblical narrative’, names to characters not named in Scripture, the fact that Christians *did not* do this in the Gospel traditions is even more noteworthy. Bauckham himself concludes that most of the named characters in the Gospel traditions are original. Given that names tend to be the least well remembered elements of events, it follows that the Gospel tradition will evidence their reduction. This makes it all the more important to ascertain why some names have been kept in the narratives.

In light of this evidence concerning the appearance and disappearance of names in early Christian traditions, Bauckham wants to suggest a ‘comprehensive hypothesis’ that enables one to account for the named characters in the Gospel traditions. In a nutshell he suggests that, with the exception of a few, the named characters are ‘people [who] joined the early Christian movement and were well known at least in the circles in which these traditions were first transmitted’. Not only is the assumption that many of these characters joined the early Christian communities in Judea or Galilee explicitly affirmed in a few cases (e.g. the four brothers of Jesus), but the sort of spread of people evidenced is exactly what one would have expected these earliest Christian groups to consist of. The tendency of Matthew and Luke to omit some of these names can be explained as a result of a realisation that some of them would have become, ‘by the time Matthew and Luke wrote, too obscure for them to wish to retain the names when they were engaged in abbreviating Mark’s narratives’.

However, more needs to be said than simply that the named persons were known in the early Christian communities:

‘If the names are of persons well known in the Christian communities, then it also becomes likely that many of these persons were themselves the eyewitnesses who first told and doubtless continued to tell the stories in which they appear and to which their names are attached’

Bauckham first examples this argument with reference to the character called Cleopas (cf. Luke 24:18; John 19:25 and Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.11; 4.22.4). Three further cases lend strength to Bauckham’s case: ‘the women at the cross and the tomb; Simon of Cyrene and his sons; and recipients of Jesus’ healing miracles’. For the rest of the chapter, Bauckham will analyse each in turn.

i) In all the Synoptic Gospels the role of women as eyewitnesses is, as Bauckham notes, crucial: ‘they see Jesus die, they see his body being laid in the tomb, they find the tomb empty’.<sup>5</sup> A comparison of the difference in variation of names of the women mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels could suggest that the writers were not interested in historical accuracy at this point. However, Bauckham insists that the variations are evidence of ‘the scrupulous *care* with which the Gospels present the women as witnesses’. *The Gospel writers were careful only to name those who were known as eyewitnesses of*

5. Cf. also Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002).

*specific events, even when this left the edges of the narrative unpolished.* Furthermore, these women arguably remained prominent in the early church and were associated with the transmission of these traditions.

ii) While readers of Mark would naturally assume that the Twelve disciples were the major sources of the traditions within the Gospel, when they vanish from the narrative (at 14:72) the reader is left wondering who the witnesses to these events were until the mention of the women in 15:40. Who, then, witnessed the events in 15:1-15:39? Enter Simon of Cyrene. The only variation in the Synoptics is that Mark names his two sons, while Matthew and Luke omit them. Bauckham argues that Mark cites them as he appeals to Simon's eyewitness testimony not first-hand but through his sons. And they were named as they remained well-known figures in the early church and could be asked about the events themselves, whereas by the time of Matthew's and Luke's Gospel, they were no longer available or well known.

iii) The recipients of Jesus' healings were not often named so appeal to genre cannot explain why some were named in specific stories. To take an example:

'In the cases of Jairus, whose name is dropped by Matthew, and Bartimaeus, whose name is dropped by both Matthew and Luke, we encounter once again the phenomenon of a character who must have been named by Mark because he was well-known in the early Christian movement but whose name was dropped by one or both of the later Synoptic evangelists, presumably because at the time at which they wrote or in the part of the Christian movement with which they were most familiar this figure was not well-known'.

This alleged eyewitness function of the recipients of Jesus' healings is also suggested by the words of Quadratus (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.3.2), who reminisces about a time in his life 'of which it could credibly be said that some people healed by Jesus were still alive'.

Finally, and displaying the fair and honest judgment that typifies Bauckham's handling of matters throughout the book, he notes that while the existence of vivid detail within a story is not strictly evidence for or against it be reflective of an eyewitness retelling, 'it is at least interesting that some of the stories we have suggested come from those who are named in them are among the most vividly told'.

#### 2.4. *Palestinian Jewish Names*

In this key chapter Bauckham takes a small 'time out' from the main thrust of his argumentation in order to pursue an investigation of Palestinian Jewish names in the first century. He does this to inform his approach in the following chapters. His foundational claim is that, in light of the work of Israeli scholar, Tal Ilan, and her *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity: Part I: Palestine 330 BCE - 200 CE* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002) names are now a valuable resource for historical study. Indeed, Ilan has collected the names 'of as many as three thousand Palestinian Jews who lived during the five centuries' she covers.

However, Bauckham does not uncritically appropriate Ilan's work, and he differs in his understanding of certain criteria, which Ilan used to generate the statistical calculations. Bauckham's purpose is primarily to gauge the popularity of each name and so where 'Ilan counts persons', Bauckham counts 'occurrences of a name'. Thus his statistical analysis produces different results in such a way that indicates that a considerably smaller number of names were actually used.

Based upon his foundational claim that the study of Palestinian Jewish names in the first century is of importance, Bauckham proceeds to assert the significance of the fact that 'there were a small number of very popular names and a large

number of rare ones'. Comparing the results of the broader statistical analysis with the names found in the NT, Bauckham can maintain, despite some anomalies, that the statistical results offered concerning the relative popularity of various male and female names is very plausible.

A comparative study of the names of Palestinian Jews in general and those found in the Gospels and Acts leads to an important observation:

'[T]he names of Palestinian Jews in the Gospels and Acts coincide very closely with the names of the general population of Jewish Palestine in this period, *but not to the names of Jews in the diaspora*. In this light it becomes very unlikely that those in the Gospels are late accretions to the traditions'.

But why were some names so popular? The fact that 'six of the nine most popular male names are those of the Hasmonean family' indicates that the popularity of certain names is understandable as patriotism in light of Roman rule. Other names were popular because they included, or in some way implied, the divine name. Indeed, many of the names seem to reflect a strong hope for Israel's restoration and for deliverance from pagan oppressors. While Bauckham does not deny that names do not have to be popular for any specific reason but remain popular simply because they are so and would, for the sake of family tradition, be repeated from one generation to another, he still suggests that 'these are secondary factors that do not nullify the rather clear general reasons for the really rather extraordinary popularity of a rather small number of names'. Furthermore, in light of the above reasons Bauckham offers for the popularity of certain names, it may come as a surprise that the most famous Biblical names (Moses, David, Elijah) were not used hardly at all. Bauckham reasons:

'It may have been thought that to use these names for one's own children would be a presumptuous expectation that these children were actually the expected eschatological deliverers. So the non-use of these names is itself a kind of negative form of evidence for the messianic hopes of the period'.

While some of the above may be interesting, it is not as central to Bauckham's developing argument as what follows. Given that 'about half the population of Jewish Palestine were called by only about a dozen personal names', this means that a single name was not sufficient to distinguish one (e.g.) Simon (the most popular male name) from the next Simon. So how did these Jews go about distinguishing people with the same name from each other? Bauckham observes eleven strategies including the use of variant names, the addition or substitution of the patronymic, or husband's or son's name, or the use of a nickname, or place of origin, occupation etc. (cf., e.g. Mark 15:40; Luke 24:10; Acts 9:43; 10:7; 21:38).

While this chapter lays some important groundwork for the following arguments, there are some immediate implications. The names found in the Gospels 'could not possibly have resulted from the accretion of names outside Jewish Palestine, since the pattern of Jewish name usage in the diaspora was very different'. Indeed, given that the gospels evidence typical strategies for distinguishing one person from another with the same name, it would be difficult to explain this data 'as the result of random invention of names within Palestinian Jewish Christianity, and impossible to explain as the result of such invention outside Jewish Palestine'. Therefore, the authenticity of the names in the Gospel traditions is affirmed, which thus also 'underlines the plausibility of the suggestion made in chapter 3 as to the significance of many of these names: that they indicate the eyewitness sources of the individual stories in which they occur'.



### 2.5. *The Twelve*

Bauckham's central contention in the historical argument of the book is that Gospel traditions were associated with named eyewitnesses of the teaching, life death and resurrection of Jesus, and that these traditions remained, in transmission, closely associated with these specific eyewitnesses. Gospel traditions should not, then, be understood as the product of tradition circulated in anonymous church communities. The Twelve, while not alone (Bauckham contends that Gerhardsson's stress on the authoritative status of the Twelve is exaggerated) should nevertheless be seen as central in the transmission process.

But, and to be blunt, is the appointing of twelve disciples by Jesus historical? Along with the 'majority of recent scholars' Bauckham, accepting the judgements of John Meier,<sup>6</sup> S. M. Bryan,<sup>7</sup> M. Hengel and others, confidently affirms the historical veracity of the Twelve. And these disciples were, importantly, appointed first and foremost to be Jesus' companions - though they were not the only ones as, e.g. 'there were also the women (Luke 8:1-3)'. Bauckham's key claim is that the disciples remained the authoritative transmitters of the Jesus tradition in the earliest Christian communities. Not only is this a most natural assumption given that the Twelve would be the most obvious group to formulate and organise a body of Jesus traditions, Bauckham will develop an original case for his theory through an analysis of the Synoptic lists of the Twelve.

He claims that the lists of the Twelve that are found in all the synoptic Gospels (he will examine the significance of the fact John doesn't have one later) are confirmation 'that the Twelve constituted an official body of eyewitnesses'. Given the presence of Judas in all the lists, and his being allocated the final position, Bauckham fairly reasons the lists, while detailing the pre-Easter situation, are written from the perspectives of the early Church, and are thus 'fashioned precisely to display the continuity of this group during and after Jesus' ministry, i.e. with Jesus and in the early Christian community'. This is so not least because the lists were clearly not added to the Gospels merely to introduce the characters as 'no less than seven of these persons are never elsewhere mentioned again or appear as individuals in the Gospels of Mark and Luke, while the same is true of six of them in Matthew'. The Twelve 'are named, not as the authorities for this or that specific tradition, but as responsible for the overall shape of the story of Jesus and much of its content'. This is a suggestion made most explicit in Luke 1:2, but is, Bauckham urges, 'surely implicit in Matthew and Mark'.

However, to maintain this argument, Bauckham must deal with the obvious objection that the differences in the lists suggest that the members of the Twelve were no longer accurately remembered. Bauckham first stresses that the differences between the lists are not great. They exhibit the same basic structure of three groups of four, with the same person mentioned first always, and Judas likewise always last (I would add that such accuracy and variation in remembering a list like this is typical of the findings in memory studies – I don't believe Bauckham touches on this point later in chapter 13 and 'Eyewitness Memory'). Bauckham also suggests conceivable redactional reasons as to why Mark, Matthew and Acts changed the order of some of the names.

However, the Mark/Matt Thaddaeus becomes the Judas of James in Luke/Acts, so there appears to be at least one instance of real discrepancy between the lists. This has led to some bloated claims concerning the inaccuracy of the lists entirely.<sup>8</sup> His solution to this apparent problem, building on his argument in the previous chapter (that 'Palestinian Jews sometimes - perhaps often - bore both a Semitic and a Greek name'), is elegant. In a nutshell, 'To distinguish him [Judas of

6. J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Vol. 3. Companions and Competitors* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 128–47.

7. Steven M. Bryan, *Jesus and Israel's Traditions of Judgement and Restoration*, SNTSMS (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 123–24.

8. Bauckham notes Fitzmyer (J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke [I-IX]* [New York: Doubleday, 1981], 620).

James in Luke/Acts] from Judas Iscariot, this Judas could have been called by his patronymic, Judas son of James (*Yehudah bar Ya'aqov*), or, alternatively, he could have been known by his Greek name, Thaddaeus (*Taddai*).

Thus, a strong argument has been mounted such that the lists of the Twelve can be recognised as carefully preserved. And given many of the names of the Twelve are amongst the most common Jewish names from this period, it is no surprise that the many strategies that were used to distinguish, say, one Simon from another, are also preserved in the lists to distinguish one member from another. Indeed, Bauckham observes, within the lists of the Twelve, the use of many of these strategies. This last fact leads to the astonishing conclusion that the lists 'must have originated within the circle of the Twelve themselves' as such epithets were naturally used to 'distinguish members of the Twelve among themselves'. Why, then, were the Twelve remembered not only with great care but also 'to preserve precisely the way they were known in their own milieu during the ministry of Jesus and in the early Jerusalem church'? For Bauckham, the answer is straightforward: 'It is difficult to account for this phenomenon except by the hypothesis that the Twelve were the official eyewitnesses and guarantors of the core of the Gospel traditions'.

In the last section of this chapter Bauckham shows that he is no mere apologist and that he uses his own criteria even-handedly. Using the onomastic studies of the previous chapter Bauckham argues that the Thaddaeus of Mark and Matt is the same person as the 'Judas of James' in Luke and Acts. However, in light of the same arguments the identification of the Matthew of Matt 9:9 with the Levi son of Alphaeus of Mark 2:14 must be judged as implausible, as one would then 'be confronted with the virtually unparalleled phenomenon of a Palestinian Jew bearing two common Semitic personal names'. Of course, Bauckham's argument in this section does more than show that he is no apologist as he also offers an explanation as to why Matt 9:9 changes the name, namely because the Gospel author 'has appropriated Mark's story of the call of Levi, making it a story of Matthew's call instead'. This implies that the author 'intended to associate the Gospel with the apostle Matthew, but he was not himself the apostle Matthew'.

## 2.6. *Eyewitnesses "from the Beginning"*

The following chapter is a creative and learned discussion addressing the issue that scholars 'have often supposed that the Gospel writers cannot have attached much importance to eyewitness testimony since they do not indicate named eyewitness sources of the traditions they use'. While in previous chapters Bauckham has suggested that specific named individuals in the Gospels can be accounted for in that they were eyewitnesses, and that the lists of the Twelve serve to name an official body of eyewitnesses, in this chapter he attempts, in a two-stage argument, to maintain the Gospel writers did indeed have their own way of indicating eyewitness sources.

The first part of the argument maintains that 'in the early Christian movement a special importance [was] attached to the testimony of disciples who had been eyewitnesses of the whole ministry of Jesus, from its beginning at the time when John was baptizing, and whose witness extended to the resurrection appearances'. The whole ministry of Jesus, at least in light of Acts 1:21-22; 10:36-42; John 15:26-27, was seen to encompass the events including and sandwiched between Jesus' baptism and his resurrection. Naturally, the Twelve would have been specially qualified and 'authoritative' witnesses of this Christ-story understood in its broadest sense, even if they were not alone. But do the Gospels evidence such an understanding of eyewitnesses?

To answer this, Bauckham draws attention to the important evidence found in Luke's prologue. First, the mention of *αὐτόπται* in Luke 1:2 is discussed. While Bauckham (here following Loveday Alexander's extensive study) is clear that

this word should not be understood forensically but rather as referring to ‘firsthand observers’, the main point involves noting the historiographical associations in the wider context. This leads to the proposition that the phrase ‘from the beginning’ (ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς) should be seen not as ‘an evocation of the authority of antiquity in hellenistic culture or a reference to the authoritative ancient sources of an oral tradition’, but rather ‘a claim that the eyewitnesses had been present throughout the events from the appropriate commencement of the author’s history onwards’. Furthermore, the evidence in the prologue coheres well with the historiographical principle of choosing the appropriate starting-point for a history (cf. the reference to Plutarch and Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1:47). Thus, the preface to Luke’s Gospel evidences an understanding of the principal eyewitnesses – as those who had been present ‘from the beginning’ in such a way that, while perhaps just common sense on Luke’s part, reflects historiographical principles.

The main thrust of Bauckham’s argument is to affirm the importance of eyewitnesses ‘from the beginning’ in early Christianity. These eyewitnesses were also, Bauckham argues, the ὑπηρέται γενόμενοι τοῦ λόγου. Indeed, the identification of the eyewitnesses with these servants of the word is best seen as a grammatical necessity in Luke 1:2 such that those who were eyewitnesses of the whole of Jesus’ ministry thereby later qualified to be servants of the word. Of course, while these servants may not be reduced to Twelve, it would certainly have included them.

But do the other Gospels evidence anything comparable to Luke’s prologue? Building on the key observation made explicit in Luke’s prologue - that principal eyewitnesses were those who had been present ‘from the beginning’ - Bauckham boldly argues that the Gospels evidence a ‘literary device’ used to mark the principal eyewitnesses. This ‘device’ found first in Mark’s Gospel, and observed in the mention of Peter’s name at both the beginning and end of the story, emphasises that this eyewitness was present from the beginning to the end of Jesus’ ministry. The first reference (1:16) involve as an awkward double mention of Simon’s name, while the final reference in 16:7 forms ‘an *inclusio* around the whole story’. What evidence is there to support this claim?

First, Papias’s witness always suggested Peter’s hand in the Markan Gospel.<sup>9</sup> Second, the frequency of Peter’s name in Mark’s Gospel is indicative of the important part Peter played in this narrative. Third, Peter ‘is actually present through a large proportion of the narrative from 1:16 to 14:72’. However, also important is the evidence that comes to light when this *inclusio* device in Mark is compared with its reception and change in the Gospels of John and Luke. Both John and Luke preserve the Markan ‘Petrine *inclusio*’, thus indicating their indebtedness to the Petrine testimony within Mark which they use for their own Gospels. However, the *inclusio* is altered by both J and L *in such a way that indicates its presence was recognised by both John and Luke, and was exploited to make a different claim*. Bauckham’s analysis of the material in the fourth Gospel leads to the conclusion that John:

‘uses the *inclusio* of eyewitness testimony in order to privilege the witness of the Beloved Disciple, which this Gospel embodies. It does so, however, not simply by ignoring the Petrine *inclusio* of Mark’s Gospel, but by enclosing a Petrine *inclusio* within its *inclusio* of the Beloved Disciple’.<sup>10</sup>

The beloved disciple is introduced at the beginning of the narrative unobtrusively ‘but rather immodestly in that he displaces Peter from the position of absolute priority’. Put directly: ‘John’s Gospel thus uses the *inclusio* of eyewitness testimony in order to privilege the witness of the Beloved Disciple’. Indeed, John’s Gospel seems to imply a friendly competition

9. Bauckham’s whole argument thus flies in the face of Joel Marcus’ claim that ‘were it not for Papias, one would never suspect that the Second Gospel were particularly Petrine.’ (J. Marcus, *Mark 1-8* [AB27; New York: Doubleday, 1999], 24.)

10. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006), 129.

between Peter and the Beloved disciple such that the importance of the Petrine testimony (via Mark<sup>11</sup>) is played off against that of John. Bauckham sums up:

‘So three of the four Gospels evidently work quite deliberately with the idea that a Gospel, since it tells the whole story of Jesus, must embody the testimony of witnesses who were participants in the story from beginning to end - from the time of John the Baptist’s ministry to the time of the resurrection appearances. These three Gospels all use the literary device of the *inclusio* of eyewitness testimony in order to indicate the main eyewitness source of their story. This does not, of course, exclude the appropriation also of material from other eyewitnesses, and we shall see that these Gospels also do that’.<sup>12</sup>

Matthew’s Gospel seems uninterested in alluding to the principle of eyewitness testimony, a point coherent with the uniquely Matthean feature that he adds no names ‘to those occurring already in Mark, while actually dropping several of the names in Mark’.<sup>13</sup> However, Luke’s Gospel, like John’s, shows a striking re-appropriation of Mark’s *inclusio*, and includes another of his own indicating the presence of the female eyewitness sources. While Luke is, like John, dependant on the Petrine tradition through Mark, and indicates this in the broadest *inclusio*, the mention of the names of the women in Luke at both 8:2-3 and 24:5-7 form another *inclusio*, ‘bracketing all but the earliest part of Jesus’ ministry’, indicating Luke’s reliance on their testimony. Striking is that Luke doesn’t refer to the women by name, as does Matthew, Mark and John, when they are present at the cross. ‘Instead, he reserves that information until the end of his story of the women’s visit to the empty tomb: ‘Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles (24:10)’. This implies that Luke was careful to only name the women to indicate the end of the *inclusio* of their eyewitness.

But did Mark invent this literary device, or was it borrowed from ‘popular biographical works of the kind that the Gospels resemble in genre’? While there are only a few remaining of the sort (biographical works on significant religious figures), Bauckham examines two case studies that resemble the pattern observed in the Gospels (apart from Matthew).

First is Lucian’s work on Alexander. Lucian’s references to Rutilianus indicate he was the principle eyewitness of Alexander’s life. The evidence is highly suggestive: ‘Apart from Alexander himself, there are far more references to Rutilianus than to any other character. Just like the Petrine *inclusio* in the Gospel of Mark, Rutilianus is both the first character in the story, apart from Alexander, to be named and the last to be mentioned by name’. Furthermore, the first mention of Rutilianus appears to be contrived. Though ‘Rutilianus does not actually figure in the story until Alexander’s fame reaches Rome (§30) halfway through the book’, ‘Lucian contrives to make him the first named character, other than Alexander, to be mentioned by citing a letter from Alexander to him before he has begun to tell the story’. Lucian also parodies this eyewitness in that he calls Rutilianus’ credibility into account while using him as an eyewitness source. Nevertheless, ‘the resemblance between the way that Rutilianus, Alexander’s most eminent follower, appears in Lucian’s narrative and the way that Peter, Jesus’ most prominent disciple, appears in the Gospel of Mark’ is noteworthy.

The second example is Porphyry’s *Life of Plotinus*. Porphyry uses the eyewitness Amelius as his source, though he only refers to him as his source once, at the very beginning. He did not need to mention his name again, as ‘After this first

11. Bauckham considers it most plausible that John expected his readers knew of Mark (R. Bauckham, ‘John for Readers of Mark,’ in R. Bauckham ed., *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997], 147-171).

12. Richard Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 131.

13. *Ibid.*, 132.

reference the matter should be evident'. Once again, 'apart from Plotinus and Porphyry, [Amelius] is the person named first and last in the work'. Additionally, 'Amelius's name occurs thirty-eight times, more often than that of anyone else except Plotinus, exceeding even the occurrences of Porphyry's name (twenty-five times)'. Amelius was indeed an ideal eyewitness in that he encompassed the story of Plotinus. Nevertheless, in a way reminiscent of the friendly competition between John and Peter in the Johannine Gospel, 'Porphyry plays up his own importance as disciple of Plotinus and contrives also to denigrate Amelius'. Furthermore, Amelius, Porphyry wants to communicate, 'did not truly understand his master, while Porphyry, who even had the experience of union with the One in common with his Plotinus, was the true continuator of Plotinus's philosophy'. Again, this is 'rather reminiscent of the roles of Peter and the Beloved Disciple in the Gospel of John'. The striking similarities between the Gospels and Porphyry Life of Plotinus (what Mark Edwards has suggested 'was intended as a pagan gospel') - especially given Porphyry's knowledge of the Gospels - leads to the question: 'Was his use of the inclusio of eyewitness testimony also modelled on the Gospels?' Bauckham answers: 'It is impossible to be sure, but, if it was, it is significant for our argument that Porphyry recognized this feature of the Gospels'.

Bauckham concludes:

'[H]owever much weight should be given to these parallels outside the Gospels, the data within the Gospels is itself adequate to attest the convention as one that the Gospel writers deliberately deployed. Especially important in establishing the inclusio of eyewitness testimony is the way in which Luke and John seem clearly to have recognized Mark's use of the device and to have adapted it to their own narratives and purposes'.

Hence, the Gospels do indicate their own eyewitness sources, an argument all the more credible when one considers 'most ancient readers or hearers of these works ... would have expected them to have eyewitness sources' and so would have been alert to any indications of eyewitness identification.

### 2.7. *The Petrine Perspective in the Gospel of Mark*

'Mark's Gospel not only, by its use of the inclusio of eyewitness testimony, claims Peter as its main eyewitness source; it also tells the story predominantly (though by no means exclusively) from Peter's perspective'.

In the previous chapter Bauckham maintained that the identified literary *inclusio* established Peter as the key eyewitness for the Markan Gospel. However, what further evidence would suggest that the Gospel of Mark involves a particularly Petrine perspective? While modern scholarship tends to reject the claim of Papias that the Markan Gospel was based on Peter's sermons, or even that it displays Petrine influence, Bauckham, in this chapter, will argue that there is good internal evidence in the Gospel of Mark for just such a Petrine perspective (chapter 9 will look more closely at Papias' claims regarding Mark's Gospel).

The first step in his argument builds upon a neglected article by C. Turner published in 1925. Turner argued that the Gospel tells the story from the perspective of one of the Twelve, and this must be Peter. In particular:

'Turner drew attention to twenty-one passages in Mark, in which a plural verb (or more than one plural verb), without an explicit subject, is used to describe the movements of Jesus and his disciples, followed immediately by a singular verb or pronoun referring to Jesus alone' (For example, '*They came* to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. And when *he had stepped out* of the boat' [5:1-2]).

Bauckham calls this the plural-to-single narrative device. It is an unusual phenomenon for there is a distinction in the words not only between first- and third-person, but also between plural and singular. What is the significance of this? Citing Turner:

‘[T]he natural and obvious explanation is that we have before us the experience of a disciple and apostle who tells the story from the point of view of an eyewitness and companion, who puts himself in the same group as the Master ... Matthew and Luke are Christian historians who stand away from the events, and concentrate their narrative on the central figure’.

Hence, this device shows us that Mark contains a literary feature that emphasises ‘the “point of view” of the group of disciples or of someone within the group’. A comparison of the use of this phenomenon with parallels in Matthew and Luke, demonstrates the use of this device as ‘overwhelmingly Markan’. Furthermore, the textual critical questions surrounding the instances of Mark’s use of the device, while not reason to doubt the authenticity of the device, show that it was felt to be an unnatural literary occurrence. So why does it exist in Mark? On top of this, the Markan use of the plural-to-singular device appears to be deliberately associated with the Markan *inclusio* (as discussed in the previous chapter), and appears intentionally maintained in Mark through entire pericopae to emphasise a certain perspective. These observations have important consequences that shall be revisited, but before the significance of these observations can be appreciated, Bauckham covers a little more ground.

Those scholars engaged in narratological analysis of Mark’s Gospel, and the ‘point of view’ expressed, have long recognised the presence of what is called an ‘omniscient narrator’. However, not only have they failed to notice the presence of the plural-to-singular device, the significance of the ‘internal vocalisation’ perspective which ‘enables readers to view the scene from the vantage point, spatial and (optionally) also psychological, of a character within the story’, has been neglected. The function of the device understood in light of narratological study is, as Bauckham shows, to get ‘readers into spatial position vis-à-vis the scene in which Jesus then acts’.

Bauckham’s emphasis on the deliberate Markan use of the device, and its relation to the *inclusio*, raises an important question for which the previous observations are relevant. While Mark’s deliberate employment of the literary device speaks against Turner’s claim that the phenomenon is ‘a mere relic of the way Peter told his stories orally’, does this mean the device was only a literary device and not reflective of a genuine Petrine perspective? First the unnaturalness of the literary structure, as noted above, makes this unlikely. Furthermore, such a view doesn’t take into consideration the fact that Mark appears to use this device in association with the *inclusio*. Related as it is to the *inclusio*, Bauckham concludes:

‘While the Petrine *inclusio* is Mark’s literary means of indicating Peter as the main eyewitness source of the Gospel, the plural-to-singular narrative device appropriately makes the dominant perspective (internal focalization) within the Gospel’s narrative the perspective of Peter and those closest to him’

Therefore, the device functions, in effect, as ‘Mark’s way of deliberately reproducing in his narrative the first-person perspective - the “we” perspective - from which Peter naturally told his stories’.

Bauckham then shows that Mark’s use of the device tends to cluster together with appearances of the mention of the name of Peter, at least at the beginning and at the end of the sequences of the device. However, only four pericopae ‘that are introduced by this narrative device are pericope in which Peter appears as a character’, leaving eight pericopae using the

device that do not feature Peter. To answer the obvious question: ‘what of those pericopae that lack the narrative device but do feature Peter as a character?’, Bauckham turns to analyse the role and character of Peter in Mark.

To address this issue, Bauckham builds on the work of Timothy Wiarda in casting doubt on an understanding of Peter in the Gospel of Mark as ‘representative’ of the disciples. Bauckham’s analysis of the material leads the following conclusion:

‘Peter, we could say, is always aligned with the other disciples, whether as typical or as giving a lead. Even before the story of the denials, Peter has much more individuality in this Gospel than any of the other disciples, but it is an individuality that always emerges within the context of the group’

What is the significance of this conclusion? Tying this to the result of the analysis of the plural-to-singular device - in which it was argued that it gives ‘the readers a perspective on events *from within* the circle of the disciples’ - it is possible to understand this individuality as indicative of Peter himself. Bauckham suggests that ‘we could call it Peter’s “we” perspective (distinguished from his “I” perspective)’.

What Bauckham’s study of the role of Peter has enabled is an appreciation of the tension between the portrayal of Peter as a typical disciple yet also one with his own individuality. This coheres with the two main themes explored in Mark, that between understanding in contrast with non/misunderstanding, and loyalty in contrast with apostasy. The tension of Peter’s typifying yet also individual role in the Gospel coheres precisely with this double themed Markan concern, as 8:27-9:13 and 14:29-72 show. While this is highly suggestive, Bauckham is perhaps not entirely clear what it all has to do with the questions stated at the outset of this subsection. Yet the answer would appear to be that Peter need not be in all of the pericopae introduced by the singular-to-plural device because Mark is in complete control of his sources, using his main eyewitness for his own purposes.

As with the plural-to-singular narrative device, we must recognize that Peter’s role in the Gospel is not *merely* a reflection of the way Peter himself told the stories. It is too well integrated into the overall message of the Gospel and into the way in which Mark’s masterly composition of his narrative is controlled by his main concerns as an author. But this is no argument against the claim that Peter himself was Mark’s major eyewitness source, or that the prominence of Peter in the Gospel reflects this. It simply means that Mark is an author in full control of his sources

However, another objection to Bauckham’s thesis needs to be addressed: if Peter played such a significant role in the formation of this Gospel, why is his pre-eminent role in the early Christian community not underscored as it is in the other Gospels? Bauckham cleverly turns this potential objection on its head so that it actually supports his case. Not only must one recognise the limited focus of Mark’s Gospel (Peter’s concern would have surely been to relate Gospel information, not biographical details), but more importantly the question itself generates, in turn, another: How can one account for the prominence of Peter in this Gospel if it ‘is not connected with the role he would later play in the Christian community and its mission’? Bauckham writes:

‘We need to account for the large extent to which the point of view that the narrative gives its readers or hearers is either Peter’s “we” perspective (the plural-to-singular narrative device) or Peter’s “I” perspective (when Peter acts as an individual in the story). Taken together, these features make Mark a Gospel that presents, to a far larger degree than the others, a Petrine perspective on the story of Jesus. The explanation must have two aspects: relating to the source of Mark’s traditions and to the way in which Mark has shaped these traditions in the service of his

main concerns in his overall composition of the Gospel’.

Again building on Wiarda’s work, Bauckham develops his argument further in relation to the characterisation of Peter in Mark. While careful to admit the exaggerations of some of those involved and social-scientific study of the NT, particularly as it relates to the ancient Mediterranean ‘group-orientated’ personality, Bauckham can nevertheless affirm that this coheres with his own emphasis on the tension between Peter’s individuality and typicality in Mark. This means that an appreciation of the importance of Peter in the Gospel can only be undertaken when due consideration is given to the different (auto)biographical strategies of the ancient authors. When this is recognised it can be asserted, given that it was then typical that characterisation was achieved through the relaying of the words and actions of a person (not psychological introspection), that Peter is the mostly fully characterised character in Mark’s Gospel apart from Jesus.

However, the characterisation of Peter in Mark is not static, Peter changes as he experiences various crises and events. The argument that the polemic apparently against Peter in the Gospel should be taken as evidence Peter himself couldn’t have had a hand in the Gospel is strongly disputed by Bauckham, and the reader or hearer is encouraged to ‘sympathize and identify’ with Peter, ‘further promoting that focalization or seeing from Peter’s perspective’.

Much of the data relevant to Bauckham’s arguments are collected in large tables at the end of chapters. The full weight of his arguments cannot be appreciated without consulting them. Nevertheless, clarity is not sacrificed in the process, and in this chapter Bauckham unravels important exegetical arguments in favour of an appreciation of Peter as the Markan Gospel’s main eyewitness such that while the Gospel of Mark is no ‘mere transcript of Peter’s teaching’, ‘Mark has deliberately designed the Gospel in such a way that it incorporates and conveys this Petrine perspective’. This important chapter has built an impressive case in favour of Bauckham’s overall thesis., while at the same time making original and creative contributions to Markan scholarship.

## 2.8. *Anonymous Persons in Mark’s Passion Narrative*

Gerd Theissen has argued that ‘various features of Mark’s passion narrative reflect the situation of the Jerusalem church in or around the decade 40-50 C.E’. He does this by suggesting an answer to the strange anonymity of two unnamed persons in Gethsemane, namely that ‘[t]heir anonymity is for their protection’. The pre-Markan source thus deliberately omits the names of certain characters in order to keep them safe from trouble were the texts to fall in to the wrong hands. This helps Theissen date the source as ‘[o]nly in Jerusalem was there reason to draw a cloak of anonymity over followers of Jesus who had endangered themselves by their actions’. This protective anonymity is also reflected in Mark’s naming of Pilate (who lost office in 37 C.E), but not of the high priest Caiaphas (given the continuing influence of the house of Annas):

‘The power of the house of Annas and their hostility to Christians would have made it diplomatic for Christian traditions formed in Jerusalem in that period not to refer explicitly to the name of Caiaphas in an account of the death of Jesus. Pilate, on the other hand, was a quite different case’.

In this chapter, Bauckham takes Theissen’s arguments further. First, he analyses the narrative in Mark 11:1-7 and argues that the owner of the colt was kept anonymous as he could be understood to be a ‘complicit in a politically subversive act’. A similar analysis proceeds in relation to Mark 14:12-16 and the Passover meal such that Bauckham can claim that these ‘two stories do give us a sense of the danger, not only to Jesus but to those close to him, during his last days in Jerusalem and the secrecy and subterfuge this required’.



Bauckham then extends this line of reasoning to Mark 14:3-9 and the case of the woman who anointed Jesus. Even though Jesus says that ‘what she has done will be told in remembrance of her’, her name is nevertheless omitted! What can account for this oddity? Bauckham suggests:

‘At the time when this tradition took shape in this form in the early Jerusalem church, this woman would be in danger were she identified as having been complicit in Jesus’ politically subversive claim to messianic kingship. Her danger was perhaps even greater than that of the man who attacked the servant of the high priest, for it was she who had anointed Jesus as Messiah’.

Furthermore, Bauckham also points out the potential significance of Mark’s placing this story between the plot to kill Jesus (14:1-2) and his account of Judas’ visit to the chief priests (14:10-11), arguing that ‘[w]e should surely understand that Judas reports the incident of the anointing to the chief priests’. What is more, the Markan downplaying of the Messianic significance of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, his temple ‘cleansing’ and the anointing can also be explained as a protective mechanism for the early Jerusalem Christian community.

The significance of this is highlighted when it is noticed that the anonymous persons in Mark are named in John (cf. John 12:3; 18:10). Bauckham has already argued that the addition of names to a tradition was rare before the fourth century, so it appears likely that John could add these, among other reasons, because the time of immediate danger had passed for the early Christian community in terms of the matters related to in these Markan narratives.

This reasoning can also explain the absence of the Lazarus account in all traditions bar John. ‘For Lazarus’, Bauckham argues, “‘protective anonymity’ had to take the form of his total absence from the story as it was publicly told’. Bauckham speculates further (and it is only meant as speculation). It seems likely that the ‘naked youth’ in Mark 14:51-52 was not only a Christian, but also was the eyewitness to this tradition. The question arises as to why he was left unnamed, as part of Bauckham’s whole argument is that eyewitnesses were named in the Gospel traditions. In this case, and overriding the convention of naming eyewitnesses, the young man needed to remain under ‘protective anonymity’. Putting the pieces together, one can speculate that Lazarus was the ‘young man’ as the premise that he was a wanted man ‘would explain both the fact that there was an attempt to arrest the young man and that he is anonymous in Mark’s story’. This is indeed detective work of the highest quality!

## 2.9. Papias on Mark and Matthew

While many scholars, though not all (e.g. Hengel, Byrskog etc.), have doubted the usefulness of the evidence from Papias concerning the origin of the Gospel of Mark, Bauckham provides in this chapter good reason to reject what he calls such ‘gratuitous scepticism’. He considers the most important argument in his favour the manner in which the Gospel of Mark itself indicates Peter as the principal eyewitness source, especially as it appears that Luke and John ‘both understood Mark to be making this claim’ (cf. chapters 6 and 7). Indeed, one of the major contributions of this whole book is that Papias’ statements have been thrust back on stage as credible evidence.

What does it mean, however, when Papias claims Mark was Peter’s ‘interpreter’ (this being the most likely translation of the Greek)? A ‘translator’ in those days could interpret very flexibly. For example, Josephus, Bauckham notes, claimed that his *Antiquities* (cf. *Ant.* 1.5, 17; 4.196) was simply a translation of the Hebrew scriptures! However, Bauckham argues that Papias, unlike Josephus, appeared to understand translation in a stricter sense and understood Mark as

‘scrupulously accurate in reproducing Peter’s oral testimony’. Bauckham further argues that Papias was called Peter’s interpreter ‘not in the sense that he acted as such when Peter was teaching orally, but in the sense that he translated Peter’s words when he and Peter engaged in a process of setting them down in writing’.

However, this involves an understanding of the key words for recalling and relating from memory in Papias that many reject. These scholars will argue that the one doing the recalling is Mark, not Peter. However, while this is grammatically possible, Bauckham argues that Papias’ line of reasoning requires that Peter be the subject of the relevant verbs. Indeed, read in this way it is further evidence that Papias used ‘technical or semi-technical terms from literary and rhetorical discussion’.

Another couple of points of translation are then made in relation to the words *chreiai*, *suntaxis* and *logia*. The first surprise involves Bauckham’s discussion of the latter, which concludes with the claim that it refers not to “sayings of the Lord” or “prophetic oracles of the Lord” or “prophetic oracles about the Lord,” but something like “short reports of what the Lord said and did”. He then proceeds to argue that *chreiai* be best understood – so long as it is understood flexibly –, in light of Theon’s examples, as ‘brief narratives containing only actions, as brief narratives containing only sayings, and mixed types containing both actions and sayings’, for which the English term ‘anecdote’ would be the best translation. This discussion of *chreiai* leads to the conclusion that ‘There is no reason why the basic form of many of the *chreiai* in Mark should not have been given them by Peter in his oral rehearsing of the words and deeds of Jesus’.

Papias opines Mark’s lack of order. While Mark, for Papias, did very well according to good historiographical practice of faithfully recording his eyewitness source (Peter), it stopped short of being a true work of history given that it attempted no aesthetic arrangement or continuous narrative (*suntaxis*) of the *chreiai*.

And what does Papias say of Matthew and John? His descriptions always involve comment on two stages: the activity of an eyewitness (i.e. the question origin) and that of non-eyewitnesses (involving the question of the ‘order’ of the traditions). In doing this Papias wants to maintain that both Mark and Matthew lack proper order, which implies that Papias is making a comparison with another Gospel that differs in terms of chronology significantly from either Matthew or Mark. Bauckham suggests that it is likely that Papias’ measuring rod was John’s Gospel (especially plausible if, as Bauckham has argued earlier, Papias knew John’s Gospel). In summary, Bauckham proposes that:

‘[W]e find that Papias was contrasting the lack of order in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew with the order to be found in the Gospel of John. He took for granted that all three Gospels originated from eyewitness testimony, but, whereas the Gospel of John was actually written by an eyewitness, the Gospels of Mark and Matthew (in the form available to Papias) were at one stage of transmission removed from the direct report of the eyewitness in question himself’.

Perhaps, Bauckham speculates, ‘it would have been the initial “publication” of the Gospel of John that required some such comment on the most obvious difference between this Gospel and those of Mark and Matthew’. In chapter 15 Bauckham will return to the evidence in John’s Gospel itself that seeks to establish ‘its author’s claim to offer eyewitness testimony additional and in some respects superior to that of the much better known eyewitness Peter, embodied in Mark’s Gospel’.

However, isn’t Papias simply wrong about what he says about Mark’s Gospel as evidencing no ‘order’? And doesn’t this throw a spanner in the works if much of the previous argumentation is based upon a fresh appreciation of Papias’ historical usefulness? Bauckham is forthright: ‘Papias’s contention that Mark did no more than record, with

scrupulous accuracy, the *chreiai* as Peter related them, is mistaken'. However, and building on the work of Joanna Dewey, Bauckham argues that Papias is rejecting a certain type of 'order' in Mark's Gospel. While Mark does structure his narrative in ways 'characteristic of oral composition' and appears to be based on an 'already existing oral narrative' (even if it be refined in writing), in light of such 'ordering' it is simpler to understand 'how easy it was for Papias to exaggerate Mark's lack of order'. It would appear that this is not an order that Papias wanted to recognise. Furthermore, his 'exaggeration also served his purpose well. Papias was engaged in explaining the differences between John's Gospel and Mark's in a way that favoured John's "order" without *denigrating* Mark's Gospel'.

Bauckham ends the chapter by noting a couple of independent sources that may, without any degree of certainty, provide further support that Mark was understood as Peter's Gospel (he mentions *Dial.* 106.3 and Justin Martyr's description of this Gospel as 'the memoirs' of Peter earlier). First, he notes Saying 13 of the Gospel of Thomas arguing that if 'Matthew in this passage represents Matthew's Gospel, then it becomes highly likely that Peter represents Mark's Gospel'. Second he mentions the slightly ambiguous evidence found in the words of Clement of Alexandria (*Str.* 7.106.4). While these do not make the argument clear-cut, 'evidence for the association of Peter with Mark's Gospel independent of Papias ... are quite strong'.

#### 2.10. *Models of Oral Tradition*

'The main purpose of this chapter and the next', so writes Bauckham, 'is to consider the implications of putting the eyewitnesses back into the picture [of theories concerning oral tradition], not merely as the original sources of Gospel traditions, but as people who remained accessible sources and authoritative guarantors of their own testimony throughout the period between Jesus and the writing of the Gospels'.

This project involves setting the role of eyewitnesses in the broader context of the nature of the transmission of Jesus traditions in the early church, and focuses, for now, on the Synoptics 'since it is generally agreed that the Gospel of John is a special case' (for which see chapter 14-16). To do this, Bauckham analyses the three main models of oral tradition, namely those associated with Rudolf Bultmann, Birger Gerhardsson and Kenneth Bailey. After summarising the history of 'form critical' scholarship, its significant insights, its theories concerning the original 'form' of an oral tradition, its stress on *Sitz im Leben*, anonymous transmission and the emphasis given to the supposed analogy of Jesus tradition with folk literature, Bauckham launches into a devastating attack on form criticism. He concludes: 'There is no reason to believe that the oral transmission of Jesus traditions in the early church was at all as Bultmann envisaged it'. However, it is not merely Bultmann that concerns Bauckham, but the shadow of form criticism which still darkens much NT scholarship, namely 'the largely unexamined *impression* that many scholars - and probably even more students - still entertain: the impression of a long period of creative development of the traditions before they attained written form in the Gospels'.<sup>14</sup>

The 'Scandinavian alternative' of Bauckham's subtitle refers to Gerhardsson's contribution in his book *Memory and Manuscript* (1961). This model, based on a study of oral transmission in rabbinic Judaism, places more emphasis upon memorisation and mnemonic techniques and thus posits more control in the transmission of tradition. Noting more negative scholarly evaluations of this work, Bauckham is quick to point out how unfair some criticism has been. He turns quickly to assess the contribution of Bailey, a potential middle way between Bultmann and Gerhardsson, and discusses his threefold typology (informal uncontrolled - informal controlled - formal controlled). To the possible surprise of some, Bauckham has

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14. *Ibid.*, 249.

a fair amount to say in critique of the Bailey typology, and Dunn's adoption of the 'informal controlled' model. Bauckham distinguishes two questions that Dunn muddles together, namely 'who does the controlling, the community or specified individuals?' and 'how is this control exercised?'. This leads to the observation that the matter of stability and flexibility is really a third factor besides controlled or uncontrolled, formal or informal. Hence Bauckham can argue that 'the threefold typology has probably had a somewhat misleading effect on scholars who favour Bailey's *informal* controlled tradition as the best analogy for the Gospel tradition'.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, despite the merits of Bailey's model, it leaves important questions unanswered, especially as it relates to the role of eyewitnesses in the earliest Christian communities – questions provoked all the more urgently by Dunn's treatment of oral tradition.

Bauckham sets out the questions that need attention in the following way:

'(1) Was the tradition *controlled* in any way? (1a) For what *reasons* would control over the tradition have been thought necessary?

(2) If the tradition was controlled, what were the *mechanisms of control*?

(3) Were *different kinds or aspects of traditions* treated differently with regard to the degree of flexibility permitted? (3a) What was the *relative balance of stability and flexibility* in the treatment of these different kinds or aspects of traditions?

(4) How are the Gospels related to the oral tradition?'.<sup>16</sup>

Questions 1, 1a and 2 will be addressed in the following chapter, while question 4 involves direct interaction with the contention of Bauckham's book.

Before finishing this chapter, Bauckham presses the point that neither Bailey nor Dunn have explored the matter of eyewitnesses in sufficient depth. They confuse matters and ignore important distinctions (such a between minor eyewitnesses and those who were 'from the beginning'). To an extent they even continue to propagate the form critical picture of an oral tradition for which eyewitnesses were only a starting point. While Dunn in particular has made some progress in terms of the questions Bauckham draws attention to, in the next two chapters Bauckham will develop appropriate solutions in far more detail, and seek to understand how eyewitnesses play a part in the picture.

### 2.11. *Transmitting the Jesus Traditions*

It will be remembered that Bauckham reserved little criticism in the previous chapter for Gerhardsson's model. The next two chapters analyses the nature of 'the transmission process of the Jesus traditions as a formal controlled tradition in which the eyewitnesses played an important part'.<sup>17</sup> To do this, he first turns attention to the evidence in the Pauline literature (though he notes that the evidence is not particular to Paul). Paul used technical terminology for handing on a tradition which would have involved some sort of 'teaching and learning so that what is communicated will be retained'.<sup>18</sup> Noticeably, when Paul speaks of traditions, 'he makes clear that his authority for transmitting at least some of them to his churches was not his apostolic status as such, but the fact that he himself had received them from competent authorities (1

15. *Ibid.*, 258.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, 264.

18. *Ibid.*, 265.

Cor 15:3)'.<sup>19</sup> This indicates that Paul understood 'a chain of transmission that *begins from Jesus himself* and passes through intermediaries to Paul himself, who has already passed it on to the Corinthians when he first established their church'.<sup>20</sup>

Paul, Bauckham argues, received (by a formal process of learning) the traditions from the Twelve. This claim naturally involves an explanation as to why Gal 1:11-12 and 1 Cor 11:23 ('from the Lord') are not inconsistent with this proposal. In passing traditions on to the churches (presumably also by a formal process of learning), while there is no mention of the transmission of tradition to specific individuals (cf. 1 Cor 11:2; 15:2 etc.), it is clear that certain persons were designated as teachers (e.g. Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28-29). This picture is then substantiated with reference to evidence in Josephus concerning the Pharisaic transmission of tradition both to people generally and to specific teachers.

'Thus, even within the Pauline communities, we should reckon with the role of specially authorized guarantors of the traditions, and thus a more formal process of preservation and transmission of the traditions than Bailey's model envisages'.<sup>21</sup>

Drawing on the work of Jan Vansina, Bauckham notes that oral societies treat fictional historical tales and historical accounts differently such that the latter is preserved more faithfully. This leads, again building on Vansina's work, to a powerful critique of the form critical claim that the early Christians didn't distinguish between past and present. These Christians certainly did make such a distinction as is clear in i) the varied usage of the 'son of man' title in both the Jesus traditions on the one hand, and the early church on the other, ii) the expectations associated with the genre of 'biography' with which the Gospels are to be associated, and iii) the obvious religious significance of the past: 'The present in which they lived in relationship with the risen and exalted Christ was the effect of this past history, presupposing its pastness and not at all dissolving it'.<sup>22</sup>

Bauckham then maintains, again with a sympathetic ear to Gerhardsson, that Jesus tradition, in contrast with the form-critical picture, was transmitted '*independently of its use*',<sup>23</sup> the *Sitz im Leben* of a tradition being the transmission processes itself. This is supported by the evidence analysed in Paul above, but also in the clear distinction Paul made between the sayings of Jesus and his own teaching concerning divorce in 1 Cor 7. Naturally Bauckham is not asserting that 'the Jesus traditions as we know them from the Gospels in no way reflect the context of the early Christian movement'. But later changes were moderate. Indeed, '[t]he Gospels themselves would be hard to explain unless the oral Jesus traditions before them were transmitted for their own sake ... The disciples do not supplement Jesus' teaching with contributions - adding or interpreting - in their own name'.<sup>24</sup>

Bauckham ends the chapter with a discussion of two types of controls that could have played a part in the transmission of traditions, namely memorisation and writing. Not only was memorisation 'universal in education in the ancient world',<sup>25</sup> but (and citing Rainer Riesner) 'the form of the sayings of Jesus included in itself an imperative to remember them'.<sup>26</sup> In critical dialogue with Werner Kelber, Bauckham maintains that different types of material were remembered in different ways, and the only way to know how Jesus traditions were treated is to analyse the Gospel evidence

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19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., 268.

21. Ibid., 270.

22. Ibid., 277-78.

23. Ibid., 278.

24. Ibid., 279.

25. Ibid., 280.

26. Ibid., 282.

itself. This leads to the conclusion that ‘Jesus must have expected his sayings to be deliberately learned’.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, again relying to an extent on Riesner, ‘the strong tradition within the Gospels that Jesus sent out his disciples to spread his own message during his ministry’ is evidence that ‘Jesus expected his disciples to transmit his teaching to others’.<sup>28</sup>

The main critique of Gerhardsson’s position has been that it doesn’t account for variations in the Jesus tradition, as some claim Bailey’s model does. However, variations in the tradition can be explained on other grounds (Bauckham provides five potential reasons, though doesn’t attempt to justify them in any detail – i.e. there is a doctorate waiting to be written here!).

Finally, Bauckham asks if writing was a way used to control the transmission of tradition. In relation to this, he asserts: ‘The first Christians ... included people who studied the Scriptures with current exegetical skills and could write works with the literary quality of the letter of James’.<sup>29</sup> Hence, ‘it does seem unlikely that no one would have even noted down Jesus traditions in notebooks’,<sup>30</sup> but this wouldn’t have replaced but rather complimented orality and memorisation.

### 2.12. *Anonymous Tradition or Eyewitness Testimony?*

Throughout the book thus far Bauckham has sought to argue that Jesus traditions originated and were transmitted in connection with a body of official and named eyewitnesses who functioned as ‘active guarantors’ of these traditions. In those groups that didn’t enjoy the presence of such an eyewitness there would likely have been teachers who functioned as ‘authorized tradents’, having received their knowledge either directly from the original eyewitness(es) or through an authorised chain of intermediaries. In contrast to this, scholarship has tended to elevate the significance of the ‘shared memory’ of anonymous communities to the key role in the transmission of Jesus traditions, something done even by those (like Dunn) who acknowledge the reality of individual eyewitnesses. However, and this is a point which Bauckham has spent a good deal of space justifying, the Gospels writers would hardly have been content to collect such communal and anonymous traditions. Rather, given memorisation, possibly the use of writing, and the presence of eyewitness testimony, the (isolated) traditions underwent *a particular kind of formal control* in their transmission. Furthermore, Papias is clear evidence that at the time of the production of the Gospels, there was little interest in anonymous community traditions. Indeed, the evidence strongly indicates that the notion of the transmission of traditions through a chain of authorised tradents was commonplace. To add to the already impressive argument, Bauckham indicates the significance of the Jerusalem church, a matter missed in the ‘informal controlled’ models.<sup>31</sup> As he maintains:

‘We should probably envisage a carefully compiled and formulated collection of Jesus traditions, incorporating other important eyewitness testimony as well as that of the Twelve themselves, but authorized by the Twelve as the official body of witnesses’.<sup>32</sup>

Bauckham then turns to address the claim that ‘Jesus traditions [were] circulated anonymously in the early church and that therefore the Gospels, in which they were gathered and recorded, were also originally anonymous’.<sup>33</sup> His argument, partly depending on arguments proposed by Hengel and partly on the evidence of chapters 3-8 and especially that the Gospels *do*

27. *Ibid.*, 284.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*, 289.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Cf. 299, n. 22 for a fascinating take on 1 Cor 14:36 in this regard.

32. Richard Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 299.

33. *Ibid.*, 300.

indicate their eyewitness sources, claims that ‘as soon as the Gospels circulated around the churches they had author’s names attached to them, even though such names were not part of the text of the Gospels’.<sup>34</sup>

This leads to a discussion concerning the role of eyewitnesses and Gospels in the controlling of the transmission of Jesus traditions. He argues, noting especially the import of 1 Cor 15:3-8: ‘In the early Christian movement we may suppose that the authorized tradents of the tradition performed this role of controllers, but among them the eyewitnesses would surely have been the most important’.<sup>35</sup> When these eyewitnesses started dying out ‘the Gospels will have stepped into the role of the eyewitnesses ... functioning as the guarantor of the traditions, as the eyewitnesses had in their lifetimes, and as controls on the tradition’.<sup>36</sup> It is not that the Gospels didn’t involve a measure of creative adaptation of the eyewitness testimony, but their preservation of these traditions would have been, in best ancient historiographical practice, faithful.

While many works have been influenced by Maurice Halbwachs’ concept of ‘collective memory’, which would justify key assumptions in form critical scholarship, Bauckham, drawing especially on the work of Barbara Misztal, presses a set of important and original distinctions such that one need not ‘dissolve the distinctiveness of personal recollection’ into a social or collective memory which has little interest in the past.<sup>37</sup> In other words, ‘social memory or oral tradition has to be constantly negotiating the relationship of the present to the past. In this negotiation the past has a voice that has to be heard. It cannot be freely invented’.<sup>38</sup>

### 2.13. *Eyewitness Memory*

Even if Bauckham’s argument concerning the eyewitnesses thus far is correct, can the memories of these witnesses be trusted given the fallible nature of human memory? This chapter is a first attempt to relate the findings of modern psychological study to the gospel traditions in a systematic way.

He examines so-called ‘recollective memory’ for this would correspond most closely with the Gospel narratives (assuming they are based on eyewitness testimony). To do this he first details the theoretical debate concerning the nature of memory, namely whether it is a (re)construction or copy of the original experience. Bauckham’s major point, to which he will return, is that while memory has ‘reconstructive’ and interpretive elements, this needs to be kept in tension with the point that this doesn’t *necessarily* entail inaccuracy. Furthermore, some things are remembered better than others; not all things are remembered equally well in the same way. Additionally, and drawing on the work of F.C. Bartlett, while the entire remembering and retrieval process involves selection and interpretation in light of (socially shaped) mental models or schemata, this should not be understood to imply that this mechanism impedes the minds access to what really happened. However, it is clear that memories become formulated as meaningful stories and are so ‘as the conjunction of information and meaning, and as the interaction of past and present’.<sup>39</sup> Once again, this is not to dissolve the past into the need for meaning in the present *independent of the past*, but it is to insist that ‘memory intends to speak of the past and is engaged in a search for truth. This is what differentiates memory from imagination’.<sup>40</sup>

All of this is then related to the Gospel data, such that Bauckham can claim (it is worth citing at greater length):

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34. *Ibid.*, 304.

35. *Ibid.*, 306.

36. *Ibid.*, 309.

37. *Ibid.*, 313.

38. *Ibid.*, 317.

39. *Ibid.*, 338.

40. *Ibid.*, 341.

‘The eyewitnesses who remembered the events of the history of Jesus were remembering inherently very memorable events ... and their memories would have been reinforced and stabilized by frequent rehearsal, beginning soon after the event ... [and] central features of the memory, those that constituted its meaning for those who witnessed and attested it, are likely to have been preserved reliably. We may conclude that the memories of eyewitnesses of the history of Jesus score highly by the criteria for likely reliability that have been established by the psychological study of recollective memory’.<sup>41</sup>

Dennis Nineham has influentially argued that the form critics have demonstrated that ‘the forms in which the Gospel traditions are cast were the result of a long process of development in community use’.<sup>42</sup> The material from psychological studies overviewed in the first part of this chapter enable Bauckham to complete a devastating critique of Nineham’s pro-‘form critical’ argument, and he points the way forward to a needed area of research in relation to the Gospel forms in association with notions of schemata and cross-cultural story scripts (another potential idea for those seeking a doctoral research topic!).

Again based upon the discussion in the first part of the chapter, Bauckham briefly analyses the potential significance of John Robinson’s category of ‘deferred meaning’ as a significant concept for understanding how the Gospel traditions were later remembered in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus (cf., e.g. John 12:14-16). However, he notes that ‘it is remarkable how little subsequent interpretation many Synoptic narratives have received’,<sup>43</sup> especially the stories of Jesus’ healings and exorcisms. To be remembered is that Bauckham earlier argued that the Jesus traditions were largely circulated as ‘isolated’ traditions, i.e. independent of a particular communal use. This leads to an astonishing line of argumentation:

‘The relatively small extent to which the stories have been affected by post-resurrection interpretation has to be explained by the probability that it was *the stories in the fairly fixed form already given them by the eyewitnesses during Jesus’ ministry that survived the revolution in understanding consequent on the cross and the resurrection*. The eyewitnesses were still around. They remained the authoritative source of their traditions. And the impact of the past itself, along with a conviction that the past history of Jesus mattered as past event, gave stability to their memories long after the crucial theological developments that took place in the earliest Christian circles’.<sup>44</sup>

#### 2.14. *The Gospel of John as Eyewitness Testimony*

In the next few chapters Bauckham turns to address the Johannine evidence concerning eyewitness testimony. Notably, the concluding verses of John’s Gospel claim: ‘This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true’. The obvious reading of this verse in context indicates that the disciple in question (‘the disciple Jesus loved’) wrote the Gospel. However, the usual demotion of the Gospel of John in modern scholarship has lead many to attempt arguments that evade the import of these words. However, Bauckham forcefully shows that both those trying to expand the meaning of the Greek verb *graphein* and those who restrict the referent of ‘these things’ to either chap 21 alone or a written source behind the canonical Gospel, are using faulty reasoning. Rather, the words from John 21:24 cited above require that the Beloved disciple ‘was substantially responsible both for the content and for the

41. Ibid., 346.

42. Ibid., 347.

43. Ibid., 353.

44. Ibid., 355, italics mine.



words of the book'.<sup>45</sup> Naturally, this may be factually incorrect, but it is still the import of the Gospel text, despite the many scholars who have adopted one of the evasion strategies above.

Most scholars, however, have understood the Gospel to have originally ended at the end of chap 20, thus making the words cited above part of a later editorial addition. Against this majority opinion, Bauckham argues that there are clear and deliberate associations between the Prologue and the Epilogue such that it is unlikely that the Gospel ever existed without chap 21. To maintain this conclusion he must deal with the problem that chap 20 appears to have its own conclusion (vv. 30-31). Bauckham thus proceeds to analyse and compare the two texts (20:30-31 and 21:24-25) in depth arguing that while the texts are parallel, they are not repetitive. Indeed, the texts function as a 'carefully designed two-stage disclosure of the Beloved Disciple's role in the production of the Gospel',<sup>46</sup> which are careful to reveal his authorship only at the very end. If Bauckham's arguments at this point succeed in convincing his readers (and in my opinion that is an open question), 'then we cannot think that the identification of the Beloved Disciple as the author of the Gospel is a later, secondary accretion to the Gospel. The Gospel, with its epilogue and its two stage conclusion, has been designed to reveal only at the end the role of the Beloved Disciple in its making'.<sup>47</sup>

In the verse cited above it states that 'we know that his testimony is true'. But who are the 'we'? Could it, and clearly contra Bauckham, refer to a later editorial or authorial community? Bauckham argues that the 'we' reflects not a genuine plural but rather stand for 'I'. To be more precise, the usage is a Johannine idiom that he calls 'the "we" of authoritative testimony'.<sup>48</sup> The 'we', rather than indicating 'I and you or 'I and my associates' is best understood as a way of adding force to the self-reference, especially in testimonial contexts. Bauckham finishes the chapter by analysing a number of verses that appear to evidence just such a usage, namely 3 John 9-12, 1 John 1:1-5, 4:11-16, John 3:10-13, 21:24-25 and 1:14-16. While not all of the material Bauckham examines is equally convincing, arguably the evidence in 1 John and John 3 make Bauckham's suggestions likely.

The result of this chapter is now clear: According to John 21:24, the Beloved Disciple is 'both the primary witness on whose testimony the Gospel is based and also himself the author of the Gospel'.<sup>49</sup>

### 2.15. *The Witness of the Beloved Disciple*

In the previous chapter it was argued that the Beloved Disciple is portrayed as 'the primary witness' and author of the Gospel. But what does 'witness' mean? While the argument of the book thus far would strongly imply that we should understand the Beloved Disciple's 'witness' in an historiographical sense, it needs to be noted that the *marureô* word group used in the Gospel for 'witness' derives not from historiographical contexts, but rather those legal. A.T. Lincoln has argued that the Isaianic motif of a cosmic trail 'forms a broad metaphorical framework' for this Gospel. 'In that framework witness is a legal metaphor and the Beloved Disciple's witness cannot be equated with "literal" eyewitness'. The 'Beloved Disciple's testimony' for Lincoln, is thus 'a literary device in the service of the theological agenda of witness, not a serious claim to historiographical status'.<sup>50</sup> However, and while agreeing with much in Lincoln's case, Bauckham nonetheless insists that the Beloved Disciple can only interpret the various witnesses in the trial metaphor throughout the Gospel, 'if at

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45. *Ibid.*, 362.

46. *Ibid.*, 366.

47. *Ibid.*, 368.

48. *Ibid.*, 371.

49. *Ibid.*, 384.

50. *Ibid.*, 386.

the same time it does in some sense report them'.<sup>51</sup> The Gospel understanding of witness coincides with and should not be played against 'historiographic autopsy'. Indeed, in comparing this suggestion with material in Luke-Acts, Bauckham strengthens his argument that the Fourth Gospel intentionally used both a historiographic *and* metaphorical-theological understandings of 'witness'. Furthermore, the posited *inclusio* of eyewitness testimony (cf. chapter 6) indicates a historiographical element. Bauckham extends his earlier analysis to suggest a 'quite elaborate use of the *inclusio* of eyewitness testimony' in John.<sup>52</sup> Not only that, but the role the Beloved Disciple plays in the narrative of the Gospel coheres well with the hypothesis that he is the primary witness and author.

To make this case, Bauckham strongly argues against false notions associated with the portrayal, in John, of the Beloved Disciple as the 'ideal disciple' in contrast with Peter. While there is a sense in which the Beloved Disciple is superior to Peter, they represent two types of discipleship: active service (Peter) and perceptive witness (Beloved Disciple). There are four elements that lend to an understanding of the Beloved Disciple as 'perceptive witness': his intimacy with Jesus, his presence at key points in the story of Jesus, the observational detail involved in the narrative when the Beloved Disciple appears (cf. the chapter for important qualifications), and the spiritual insight of his witness. Together they 'qualify him to be the ideal witness to Jesus, his story, and its meaning'.<sup>53</sup> Suggestively, in arguing that these two portrayals of Peter and the Beloved Disciple in the Gospel are made to denote their two different ways of following Jesus, he notes that this is done so precisely as it would relate to their role in the church *after the resurrection*. In other words, the Beloved Disciple is framed as the ideal author of the Gospel.

While evidence in the Gospel presupposes that the Beloved Disciple experienced a lengthy time of relationship with Jesus, it is not necessary to maintain that he was 'personally present at all the events he narrates, since it is also clear from the Gospel that he belonged to the circle of disciples of Jesus and would have had direct and easy access to the eyewitness testimony of those who had been present at events he himself did not witness'.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the Gospel doesn't have a list of the Twelve (which Bauckham has argued in earlier chapters were made to 'cite their authority as the official sources and guarantors of the main body of Gospel traditions these Gospels contain'<sup>55</sup>) as the Beloved Disciple was likely not one of the Twelve. His Gospel draws both on his own direct autopsy of Jesus as well as that of other individual disciples and so *ought not* to list the Twelve.

In John 1:14 it states that 'we have seen his glory'. While this can be cited to suggest that already in the Prologue the Gospel is claimed to be based on eyewitness testimony, Lincoln notes that 'in the discourse of the Fourth Gospel, seeing and testifying are the equivalent of believing and confessing'.<sup>56</sup> Ergo, the seeing of the eyewitnesses is not literal but rather interpretive. Bauckham, while maintaining a mixture of historiographical and theological notions of 'witness' in the Gospel, strongly contests Lincoln's conclusion by pointing to the temporal and historical nature of the seeing in the Gospel, and argues that:

'It is the testimony of those who did see and believed that enables those who have not seen also to believe, and it is the Gospel that mediates the testimony of those who have seen to those who have not, so that the latter may also believe'.<sup>57</sup>

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51. *Ibid.*, 388.

52. *Ibid.*, 393.

53. *Ibid.*, 399.

54. *Ibid.*, 402.

55. *Ibid.*, 403.

56. *Ibid.*, 404.

57. *Ibid.*, 405.

But why is the Beloved Disciple's role as principal witness and author not revealed until the end of the Gospel? Because the Beloved Disciple was not a well-known disciple, he had to be careful how he advanced his own claim to be qualified to write a Gospel of Jesus as an eyewitness. The postponement of it is thus due to a 'combination of modesty and temerity'.<sup>58</sup>

However, can we really believe the Beloved Disciple wrote the Gospel? Isn't the claim simply pseudepigraphal?

'The question is by no means easy to answer. All of our arguments so far go to show that the Gospel *portrays* the Beloved Disciple as its principal witness and author, making a historiographical claim about his eyewitness evidence as well as a theological one about his perceptive understanding'.<sup>59</sup>

However, one strong argument can be said in favour of the authenticity of the Gospel's claim to have been written by the Beloved Disciple: 'why should a pseudepigraphal author in search of a suitable pseudonym choose such a character? Why not write, as the authors of other pseudepigraphal Gospels did, in the name of a well-known disciple - Philip or Andrew or Thomas? Why make the task of establishing the credibility of this Gospel narrative so hard for himself/herself?'.<sup>60</sup>

The high degree of interpretation in the Fourth Gospel's presentation of the story of Jesus actually, as was seen earlier in relation to Papias on the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, qualifies the Gospel as a more serious work of history in the eyes of Graeco-Roman historians. Far from the highly interpretive element suggesting distance from eyewitness sources, '[t]he author's eyewitness status', claims Bauckham, 'authorizes the interpretation'.<sup>61</sup>

This mixture of 'empirical sight' and 'spiritual perception' in the Gospel's presentation is not something to be feared. 'If this history was in fact the disclosure of God, then to have the report of some uncommitted observer would not take us nearer to the historical truth but further from it'. The Gospel's interpretive nature is thus 'wholly appropriate to the historical uniqueness of the subject matter'. This Gospel surely presents a perspective outside the circles from which the synoptic traditions derive. It is idiosyncratic. However, '[a]s with all testimony, even that of the law court, there is a point beyond which corroboration cannot go, and only the witness can vouch for the truth of his own witness'.<sup>62</sup>

#### 2.16. *Papias on John*

In the previous two chapters Bauckham has argued that the Gospel of John portrays, and plausibly so, its author as the disciple it calls 'the disciple Jesus loved'. This argument entails that the Beloved Disciple was not one of the Twelve, namely John the son of Zebedee. This is affirmed by the absence of a list of the Twelve disciples in the Gospel of John as is made in the Synoptics which, as was argued earlier, was indicative of an acknowledgment of indebtedness to the traditions of the Twelve. The names in John's Gospel rather indicate that it draws on traditions 'not simply from the Beloved Disciple himself, but from a particular circle of disciples of Jesus in which the Beloved Disciple moved'.<sup>63</sup> This conclusion is further strengthened with reference to the 'protective anonymity' scheme detailed earlier.

This does not mean that the question of the identity of the John 'the Beloved' should remain closed. Indeed, and drawing on Hengel's work again, he asserts: 'That the author of John's Gospel was a John other than John the son of Zebedee is not at all unlikely'.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, the evidence of what Papias said about the origin of the Gospels can be used

58. *Ibid.*, 408.

59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*, 409.

61. *Ibid.*, 411.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*, 414.

64. *Ibid.*, 416.

to argue that the author of the Gospel of John is none other than ‘the disciple of Jesus whom Papias calls John the Elder’.<sup>65</sup> This leads to an extensive analysis of the Papias material once again that firmly associates the Gospel author with ‘John the Elder’, and not John the son of Zebedee. To strengthen this case Bauckham investigates the meaning of the John 21:23 ‘rumour’ that the Beloved Disciple would survive until the parousia, and the title ‘the elder’. To facilitate this examination, Bauckham also addresses the question as to why ‘no explicit comments by Papias on the Gospel of John have survived’<sup>66</sup> and argues that Eusebius had good reason to edit out much material original to Papias. However, and again breaking fresh ground, Bauckham argues in detail that some remnant of Papias’s comments on the Gospel of John can be found in the Muratorian Canon. His reasoning at this stage is a powerful blend of deep familiarity with early Christian literature and exact reasoning, which maintains that, for the author of the Muratorian Canon who drew to an extent from lost Papias material, John was a disciple *but not a member of the Twelve*.

‘We may conclude that what Papias said about the origin of John’s Gospel was that John the Elder, the disciple of the Lord, wrote it. He may have said that John was urged to do so by the elders, the leading Christian teachers in the province of Asia, who had known other disciples of Jesus. Papias also, very likely, said that these elders vouched for the truth of the Gospel (referring to John 21:24). He then quoted part of 1 John 1:1-4 in order to show that its author, John the Elder, was both himself an eyewitness of the events of the Gospel history and himself wrote them in his Gospel. Therefore he alone, among the Gospel writers Papias discussed, wrote the *logia* of the Lord in order’.<sup>67</sup>

The chapter ends with an appendix making several significant qualifications to the arguments of Charles Hill that Papias’ ‘views on John’s Gospel ... are preserved by Eusebius in *Hist. Eccl.* 3.24.5-13’<sup>68</sup> as Hill’s thesis would negate much of Bauckham’s work in isolating dependence on Papias in the Muratorian Canon.

### 2.17. Polycrates and Irenaeus on John

Key clues to the identity of the author of the Gospel of John can be found also in the witness of Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus in the late second century. Important is his letter to Bishop Victor of Rome concerning the Quartodeciman controversy which, Bauckham argues, is good evidence that Polycrates refers to the author of John’s Gospel as a John *other than the son of Zebedee*. This is especially clear in Polycrates’ curious mention that John was ‘a priest, wearing the high-priestly frontlet (*to petalon*)’. It would appear to be, given the reference to the *petalon*, an unambiguous indication that Polycrates portrayed John as high priest in the Jerusalem Temple. After detailing the various views on this matter, Bauckham strongly argues that, based in Acts 4:6 (and possibly facilitated by John 18:15), the tradition ‘that John the Beloved Disciple was a high priest is neither metaphorical nor historical, but *exegetical*’.<sup>69</sup> Rather typical of Bauckham’s manner of argumentation, the punch line awaits a strongly formulated conclusion:

‘[W]hen the Ephesian church looked for its own John, the Beloved Disciple, in New Testament writings other than the Gospel of John, they did not identify him with John the son of Zebedee. The identification of him with the John

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65. *Ibid.*

66. *Ibid.*, 422.

67. *Ibid.*, 433.

68. *Ibid.*

69. *Ibid.*, 451.

of Acts 4:6 makes it impossible to identify him with John the son of Zebedee'.<sup>70</sup>

Bauckham's developing argument maintains that 'in the second-century Christian traditions of the province of Asia, and especially in Ephesus, the John who wrote the Gospel of John and was the disciple that Gospel calls the disciple Jesus loved was not identified with John the son of Zebedee'.<sup>71</sup> This conclusion is further strengthened through an examination of Irenaeus on John. Notably, Irenaeus' references to John do not lend at all to the opinion that the son of Zebedee is to be understood. Even though he speaks of John as an apostle, Irenaeus could use the term flexibly to include far more than just the Twelve, even to the extent of calling John the Baptist an apostle. 'There is therefore no reason to think that either Irenaeus's Asiatic sources or Irenaeus himself thought the author of the Gospel of John to be one of the Twelve'.<sup>72</sup>

But there is clear evidence in 'two Christian works of the second century that clearly identify the John who wrote the Gospel with John the son of Zebedee',<sup>73</sup> namely the *Acts of John* and the *Epistle of the Apostles*. Given recent research as to the date and place of composition of these works, Bauckham admits: 'I am no longer confident of my earlier argument that [these works] indicate that the identification of the author of the Gospel of John with John the son of Zebedee probably originated in Egypt in the second half of the second century'.<sup>74</sup> Rather, the emerging definition of 'canon' in contrast with the Gnostic Gospels meant that 'apostle' came to indicate 'reliable authority, authorized by Christ himself and generally recognized in the churches'.<sup>75</sup> The local Ephesian tradition identifying the author of John's Gospel with a John other than the son of Zebedee was later lost sight of, and once John the Elder became regularly termed an 'apostle', he 'very easily became indistinguishable from John the son of Zebedee'.<sup>76</sup>

## 2.18. *The Jesus of Testimony*

If, as has been argued, the Jesus of the Gospels is the Jesus of eyewitness testimony, then it is necessary to examine the category of testimony further, namely 'its epistemological status, its role in historiography and its significance as a theological category'.<sup>77</sup> In a nutshell, Bauckham argues:

'Testimony ... is both the historically appropriate category for understanding what kind of history the Gospels are and the theologically appropriate category for understanding what kind of access Christian readers of the Gospels thereby have to Jesus and his history. It is the category that enables us to surmount the dichotomy between the so-called historical Jesus and the so-called Christ of faith'.<sup>78</sup>

Drawing on the work of K. Vanhoozer and especially C.A.J. Coady, he notes how depended humans are on testimony in the run of daily life. Furthermore, Coady has shown, against the grain of modern individualistic tendencies, 'that testimony is as basic a form of knowledge as perception, memory and inference'.<sup>79</sup> This means that it is necessary to 'understand our epistemic situation in less exclusively individualistic terms, more in communal or inter-subjective terms'<sup>80</sup> which involves a

70. *Ibid.*, 452, italics suppressed.

71. *Ibid.*, 452.

72. *Ibid.*, 462.

73. *Ibid.*, 463.

74. *Ibid.*, 465.

75. *Ibid.*, 467.

76. *Ibid.*, 468.

77. *Ibid.*, 472–73.

78. *Ibid.*, 473.

79. *Ibid.*, 475.

80. *Ibid.*, 477.

fundamental attitude of trust. Testimony invites trust, but not blind uncritical trust. Rather, it is ‘important to appreciate the complex relation between trust and critical appraisal’.<sup>81</sup>

‘The situation is in principle no different than in the case of our individual perceptions, memories and inferences, which we have no choice but to trust fundamentally, while also being aware that they can mislead us and require critical evaluation in suspicious cases. It is only the excessive individualism of the modern western ideology that tempts us to the view that testimony should regularly and generally incur our suspicion, while our own perceptions, memories and inferences should not’.<sup>82</sup>

How does this relate to historical study? While ‘Graeco-Roman historians achieved results that we should not be too ready to suppose a historian equipped with modern historical methods could easily have surpassed’,<sup>83</sup> it is true that there are significant differences between ancient and modern ways of approaching historical study. Significantly, modern scholars now focus heavily on extracting evidence from the testimony of witnesses *in spite of themselves*, which is an important insight (cf. M. Bloch and especially R.G. Collingwood). ‘But’, Bauckham proceeds, ‘we should also note that nothing about modern historical method prohibits us from reading the explicit testimonies of the past for the sake of what they were intended to recount and reveal’<sup>84</sup> even if some deny that the ‘past voluntarily “gives” the historian anything’.<sup>85</sup> This is all the more true as this denial tends to lead to the unsustainable assertion that ‘whereas in everyday life we treat testimony as reliable unless or until we find reason to doubt it, in scientific history testimony is suspicious from the outset and can only be believed when it is independently verified’. But at this point ‘it ceases to be testimony’.<sup>86</sup> Testimony, despite the attitudes of much modern Gospel scholarship, invites to be trusted; comprehensive doubt is impossible.

Turning to Paul Ricoeur (and his major recent work, *Memory, History, Forgetting*) who makes ‘testimony as the record of memory indispensable for historiography’,<sup>87</sup> Bauckham seeks a ‘more adequate philosophical account of historiography than Collingwood’s’.<sup>88</sup> This leads to the conclusion: ‘In the end, testimony is all we have. For the historian, the testament, as a record of memory, is bedrock’.<sup>89</sup>

Examining in more detail the dialectic of trust and critical assessment of testimony, Bauckham argues that the evaluation is essentially an assessment of whether the testimony is trustworthy or not. In other words, ‘[w]hat is not possible is the independent verification or falsification of everything the testimony relates’.<sup>90</sup> While archaeological findings, for example, can ‘to a degree corroborate or discredit testimony ... [t]hey cannot replace testimony’.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, ‘for the sake of maintaining the quest for the truth of history, we must allow the testimony to resist the limiting pressure of our own experiences and expectations’.<sup>92</sup>

This leads to an analysis of Holocaust testimonies, how this sheds light on Gospel testimony and the argument that ‘testimony can be checked and assessed in appropriate ways, but nevertheless has to be trusted. In the uniquely unique [a

81. Citing Coady (Richard Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 478).

82. Richard Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 478–79.

83. *Ibid.*, 480.

84. *Ibid.*, 483.

85. *Ibid.*, 484.

86. *Ibid.*, 485.

87. *Ibid.*, 488.

88. *Ibid.*, 487.

89. *Ibid.*, 489.

90. *Ibid.*, 490.

91. *Ibid.*

92. *Ibid.*, 492.

phrase adopted from Ricoeur] events we are considering, this is all the more true'.<sup>93</sup> Testimony can yield truth about the past that nothing else can. We cannot 'suppose that we can extract individual facts from testimony and build our own reconstruction of events that is no longer dependent on witness'.<sup>94</sup>

The traditions in the Synoptic Gospels are, despite being close to how the eyewitnesses told them, actually told by others. However, the extra interpretive element this adds 'does not come in between us and the realistic character of the story, as interpretation can. The authenticity of the eyewitness memory, if that is what it is, is not compromised or obscured by literary contrivance'.<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, Bauckham argues that the distinction between 'plain narratives and narratives that embody interpretation through literary devices such as intertextual allusions' may help us to better understand the differences 'between the narratives of the crucifixion and those of the resurrection'.<sup>96</sup>

'For all the ingenuity of scholars ... [the resurrection] stories remain strangely *sui generis* and lacking theological interpretation. None of the standard Jewish formulae or images of resurrection occur. We seem to be shown the extraordinary *novum*, the otherness of resurrection, through the eyes of those whose ordinary reality it invaded'.<sup>97</sup>

Where does all of this lead us? 'Reading the Gospels as eyewitness testimony' Bauckham argues, 'differs therefore from attempts at historical reconstruction behind the texts. It takes the Gospels seriously as they are; it acknowledges the uniqueness of what we can know only in this testimonial form ... This does not mean that historians must trust testimony uncritically, but rather that testimony is to be assessed *as testimony*'.<sup>98</sup> Especially in terms of some 'uniquely unique' events, testimony *discloses* something and 'disclosure is what makes the category of testimony not only the appropriate one for the kind of history the Gospels are, but also the theologically appropriate one for understanding the Gospels'.<sup>99</sup>

'In summary, if the interests of Christian faith and theology in the Jesus who really lived are to recognize the disclosure of God in this history of Jesus, then testimony is the theologically appropriate, indeed the theologically necessary way of access to the history of Jesus, just as testimony is also the historically appropriate, indeed the historically necessary way of access to this "uniquely unique" historical event. It is in the Jesus of testimony that history and theology meet'.<sup>100</sup>

### 3. Critical questions to pursue

Given that Bauckham's work covers such a wide range of material it is inevitable that there will be room for critique and further development. However, the work is also a *tour de force* of learning, so any who are tempted to simply dismiss the arguments of the book will do so at their own peril. Nevertheless, a few questions present themselves, though these points are made with an understanding nod to the fact that the book was already over 500 pages long.

1) *Trusting Papias' testimony*. Steven Tomkins, in his short work on church history memorably wrote: 'Legend says that Peter insisted on being crucified upside down, but the earliest version of this story also has him resurrecting a

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93. *Ibid.*, 502.

94. *Ibid.*

95. *Ibid.*, 504.

96. *Ibid.*

97. *Ibid.*, 505.

98. *Ibid.*, 506.

99. *Ibid.*, 507.

100. *Ibid.*, 508.

smoked fish, so it is perhaps not entirely trustworthy'<sup>101</sup> These words demonstrate, albeit amusingly, a very common type of reasoning which raises the issue of trusting testimony. In the last chapter Bauckham argues that trusting testimony is indispensable to historiography. However, he adds that '[t]his trust need not be blind faith. In the "critical realist" historian's reception and use of testimony there is a dialectic of trust and critical assessment. *But the assessment is precisely an assessment of the testimony as trustworthy or not*'.<sup>102</sup> It is well known that Papias' testimony includes legendary accounts, for example the report concerning the swollen body of Judas. Accordingly, many may well doubt Papias' testimony given these elements. It must be insisted that Bauckham is well aware of these issues as he pointed out on an internet site: 'Doubtless the tradition about the death of Judas is legendary. I expect most oral history includes some legendary material along with good reminiscences. I've no problem with this'. Again, 'there were plenty of historians in the ancient world who knew what good historical practice was supposed to be but didn't practise it very well'. Besides, in relation to Papias, Bauckham practices what he preaches and maintains a dialectic of trust and critical assessment as is clear from his critical stance towards other aspects of Papias' testimony (cf. 'Papias' contention that Mark did no more than record ... the *chreiai* as Peter related them, is mistaken'<sup>103</sup>). However, perhaps the legendary elements deserved at least comment given i) his consistent, and arguably successful, case for a renewed appreciation of the Papias material and ii) the inevitable manner in which many will brush the Papias material aside given those elements.

2) *Hebrews*. Perhaps more discussion concerning the evidence in Hebrews was to be expected, especially in light of Heb 2:3 ('It was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him'), the presence, in Hebrews, of 'Synoptic-like "historical Jesus" titbits (e.g. 2:18; 4:15; 5:7-9 – The Temptation and Gethsemane, the beginning and end of Jesus' public career?)',<sup>104</sup> as well as the evidence of the important 'testimony' theme within Hebrews (cf. Heb 2:4, 6; 3:5; 7:8; 10:15, 28).

3) *Mnemonics*. Bauckham's thirteenth chapter (on eyewitness memory) was an important contribution to a neglected aspect of research in terms of Jesus tradition. However, one wonders what else could be said in relation to the effectiveness of recall had the matter and effectiveness of deliberate mnemonic techniques been explored in more depth.

4) *Believing the miraculous*. Bauckham speaks of the 'inherently memorable' nature of much of the Jesus tradition, with a nod to the perceived reality of the extraordinary and 'supernatural' events like the resurrection. Many rationalists and naturalists will simply give up at this point as they would argue that we can no more trust the biblical accounts of such supposed events any more than bizarre stories in other premodern literature such as the Apostle Peter's resurrecting of the smoked fish in the apocryphal Acts of Peter or the piecing together of the torn-to-shreds St Aelhaiarn in mediaeval hagiography. While this book was not the place to justify his perspective on these matters, perhaps a footnote or two to other works who discuss matters would have helped some readers.

5) *The Jesus of faith and the Jesus of testimony*. To claim that the Jesus of testimony is different from the Jesus of faith implies a distinct understanding of the latter. This argument, which is nevertheless arguably convincing, perhaps could also have profited from a more nuanced treatment. Also, given that he still allows for a good deal of interpretive development in the Jesus traditions and himself deals with various testimonies, most clearly that of Papias, in a selective manner such that he accepts parts of them and rejects other elements (simply practicing what he preaches in relation to the

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101. Stephen Tomkins, *A Short History of Christianity* (Oxford: Lion, 2005), 22.

102. Richard Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 490, italics mine.

103. *Ibid.*, 231.

104. A point made by Michael Pahl: <http://michaelpahl.blogspot.com/2007/02/thoughts-on-bauckhams-jesus-and.html>



dialectic of trust and critical assessment), one wonders if historical Jesus questing that attempts a critical reconstruction of ‘what actually happened’ based on the Gospels is discounted by Bauckham’s thesis as he implies in the first chapter.

6) *Names in the Gospel traditions*. The phenomenon of the presence and absence of names in the Gospel traditions is one that Bauckham insists needs explanation. Indeed, any explanation offered to account for this is necessarily a hypothesis like Bauckham’s, even if one simply argues that some names have randomly been retained and others dropped to avoid cluttering. The problem is not, as some have argued, that Bauckham proposes an hypothesis, but whether his proposal is the *simplest* explanation of the data. It must be admitted that Bauckham’s hypothesis at this point is closely tied with his larger argument and so its explanatory power must be assessed in the light of the broader sweep of his argument, but this is an issue that could perhaps have done with more explicit justification, all the more so in light of what readers could imagine an ancient work would like were it dependant on eyewitness sources. This point needs explanation: If one were to suggest a best-case scenario for determining whether an ancient work was dependant on eyewitness sources then one could argue that it would naturally include such language as ‘This is what Peter heard Jesus say’ etc.,<sup>105</sup> and an unambiguous attestation of sources (which was not unknown in ancient literature even if not in religious biography). However, as this is not the case with the canonical Gospels, Bauckham argues that the eyewitnesses were indicated via the *inclusio* and the presence of named characters, importantly including the Twelve. That Bauckham’s hypothesis concerning named individuals in the Gospels is simpler than competing options (that would emphasise simple randomness) could perhaps have done with more explicit justification.

7) *Matthew*. The implications of Bauckham’s thesis for Matthew’s Gospel, and vice versa, are areas waiting to be developed. For example, why does Matthew’s Gospel not include an *inclusio*?

8) *The beginning*. In chap 6 Bauckham details the significance of ‘eyewitnesses from the beginning’. After examining Luke’s Prologue he considers the Markan *inclusio* starting at Mark 1:16. However, could the emphasis on the beginning of eyewitness testimony, a matter Bauckham repeatedly notes, also be reflected in the explicit ἀρχή language in Mark (1:1) and John (1:1-2)? (Matthew, once again, doesn’t feature) Luke 1:2, which Bauckham examines, could be reflective of the language of Mark 1:1, while John’s Prologue could be seen to further develop theological insight into ‘the beginning of the Gospel’. I.e. the beginning of the Gospel is tied, with an association to Gen 1:1 (and the anarthrous ‘ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς ...’ cf. Ralphs LXX. Or is it perhaps reflective of Mark’s anarthrous ἀρχή?) to the Word’s divine beginning with and even as God. This could mean that Luke potentially understood the historiographic significance of the Markan narrative detailing the Gospel from ‘the beginning’, and John, as Bauckham also argues, displayed his typical theological perceptivity. However, it could also be asked how, if any of the above is possible, it all would relate to the proposed *inclusio*? Perhaps this would lend credence to the claim that Luke and John adopt and adapt Mark’s *inclusio*, but more could be said.

9) *Protective anonymity*. This is not so much a critique as Bauckham’s focus in his book must necessarily be restricted. However, Richard Fellows has suggested that protective anonymity is a strategy that can also be found in Paul and Acts. This is therefore an area that needs a little more attention in its usage across the NT before Bauckham’s arguments can be better assessed.

10) *Confidence in the inclusio*. Probably not all will be convinced by the supposed presence of the *inclusio*. Some will no doubt protest that it is overly subtle to be plausible. I suspect, however, that Bauckham may well be right given the

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105. For this point, cf. <http://vridar.wordpress.com/2007/02/25/bauckhams-jesus-and-the-eyewitnesses-chapter-12b/>, even if the author presses the argument too far.

broader sweep of his argument and the manner in which the *inclusio* ties well with his analysis of other matters (such as the frequency of Peter's name in Mark, the notion of 'eyewitnesses from the beginning', the Petrine perspective in Mark etc.), but I am not as confident as Bauckham at times appears to be. For example, in providing reasons in support of Papias' statements concerning the origin of Mark's Gospel, he argues that the *inclusio* 'is probably the most important reason for reconsidering Papias' evidence' (204). But is the case he makes for the *inclusio* strong enough to serve as the foundation for another hypothesis? It is difficult to say, especially as it lacks explanatory power for the material in Matthew's Gospel.

Many more will no doubt take issue with specific elements in Bauckham's argument (to put on my Nostradamus hat on for a moment, I prophesy that the proposed *inclusio* and the significance of the Gospel names will come in for the most criticism at the start, before larger scale criticisms are constructed that attempt to engage more constructively with Bauckham's broader vision). However, the critic must be aware of the interconnected and mutually justifying nature of Bauckham's argument that accounts for a broad sweep of evidence. It is not enough, for example, to take issue with the *inclusio* proposal in light of an assumption of 'what one would expect' or a mere study of the Gospel parallels without attending also to his arguments concerning the Twelve, Palestinian Jewish Names, the significance of Luke's Prologue, the plural-to-singular device, the Papias evidence etc. The plausibility of individual elements can only be assessed when the bigger picture is kept in mind, and thus counter proposals will best need to engage with Bauckham's arguments not merely at the individual level, but in terms of this bigger picture, and thus be prepared to suggest another broader hypothesis. It is for this reason that Bauckham's thesis may well remain influential for many years, until a replacement hypothesis of equal breadth is proposed. Perhaps the back cover should also have issued a health warning for the likely numerous amateur wanna-be critics!

Perhaps the single most important book to have been written on the historical Jesus in decades, Bauckham's *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* will rightly be at the centre of the developing debate over the coming years. What makes matters all the more astonishing is that this radical book has been penned by a scholar of such international renown, indeed by perhaps the most learned scholar in the world in terms of early Christianity. Time will tell whether his thesis comes to exercise a similar influence on New testament scholarship as the speculations proffered by Bultmann and co. Whether coopted by conservative Christians in the cause of defensive apologetics-at-any-cost, or whether denounced or dismissed by critics as the work of intellectually dishonest confessionism, the depth of Bauckham's scholarship is incontrovertible. His arguments are here to stay and, I hope, will profoundly shape the unfolding debate.

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