

# John's Apologetic Christology

Legitimation and development in  
Johannine Christology

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# 1

## INTRODUCTION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF JOHANNINE CHRISTOLOGY

In recent times an area which has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention is the development of Christian doctrine, and in particular Christology. *That* Christology – whether in New Testament times or in the subsequent centuries – has undergone changes and developments of some sort, appears to be beyond question.<sup>1</sup> However, the question of *how* and/or *why* doctrine develops has not been answered with any similar degree of consensus. This lack of consensus is perhaps nowhere more clearly visible than in the case of the Fourth Gospel. In the numerous recent attempts to trace the history of the ‘Johannine community’, appeals have been made by different scholars to the influence of diverse individuals, groups, cultures and ideas, each trying to explain thereby the link between the earliest traditions about Jesus and the distinctive portrait of him found in the Fourth Gospel. In the present work we will not be attempting to write a history of the Christian community or communities within which the Gospel took shape. We shall nonetheless seek insights from the realm of sociology in order to provide an explanatory mechanism for understanding the process of christological development evidenced in the final product we know as the Gospel according to John. This Gospel appears not only to have deep roots in early Jewish Christianity, but also to have been written by and/or for Christians who were in continuing dialogue with non-Christian Judaism. How this Gospel and the beliefs it expresses can have sprung from Jewish roots, and yet at the same time have become an issue of conflict between Christians and non-Christian Jews, is the perplexing riddle which the present work hopes to help solve.<sup>2</sup> But before we can attempt to do this, we must

<sup>1</sup> Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making. An Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, London: SCM, 1989, p.xii, who calls the fact of development in the New Testament period an ‘unassailable observation’.

<sup>2</sup> To argue here the case that the primary dialogue partners of the author of the

review representatives of the major previous treatments of and approaches to this issue, and the methods used therein.

### **Previous approaches**

In contemporary scholarship a number of different approaches have been taken to the question of *why* Christology developed and, more specifically, why the Fourth Gospel presents a Christology that is so distinctive. Although all attempts to categorize the views of others risk oversimplification, it is nonetheless necessary to distinguish between and categorize different approaches if we are to evaluate them briefly and effectively. We may thus for convenience group the different perspectives we shall be examining here into the following categories:

- (1) *History of Religions approaches*: These generally argue that the Gospel of John is different from earlier writings primarily because of an influx of Gentiles and/or Samaritans into the church. These new converts brought with them their own backgrounds and worldviews, which led to the character of the church's Christology taking on a different form, one which more closely resembles Gentile or Samaritan beliefs than those of earlier Jewish Christians.<sup>3</sup>
- (2) *Organic development*: These approaches consider that the Gospel of John simply draws out the logical implications of what was already implicit in earlier beliefs. This is not to say that there is no development, but simply that the development does not represent a departure from the

Fourth Gospel are non-Christian Jews would excessively lengthen the introduction to this book. The key evidence is surveyed, albeit briefly, in the first part of chapter 2. It is felt that the arguments and evidences surveyed throughout the present work will adequately sustain this initial hypothesis.

<sup>3</sup> So e.g. Michael Goulder, 'The Two Roots of the Christian Myth', in John Hick (ed.), *The Myth of God Incarnate*, London: SCM, 1977, pp. 64–86; Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1979, pp. 34–58; Maurice Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God. The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology. The Edward Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham, 1985–86*, Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 1991. Brown's name sits uncomfortably among these other examples; even though the stimulus to development he proposed is similar to that proposed by others in the 'History of Religions' category, Brown nonetheless sought to do justice to the continuity between earlier and later stages (cf., e.g., Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to New Testament Christology*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994, pp. 109, 140, 150).

original content and character of early Jewish-Christian Christology. It is rather the drawing out of the implications which naturally follow from these earlier beliefs, implications which, in a sense, someone was bound to draw out sooner or later.<sup>4</sup>

- (3) *Individual creativity*: These approaches suggest that the distinctive Johannine developments are the product of a particular individual, presumably a Christian leader of some description, who reinterpreted earlier christological traditions in light of his own distinctive viewpoint, imagination and personality. The distinctive Johannine Christology thus represents above all else the unique insight of a particular individual.<sup>5</sup>
- (4) *Sociological approaches*: These regard the distinctive Johannine Christology as the product of a particular social setting. Some upholders of this type of perspective emphasize that development takes place as earlier traditions are applied to new contexts and issues.<sup>6</sup> The approach that we shall be adopting in the present study falls into this final category, although without excluding certain important insights offered by other approaches.

<sup>4</sup> So e.g. C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, pp. 2–4; I. Howard Marshall, 'The Development of Christology in the Early Church', *Tyndale Bulletin* 18 (1967), 77–93; R. T. France, *Matthew – Evangelist and Teacher*, Carlisle: Paternoster, 1989, pp. 316–17; 'Development in New Testament Christology', in William R. Farmer (ed.), *Crisis in Christology. Essays in Quest of Resolution*, Livonia, MN: Dove, 1995, pp. 63–82.

<sup>5</sup> So e.g. John A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John*, London: SCM, 1985, pp. 296–300; Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question*, London: SCM/ Philadelphia: Trinity, 1989, pp. 104–5, 134.

<sup>6</sup> So e.g. Wayne A. Meeks, 'The Divine Agent and His Counterfeit in Philo and the Fourth Gospel', in Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (ed.), *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1976, pp. 43–67; 'The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism', in John Ashton (ed.), *The Interpretation of John*, Philadelphia: Fortress/ London: SPCK, 1986, pp. 141–73; Jerome H. Neyrey, *Christ is Community: The Christologies of the New Testament*, Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1985; *An Ideology of Revolt. John's Christology in Social-Science Perspective*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988; James F. McGrath, 'Change in Christology: New Testament Models and the Contemporary Task', *ITQ* 63/1 (1998), 42, 49; also Robert Kysar, 'Pursuing the Paradoxes of Johannine Thought: Conceptual Tensions in John 6. A Redaction-Critical Proposal', in Dennis E. Groh and Robert Jewett (eds.), *The Living Text: Essays in Honor of Ernest W. Saunders*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985, pp. 190, 200, 203; Martinus C. de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives on the Death of Jesus*, Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996, pp. 112–17, 311, who take a similar approach to the one adopted here but without the explicit use of sociological models.



These categories are simply heuristic, and it would be quite possible to distinguish the views of various scholars along other lines. There is also potential for overlap, as some scholars seek to utilize more than one of the approaches just mentioned. For our purposes, however, this categorization will be adequate as representing the principal types of explanation offered concerning the stimuli to the development of Johannine Christology, and so we may now turn to an evaluation of the work and results of key recent advocates of each.

### History of Religions approaches

The earliest proponents of the History of Religions approach argued that Christology underwent a major transformation when it moved from the world of Palestinian Judaism (which was believed to be a purer form of Judaism) to that of the Hellenistic Judaism of the Diaspora, which was subject to the influences of paganism. Such a view has been rendered untenable by the realization that the traditional distinction between 'Judaism' and 'Hellenism' does not accurately represent the situation in the period we are studying. As the work of Martin Hengel in particular has clearly demonstrated, all Judaism during this period was 'Hellenistic Judaism', inasmuch as there was no Judaism which was not part of the Hellenistic world and influenced in some way by its thought and culture.<sup>7</sup>

The realization that all Judaism, including that found in Palestine and even that of the Pharisees, was influenced by Hellenism in some way or other has been accompanied by an awareness of the diversity which existed in Judaism in and around New Testament times. This diversity is such that Jacob Neusner has even felt it necessary to speak of 'Judaisms' in the plural.<sup>8</sup> Of course, the traditional proponents of History of Religions models of develop-

<sup>7</sup> Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism. Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, London: SCM, 1974; *The 'Hellenization' of Judaism in the First Century after Christ*, London: SCM, 1989. See also Bartlett, John R., *Jews in the Hellenistic World. Josephus, Aristeeas, The Sibylline Oracles, Eupolemus* (CCWJCW, 1), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 7–8; James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Judaism and Christianity and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, London: SCM, 1991, pp. 9–10; John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora. From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996, pp. 83–91.

<sup>8</sup> Jacob Neusner, *Judaic Law from Jesus to the Mishnah. A Systematic Reply to Professor E. P. Sanders*, Atlanta: Scholars, 1993, pp. 1–2. See also Dunn, *Partings*, pp. 18, 285 n.1, and the objections of Barclay, *Jews*, pp. 400–1.

ment were aware of this diversity, which they attributed to the differences between the 'purer' Judaism of Palestine and the Judaism of the Diaspora, which had been influenced by Hellenism. But it is precisely this type of distinction that has been proved untenable. The view that the rabbis or Pharisees were the upholders of an orthodox form of Judaism, which was defended from Hellenistic influence in their synagogues, can no longer be maintained. There was simply no generally recognized orthodox Judaism in this period. Nor was there any non-Hellenized Judaism: even the Pharisees show signs of having been influenced by Hellenism.<sup>9</sup> The conclusion which Hengel has reached must be emphasized: given that Palestinian Judaism can be accurately described as Hellenistic Judaism, having been subject to the influence of Greek culture for more than three hundred years, the term 'Hellenistic' no longer makes any meaningful distinction within the history of religions as applied to earliest Christianity.<sup>10</sup> Many works which in earlier times were assumed, because of the evidences of Hellenistic influence upon them, to derive from the Diaspora, may in fact have originated in Palestine.<sup>11</sup>

Yet while this makes certain older views untenable, it may still be possible for scholars who wish to argue for a History of Religions model of development to find ways of expressing that there were genuine differences between Jews on the one hand and other inhabitants of the Hellenistic world on the other, without this implying a return to the old, outmoded 'Judaism vs. Hellenism' schema. A possible way forward is hinted at in a recent article by Jonathan Goldstein. He draws a parallel between the situation of Jews in Greek or Roman-ruled Palestine and that of Indian Muslims in British-ruled India. While the members of the Aligarh movement in colonial India would never have considered converting to Christianity, nonetheless the movement's members actively sought to become 'gentlemen in the English mould' in all other respects. Thus in the same way that their Islamic faith was not felt to exclude many forms of 'Anglicizing', so also the Torah was not considered by many Jews to exclude the acceptance of various aspects of Hellenistic culture.<sup>12</sup> The Jews had a different

<sup>9</sup> Hengel, 'Hellenization', pp. 51–2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.53.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22–8.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan A. Goldstein, 'Jewish Acceptance and Rejection of Hellenism', in E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten and Alan Mendelson (eds.), *Jewish and Christian Self-*

religion from that of most of their neighbours, and also had a different culture. Both of these inseparable aspects of Jewish life were influenced by Hellenism, but that does not imply that Jewish religion and culture became identical with that of other peoples in the Hellenistic era, any more than Greek influence led Roman culture, for example, to cease to be distinguishable from that of the Greeks. To return to the analogy which Goldstein draws with India under British rule, Indian culture was clearly influenced by British culture, but few if any would question that it was and is still possible to continue to speak meaningfully of 'Indian culture' and 'British culture'. The edges will have been somewhat blurry, and there will have been individual Indians who so wholly adopted British ways that they might appear to have been 'more British than the British themselves'. But on the whole, it would appear that the distinction between different cultures and religious traditions, and thus between 'Jewish' and 'non-Jewish', remains valid, provided it is used carefully and with the important qualifications which have just been discussed.<sup>13</sup>

Having clarified this point, we may define more clearly what a valid History of Religions model might look like. A contemporary form of this type of approach could focus on what important differences existed between Jews and other races and religions of the Hellenistic world, and in particular on the important difference between the monotheistic Jews and their generally polytheistic neighbours.<sup>14</sup> The basic argument of History of Religions models of christological development tends to follow something along

*Definition. Volume 2: Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period*, London: SCM, 1981, p.66.

<sup>13</sup> For a helpful approach which avoids defining a religion in monolithic terms cf. J. Z. Smith, 'Fences and Neighbours: Some Contours of Early Judaism', in William Scott Green (ed.), *Approaches to Ancient Judaism. Volume II* (BJS, 9), Chico, CA: Scholars, 1980, pp. 1–25. For the issue of religious and cultural adaptation see further Barclay, *Jews*, pp. 87–91.

<sup>14</sup> Even the definition of monotheism is not without its difficulties. See the useful discussion in Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (WUNT 2, 70), Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1995, pp. 15–21; also Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord. Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*, London: SCM, 1988, pp. 17–39; 'What Do We Mean by "First-Century Jewish Monotheism"?' in Eugene M. Lovering, Jr. (ed.), *SBL 1993 Seminar Papers*, Atlanta: Scholars, 1993, pp. 348–68; Paul A. Rainbow, 'Jewish Monotheism as the Matrix for New Testament Christology: A Review Article', *NovT* 33/1 (1991), 78–91; Dunn, *Partings*, pp. 19–21. See also Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, p.264; Barclay, *Jews*, pp. 99–100, 312–13. See further our discussion in n.70 and n.71 below and in ch.3.

these lines: in contrast with Jews, Gentiles accepted and worshipped more than one god; Jesus was regarded as divine and worshipped; therefore, the concept of Jesus' divinity is a product of Gentile influence on Christianity rather than a natural growth out of the (very Jewish) message of Jesus.<sup>15</sup> To argue this way, in light of our discussion above, is not incoherent, although we shall see reasons below for ultimately rejecting this solution to the problem of the development of Johannine Christology.

### Gentile influence on Johannine Christology<sup>16</sup>

We may now consider the views of those who maintain that John's distinctive Christology took its present form under the influence of Gentiles who had joined the community. The most recent exponent of this view is Maurice Casey, whose perspective is representative of this approach to the problem of christological development. Casey's basic argument is that those Christians who came to view Jesus as divine did so under the influence of Gentile thought, to which they were susceptible because the Judaism of which they were a part had already gone some way towards assimilating to Gentile ways.<sup>17</sup> Casey is aware of the problem of Jewish diversity, and compares the issue in relation to New Testament times to the issue in modern times of 'Who is a Jew?'<sup>18</sup> Yet he stresses that in order to reach some sort of conclusion, a concept of orthodoxy is necessary, and this he finds in the Torah-observant Judaism of the Pharisees and Essenes.<sup>19</sup> Casey also suggests eight features as distinctively Jewish, so that if someone has all eight he is clearly Jewish, and if none he is clearly a Gentile. These are ethnicity, Scripture, monotheism, circumcision, Sabbath observance, dietary laws, purity laws and major festivals. Among these ethnicity is at times an overriding factor, so that someone may be perceived as Jewish even if the other factors are lacking, or conversely as a Gentile even though all the other factors are present.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> So e.g. Casey, *Jewish Prophet*, pp. 23–38. See also Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology*, New York: Scribners, 1965, pp. 232–3, who nonetheless seeks to emphasize the underlying continuity in spite of these influences.

<sup>16</sup> What follows repeats many of the arguments found in the present author's 'Johannine Christianity – Jewish Christianity?', *Koinonia Journal* 8/1 (1996), 1–20.

<sup>17</sup> Casey, *Jewish Prophet*, pp. 33–4.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17–20.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14. See also Barclay, *Jews*, pp. 402–13.

Casey's work is helpful inasmuch as it sets out clearly the presuppositions and methodology that are used by many who argue along these lines. Yet it will probably already be obvious from our discussion in the previous section that Casey's argument is open to severe criticism at a number of key points. To begin with, Casey is working with a concept of orthodoxy that is anachronistic and therefore inappropriate for the period in question. The Pharisees did not have the authority to define what was and was not legitimately considered Judaism in New Testament times. During this period there were simply no universally recognized leaders in a position to define Judaism in this way.<sup>21</sup> It is true that the Pharisees considered their interpretation of Judaism to be the correct one and the most faithful to Israel's Scriptures and traditions, but this is also true of the Qumran community, and was presumably equally true of all of the other Jewish parties. The situation in Israel/Judaism during this period has been compared to the situation in a multi-party state such as the US or Great Britain. In such a situation, there are a number of groups, each of whom would like to be in a position of authority and enforce its understanding of the way life in the nation should be lived. Nonetheless, no one party represents the whole population, so that even the party in power cannot legitimately claim to be 'the only truly American/British party'.<sup>22</sup>

It will be helpful to contrast Casey's view with that of Neusner, who emphasizes that the features usually used to define a social entity (such as a common country, language or culture) were not shared by all Jews. He thus considers that, from a purely secular perspective, the portrait of the Jews as a unified entity 'Israel' is 'a pious fantasy'.<sup>23</sup> It may of course be possible to find common

<sup>21</sup> Cf. David E. Aune, 'Orthodoxy in First Century Judaism? A Response to N. J. McElaney', *JSJ* 7/1 (1976), 1–10; Lester L. Grabbe, 'Orthodoxy in First Century Judaism. What Are the Issues?', *JSJ* 8/2 (1977), 149–53; Luke Timothy Johnson, 'The New Testament's Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic', *JBL* 108 (1989), 426–8; Bengt Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament. An Appraisal*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990, p.91; E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE*, London: SCM/ Philadelphia: Trinity, 1992, pp. 388–404; Philip S. Alexander, "'The Partings of the Ways' from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism", in James D. G. Dunn (ed.), *Jews and Christians. The Partings of the Ways A. D. 70 to 135* (WUNT 2, 66), Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1992, pp. 3, 21; Barclay, *Jews*, p.85.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Alan F. Segal, *Rebecca's Children. Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986, p.59. See also Grabbe, 'Orthodoxy', 151–2.

<sup>23</sup> Neusner, *Judaic Law*, p.2; see further his discussion on pp. 50, 62.

denominators, just as Dunn has attempted to do by speaking of 'four pillars of ancient Judaism'.<sup>24</sup> These he defines as monotheism, election of Israel, covenant (focused in Torah) and the Temple. Yet the difficulty is that, precisely as a set of lowest common denominators, these points appear not to have been the central emphases or distinguishing features in the various Jewish groups of this period.<sup>25</sup> We cannot, on the basis of the texts available to us from this period, say that there was universal agreement on precisely what monotheism meant in practice, on the place of the Gentiles, on how the Torah was to be interpreted and applied, or on the validity of the present Temple.<sup>26</sup> It thus becomes impossible to speak of a Jewish 'orthodoxy' in this period, and thus the question 'Who was a Jew?' becomes as difficult to answer as its modern analogue, 'Who is a Jew?'

This point leads us to another key element of Casey's argument. In his view, it is precisely because the Johannine Christians had lost their Jewish self-identity that they were able to develop a Christology in which Jesus was considered divine.<sup>27</sup> He regards the

<sup>24</sup> Dunn, *Partings*, pp. 18–36. Neusner expresses his essential agreement with Dunn's assessment in *Judaic Law*, pp. 52–3. See also Neil J. McEleney, 'Orthodoxy in Judaism of the First Christian Century: Replies to David E. Aune and Lester L. Grabbe', *JSJ* 9/1 (1978), 84–7.

<sup>25</sup> Neusner, *Judaic Law*, p. 53. See also Barclay, *Jews*, p. 402.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Aune, 'Orthodoxy', 6–7; Johnson, 'Anti-Jewish Slander', 426–8. There was also wide diversity of practice concerning the observance of purity laws (cf. James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law. Studies in Mark and Galatians*, London: SPCK, 1990, pp. 140–7). Thus the explanation concerning water pots for purification (John 2.6; Casey, *Jewish Prophet*, pp. 28–9) need not imply more than that there was at least one 'God-fearer' or non-observant Jew present among John's intended readership. That many Jews observed purity laws even in the Diaspora is clear enough (cf. E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah. Five Studies*, London: SCM/ Philadelphia: Trinity, 1990, pp. 258–71; *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, pp. 223–4), but nonetheless there were clearly also some who felt that such observance was unnecessary, particularly when there was no occasion for regular contact with the Temple (cf. Philo, *Mig.* 89–93). Likewise, the explanation of terms like 'rabbi' need not imply anything more than the presence of Jews whose first and perhaps only language was Greek. On the epigraphic evidence, which suggests that most Greek-speaking Diaspora Jews used a translation such as (νομο)διδάσκαλος rather than the transliterated 'rabbi', see E. Lohse, 'ῥαββί', *TDNT* VI, pp. 961–5; Shaye J. D. Cohen, 'Epigraphical Rabbis', *JQR* n.s. 72 (1981), 1–17. See also J. Louis Martyn, 'A Gentile Mission That Replaced an Earlier Jewish Mission?', in R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black (eds.), *Exploring the Gospel of John. In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996, pp. 126–7; Richard Bauckham, 'For Whom Were Gospels Written?', in R. Bauckham (ed.), *The Gospels for All Christians. Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998, p. 24.

<sup>27</sup> Casey, *Jewish Prophet*, p. 27.

Johannine references to ‘the Jews’ as decisive evidence for this. Casey’s conclusion here is questionable on a number of grounds. We may begin with the explicit evidence of 3 John 7. The Johannine epistles may with reasonable certainty be attributed to a member or members of the same early Christian community as that in which the Fourth Gospel was produced, since they show clear affinities in their theology and language.<sup>28</sup> In this text, those who are not part of the author’s group are called ἔθνικῶν, ‘Gentiles’, which clearly suggests that the group of which the author is a part does not have a Gentile self-identity.<sup>29</sup> This is further indicated in the Gospel itself by the fact that the Johannine Christians evaluate positively the title ‘Israel(ite)’ (John 1.47–9), and that the author can even state that ‘salvation is of the Jews’ (4.22). However, we also find in the Fourth Gospel that the Johannine Christians defined their identity over against a group whom they called ‘the Jews’. This fact does appear to create difficulty for the view that the Johannine Christians had a Jewish self-identity. Thus, if our understanding of John as a Christian-Jewish work is to be maintained, it will be necessary to find an alternative explanation of this Johannine phenomenon.

The key to understanding the Johannine references to ‘the Jews’ is an awareness of the background against which the Fourth Gospel was written. In ancient Mediterranean cultures, the collective identity was primary, and it was completely normal to engage in what today might be considered unhelpful ‘stereotyping’.<sup>30</sup> Even today, statements such as ‘the English are very reserved’ are made, even by people who are aware that there are exceptions to this generalization. In the case of the Fourth Gospel, the Johannine Christians had been part of a Jewish community that refused to believe in Jesus, and which took a hostile attitude towards the teaching and beliefs promulgated by these Christians.<sup>31</sup> It was

<sup>28</sup> On this see further Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (Anchor Bible, 30), New York: Doubleday and Co, 1982, pp. 20–30; Judith Lieu, *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 16–17.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Maurice Casey, *Is John’s Gospel True?*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 115–16.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World. Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, Atlanta: John Knox, 1981, pp. 53–60. See further Sean Freyne, ‘Vilifying the Other and Defining the Self: Matthew’s and John’s Anti-Jewish Polemic in Focus’, in Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs (eds.), *To See Ourselves as Others See Us. Christians, Jews, ‘Others’ in Late Antiquity*, Chico: Scholars, 1985, pp. 117–143; Johnson, ‘Anti-Jewish Slander’; McGrath, ‘Johannine Christianity’, 13–4.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. the evidence amassed in the first part of ch.2 below.

'natural', in this cultural context, for a group that had had such experiences to think of 'the Jews' as typically 'those who have hardened their hearts and refused to believe in their own Messiah'.<sup>32</sup> However, in thinking this way the author is still aware that there were Jews who believed openly in Jesus, as well as secret sympathizers within the Jewish community.

It must also be kept in mind that not long prior to John writing, a number of Christians had been expelled from the synagogue against their will. The background to this occurrence is usually thought to be the attempt by certain rabbis in the post-70 period to define more clearly, and in line with their own particular views and emphases, what it meant to be a Jew.<sup>33</sup> These Christians had been 'defined out' by the leaders of their community. Some would even argue that the majority of Jews in the community from which they were expelled refused to regard these Christians as genuine or faithful Jews, perhaps even going so far as to claim that title exclusively for themselves. The author of the Fourth Gospel cedes the term, but in other ways claims that Christians are the true Israelites and those who have truly remained faithful to the heritage of Israel's traditions and Scriptures.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> This is not to condone the many fiery statements made by the author of the Gospel, but simply to demonstrate that it appears less striking against the context of its cultural setting than it does to us today, after so many years of Christian anti-Semitism. See further Johnson, 'Anti-Jewish Slander'; John Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah. The History, Literature and Theology of the Johannine Community*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993, pp. 29–31; Casey, *Is John's Gospel True?*, p.225.

<sup>33</sup> See Klaus Wengst, *Bedrängte Gemeinde und verherrlichter Christus. Der historische Ort des Johannesevangeliums als Schlüssel zu einer Interpretation*, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981, pp. 48–73; Dunn, *Partings*, pp. 222, 238–9; Frédéric Manns, *L'Évangile de Jean à la lumière du Judaïsme* (SBFA, 33), Jerusalem: Franciscan, 1991, pp. 469–509. We are not suggesting that the Jewish community of which these Christians had been a part will have been directly affected by the council of Jamnia, but simply that the aforementioned Jewish community was part of a wider mood current in the post-70 period. See also Kysar, 'Pursuing the Paradoxes', pp. 191–2 n.6; John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1991, pp. 151–9. In light of our earlier discussion, we should perhaps also stress that this was an attempt, not to *defend* Jewish orthodoxy, but to *define* it. In the earlier period, differing definitions co-existed, whereas in the post-war period the Pharisaic-Rabbinic school of thought slowly began to predominate, and in those areas where it had sufficient power to do so, sought to enforce its own views, and to exclude proponents of certain other views which threatened its own. See also the discussion and illuminating modern illustration offered in de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives*, p.57.

<sup>34</sup> See further the helpful discussion in Dunn, *Partings*, pp. 156–60. See also Painter, *Quest*, pp. 57–8; D. Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 89–90; McGrath, 'Johannine Christianity', 11–14. Casey, *Is John's Gospel True?*, pp. 124–7 argues against Dunn and others who seek to show that there was a tendency to distinguish between



One of Casey's major points is that the Johannine Christians have defined their identity over against 'the Jews', and are thus no longer 'Jews' themselves. We have just seen that this is not a necessary conclusion to draw on the basis of the available evidence. Once again a crucial factor is that Casey is working with a definition of Judaism which appears to be too narrow for the period in question. In later times, when an 'orthodox' form of Judaism began to take shape, many other groups and beliefs were defined out along with Johannine Christianity, among these some that Casey recognizes as clearly Jewish. For instance, Philo's talk of the Logos as a 'second god' would have been excluded as heresy in this later period in much the same way as were Christian beliefs of the sort found in the Fourth Gospel.<sup>35</sup> Were Casey to allow the same looser definition of monotheism for John as he does for Philo, the former might also be included within the broad spectrum of first-century Judaism. Perhaps it is only because of his knowledge with the benefit of hindsight that Christianity eventually became a separate religion that it is possible for Casey to maintain the view that he does. Thus one cannot help but wonder whether, if Philo's teaching had been more widely propagated and, after such views were excluded by the rabbis, had produced a separate religion called 'Philonism', Casey would not have regarded Philo's teaching concerning this 'second god' as a break with Jewish orthodoxy.<sup>36</sup>

Once it has been accepted that there was no one clear orthodox Judaism in this time, the fact that the Johannine Christians may have held a spiritualizing interpretation of the Temple or of the Jewish feasts, regarding them as fulfilled in Christ, need not prevent us from considering them to have been Jewish Christians. On the contrary, the very fact that they felt the feasts and Temple to be so important that they needed to show in some way their fidelity to these institutions could well suggest just the opposite, that these

'Israel' and 'Jews'. Even if the evidence does not support the case, this does not preclude the possibility that John made such a distinction. This is nonetheless somewhat beside the point, as John can use 'Jews' as well as 'Israel' in a positive sense (John 4.22). Cf. the helpful and balanced discussion in Graham Harvey, *The True Israel. Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew and Israel in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature*, Leiden: Brill, 1996, pp. 91–2, 249–50.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven. Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (SJLA, 25), Leiden: Brill, 1977, pp. 179–80.

<sup>36</sup> McGrath, 'Johannine Christianity', 6. See further Hurtado, 'First-Century Jewish Monotheism', on this issue. He raises a number of important criticisms of Casey on pp. 350–1. On Johannine Christology and monotheism see below, ch.3.

were indeed Christian Jews.<sup>37</sup> Thus, in contrast to Casey's conclusions, Dunn argues that the prominence of the theme of conflict between Jesus and 'the Jews' in John strongly suggests that the Fourth Gospel stems from a predominantly Jewish setting.<sup>38</sup> Dunn rightly points out that the conflict between the Johannine Christians and 'the Jews' ought to be read, not as a conflict between two distinct religions, but between two Jewish groups, each attempting to claim that it represents the true continuation of Israel's ancient heritage and beliefs. The language of denunciation of 'the Jews' in John, and the references to them as 'children of darkness/the devil', is the language of Jewish sectarianism, as may be seen from much of the Qumran literature, even though the key term 'the Jews' is not found there.<sup>39</sup> It is used, however, by the later Jewish Christians who authored the Pseudo-Clementines, and is not all that different from the denunciations of 'Israel' found in the writings attributed to the (clearly Israelite) prophets in the Jewish Scriptures.<sup>40</sup> Of course, we know in hindsight that the Pharisaic rabbis held on to the title 'Judaism', and that Christianity did become a separate religion; this is not in doubt. However, it is important not to

<sup>37</sup> Cp. Philo's attitude to those who, in interpreting the Torah figuratively, rejected its literal meaning: Philo disagrees with them, but does not regard them as no longer being Jews; see his *Mig.*, 89ff. Casey gives 'half a point' to the Fourth Gospel in relation to monotheism and other distinguishing features on his scale (Casey, *Jewish Prophet*, p.29; *Is John's Gospel True?*, p.114). In our view, this undermines his whole project: if differing views on monotheism, Scripture, etc. can be more or less 'Jewish', then the whole issue of Jewishness becomes much less black and white than even Casey's 8-point scale. This in turn opens up the possibility that John, while probably not getting a full 8 points, will get far more than the 1.5 given by Casey, or alternatively that many authors that are currently classed as Jewish by Casey will need to be recategorized. On the probable observance of Torah by the Johannine Christians see further Severino Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel. The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity according to John* (NovTSup, 42), Leiden: Brill, 1975, p.530; J. Louis Martyn, 'Glimpses into the History of the Johannine Community', in M. de Jonge (ed.), *L'Évangile de Jean. Sources, rédaction, théologie* (BETL, 44), Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1977, pp. 158–9; Rodney Whitacre, *Johannine Polemic. The Role of Tradition and Theology* (SBLDS, 67), Chico, CA: Scholars, 1982, pp. 64–8; Lloyd Gaston, 'Lobsters in the Fourth Gospel', in Jacob Neusner (ed.), *Approaches to Ancient Judaism. New Series. Volume IV*, Atlanta: Scholars, 1993, pp. 115–23; McGrath, 'Johannine Christianity', 7–10.

<sup>38</sup> James D. G. Dunn, 'Let John Be John: A Gospel for Its Time', in Peter Stuhlmacher (ed.), *The Gospel and the Gospels*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991, p.303.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Johnson, 'Anti-Jewish Slander', on polemical language in early Judaism and Christianity.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Ps-Clem., *Recognitions* 1.50; 5.11; also McGrath, 'Johannine Christianity', 13.

anachronistically read the final outcome of a development back into its earlier stages.<sup>41</sup>

It would thus seem unwise to follow Casey in regarding the Johannine Christians as ‘syncretistic’ Jews who essentially apostatized from Judaism to produce Gentile Christianity. The notion of a Judaism that had not been influenced in any way by its neighbours in the wider Hellenistic world is no longer tenable. Although one can sympathize with his desire to find a clear definition of orthodoxy to work with, it has been adequately demonstrated that no such definition can accurately be applied to Judaism in the period in question. Another shortcoming of Casey’s thesis is his failure to distinguish with sufficient clarity between the self-understanding of the Johannine Christians and the way others regarded them.<sup>42</sup> He also overemphasizes the sense of alienation from Judaism expressed by the Christians who were responsible for producing the Fourth Gospel, failing to do justice to the complementary fact that it is precisely a group of Jewish origin that feels this way. The paradox of John’s Gospel’s relationship to Judaism is dealt with much better by Meeks in his famous statement, ‘To put the matter sharply, with some risk of misunderstanding, the Fourth Gospel is most anti-Jewish just at the points it is most Jewish.’<sup>43</sup> Were the conflict over Christology reflected in the Gospel also a conflict about openness to Gentile influence, we should expect to find some hint of this in the accusations raised by the Jewish authorities in the course of the Gospel, and yet we do not.<sup>44</sup> Thus,

<sup>41</sup> Cf. James D. G. Dunn, ‘Some Clarifications on Issues of Method: A Reply to Holliday and Segal’, *Semeia* 30 (1984), 100. On important differences between pagan and Christian forms of anti-Judaism even in the second century, which create difficulties for those who would argue that the latter was simply a sub-category of the former, see Miriam S. Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity. A Critique of Scholarly Consensus*, Leiden: Brill, 1995, pp. 116–21.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. again Hurtado, ‘First-Century Jewish Monotheism’, pp. 354–5, who notes the difficulty of defining first-century Jewish monotheism, and adopts the approach of accepting that ‘first century Jewish monotheism’ is that which first-century Jewish authors who consider themselves monotheists believe.

<sup>43</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, ‘“Am I A Jew?” – Johannine Christianity and Judaism’, in Jacob Neusner (ed.), *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty. Part One: New Testament*, Leiden: Brill, 1975, p.172.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. McGrath, ‘Johannine Christianity’, 10. This is admittedly an argument from silence, but it is nonetheless perhaps a valid one, inasmuch as other New Testament documents which clearly express openness to Gentiles also feel the need to defend this fact. See also the recent studies by J. L. Martyn, ‘Mission’ and Peder Borgen, ‘The Gospel of John and Hellenism. Some Observations’, both in R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black (eds.), *Exploring the Gospel of John. In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996.

in light of the evidence we have surveyed, it seems justified to reject the claim that Johannine Christianity should be regarded as a Gentile phenomenon rather than a Jewish one. This in turn suggests that Gentile influence cannot provide the key to explaining and understanding the development of Johannine Christology.

#### Samaritan influence on Johannine Christology

Another suggestion that has been offered as to a possible catalyst for the development of John's high Christology is an influx of Samaritan converts into the community. This suggestion is found particularly in the work of Raymond Brown, although other scholars have also suggested links between either the Gospel of John in particular, or higher Christology in general, and Samaritanism.<sup>45</sup> Brown's hypothesis is among the most convincing of those positing links with Samaritanism, since it allows for the essentially Jewish setting which the work of Martyn and others has shown to be most likely, while also taking seriously the necessity to explain the development of the Christology which brought the Johannine Christians into conflict with the synagogue. Brown does not attempt to argue that the Johannine Christians lost their sense of Jewish identity (especially in view of passages such as John 4.22), but simply that Samaritan converts influenced the development of Johannine thought to a sufficient extent that other Jews took notice of the presence of what they regarded as distinctively Samaritan ideas.<sup>46</sup> Brown's suggestion has the merit of placing Johannine Christianity within a Jewish context, while allowing for a development in this group's christological thinking. The catalyst for this development, an influx of Samaritan converts, would have represented an influx of people holding views that were disliked by the Jewish leaders and would thus have created tensions between them and the Johannine Christians.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Brown, *Community*, pp. 36ff.; John Bowman, *The Samaritan Problem. Studies in the Relationships of Samaritanism, Judaism, and Early Christianity*, Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1975, ch.3; George Wesley Buchanan, 'The Samaritan Origin of the Gospel of John', in Jacob Neusner (ed.), *Religions in Antiquity. Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsell Goodenough*, Leiden: Brill, 1968, pp. 149–75; Goulder, 'Two Roots', p.67; P. J. Hartin, 'A Community in Crisis. The Christology of the Johannine Community as the Point at Issue', *Neotestamentica* 19 (1985), 40–1. See too the discussion in Ashton, *Understanding*, pp. 294–9; de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives*, pp. 67, 117.

<sup>46</sup> John 8.48; Brown, *Community*, p.37.

<sup>47</sup> Brown, *Community*, p.39.

One difficulty with Brown's proposal is our lack of knowledge of Samaritanism in the first century. As Meeks notes, even the earliest sources available give us direct access only to roughly the fourth century CE, when a revival of sorts among the Samaritans led to the production of a number of important writings.<sup>48</sup> Thus the use of Samaritan texts to illuminate the New Testament must follow the same cautions that apply to the use of rabbinic texts: they are certainly not wholly irrelevant, but cannot be used directly to provide information about what their particular group believed in earlier times. A relationship will exist between Samaritanism in the first and fourth centuries, as there exists a relationship between Christianity in the first and fourth centuries, but there may have been just as much development in Samaritanism during this period as there obviously was in Christianity between, say, the time of Paul and the Council of Nicaea. Thus any conclusions about Samaritanism prior to the fourth century CE must unfortunately remain tentative.<sup>49</sup>

When Samaritan beliefs and traditions are compared with Jewish/rabbinic texts of a similar date, the distinctiveness of Samaritanism is somewhat lessened. There was evidently borrowing and interaction between Judaism and Samaritanism even after the two had gone their separate ways.<sup>50</sup> Most studies of motifs in Jewish and Samaritan sources find similar beliefs and traditions in both.<sup>51</sup> Brown refers in particular to Meeks' description of the place of Moses in Samaritanism, but is only able to speak of 'strains' in Johannine theology similar to ideas found in Samaritan writings. Meeks himself writes (in the passage referred to by Brown) that Johannine thought was at least partly shaped by hostile interaction between Christians and a *Jewish* community

<sup>48</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King. Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (NovTSup, 14), Leiden: Brill, 1967, p.219.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p.219. See also Margaret Pamment, 'Is There Convincing Evidence of Samaritan Influence on the Fourth Gospel?', *ZNW* 73 (1982), 221; Ashton, *Understanding*, p. 298; Graham Stanton, 'Samaritan Incarnational Christology?' in Michael Goulder (ed.), *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued*, London: SCM, 1979, p.243.

<sup>50</sup> So Meeks, *Prophet-King*, pp. 216–17, with references to several major experts on Samaritanism. See too Pamment, 'Is There Convincing Evidence', 229–30.

<sup>51</sup> So e.g. Wayne A. Meeks, 'Moses as God and King', in Jacob Neusner (ed.), *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of E. R. Goodenough*, Leiden: Brill, 1968, pp. 354–71; *Prophet-King*; Jarl E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord. Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism* (WUNT 2, 36), Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1985. See also Painter, *Quest*, pp. 122–5; Stanton, 'Samaritan Incarnational Christology?', pp. 243–4.

which attached great importance to Moses, and that the Johannine church had attracted members from among these Jews, as well as from among the Samaritans who held similar beliefs.<sup>52</sup> In his related study of 'Moses as God and King', Meeks concludes that the ideas he is studying concerning Moses' ascension and enthronement were of great importance and influence not only in Samaritanism, but also within certain circles in both Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism.<sup>53</sup> Given our lack of direct knowledge of first-century Samaritanism on the one hand, and the similarity of what we do know about Samaritanism with Jewish thought on the other, appeals to an influx of Samaritan converts do not appear able to provide a convincing explanation of, or catalyst for, the development of Johannine Christology. An influx of Samaritan converts, if one occurred, may not have added anything that could not also be found in contemporary streams of Judaism. In short, the Samaritan hypothesis seems unable to provide a convincing explanation of the development of Johannine Christology.<sup>54</sup>

#### 'Heterodox' Jewish influence on Johannine Christology

A slightly different approach along the same lines is found in the work of Cullmann and Ashton.<sup>55</sup> These scholars have proposed that John be situated within a form of 'heterodox' Judaism, a Judaism which has come under the influence of Gentile modes of thought.<sup>56</sup> Although Cullmann takes the view that there were from the beginning either two types of teaching given by Jesus or two interpretations of his teaching,<sup>57</sup> we have nonetheless felt it appropriate to place his approach in the History of Religions category. This is because he posits the influence of a different worldview, albeit a different Jewish one, in order to explain the distinctive development of Johannine Christology, and in his view the differences between this Judaism and 'mainstream' Judaism are still to be explained in terms of Gentile influence. The key difference

<sup>52</sup> Brown, *Community*, p.37; Meeks, *Prophet-King*, pp. 318–19.

<sup>53</sup> Meeks, 'Moses as God and King', p.364.

<sup>54</sup> For further criticisms and discussion cf. Pamment, 'Is There Convincing Evidence?'

<sup>55</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle. Its place in Judaism, among the disciples of Jesus and in early Christianity*, London: SCM, 1976, esp. pp. 49–53; Ashton, *Understanding*, pp. 294–301.

<sup>56</sup> Cullmann, *Johannine Circle*, pp. 32–3, 39–41.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 93–4.

between the view of Cullmann and his followers and that of Casey is that the former would regard this 'syncretistic' Judaism and the Christianity it produced as still Jewish in a way that the latter would not.

This approach meets with many of the same difficulties that confront the other approaches we have considered. The concept of 'heterodoxy' is anachronistic, since (as we have seen) there was no such thing as an 'orthodox' Judaism in the first century.<sup>58</sup> This view also fails to explain how the Johannine Christians apparently managed to remain part of their local synagogue for so long before they were expelled. However, if the approaches in this last category are related to conflicts between groups who were attempting to put forward different definitions of 'orthodoxy', that is, different definitions of what is and is not Judaism, then a modified version of this approach may indeed be plausible. While we have already seen that all forms of first-century Judaism may correctly be designated 'Hellenistic Judaism', so that the explanatory power of the reference to Hellenism is severely diminished, it is nonetheless possible to speak of different streams of thought and different parties/sects within Second Temple Judaism. While appeals to Hellenistic influence will not solve our problem, the study of inner-Jewish sectarian conflict, particularly in the post-70 period, may have light to shed on our topic, provided it is coupled with appropriate socio-historical perspectives, and we shall thus return to this possibility in our section on sociological approaches later in the present chapter.

### Summary

We have found unsatisfactory the attempt to explain the development of Johannine Christology in terms of the adoption of ideas from non-Jewish sources. The Gospel of John gives clear evidence of conflict with another group which is designated 'the Jews', but this most likely reflects a debate about the definition of Judaism which took place between certain Christians and the Jewish majority among whom they lived. There is simply insufficient evidence for an influx of Gentiles into the Christian community of which the Fourth Evangelist was a part, and on the contrary much evidence which indicates that this author and his readers continued to regard themselves as faithful to the beliefs, traditions and Scriptures of

<sup>58</sup> So rightly Brown, *Community*, p.36 n.52 and p.178.

Israel.<sup>59</sup> The evidence from Samaritan sources is too late to be of help to us, and at any rate shares many emphases and beliefs that are also found in various streams of Jewish thought. The development of Johannine Christology is thus not best explained in terms of the influence of ideas and worldviews other than the Jewish one in which Christianity first appeared. Of course, we are not suggesting that Christianity has never been influenced by thought-worlds other than those found in its initial Jewish context. What is being emphasized here is simply that the *Fourth Gospel* seems to be too firmly rooted in Jewish thought, and concerned with Jewish issues, for an appeal to non-Jewish influences to provide a convincing solution to the question of why Johannine Christology developed as it did. Relating the development of Johannine Christology to the different views which existed within contemporary Judaism may provide a more fruitful avenue of approach, but an explanation in terms of the groups or parties which held these different views and of the conflict between them will require the use of relevant social-scientific categories and models. We shall turn our attention to such approaches later in the present chapter.

#### Organic development

As we turn to consider this second category, it should be stressed that the designation of this type of approach as 'organic' development is not intended to imply that the earliest Christians, in seeking to express their beliefs, were not influenced by the language and concepts available to them in the society of which they were a part. Such a claim would border on the ridiculous. No one wishes to claim that the concepts used by the first Christians to express their Christology did not already have a prior history of meaning which was then inherited by the Christians who made use of these terms. Rather, what is being asserted by proponents of organic models of development is that the later stages of Christology do not make assertions about Jesus which were not already implied by the claims and impact of Jesus himself. This is not to suggest that all of the

<sup>59</sup> The 'Greeks' of John 12.20, while probably Gentiles (cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I–XII)* (Anchor Bible, 29), New York: Doubleday, 1966, p.466), were nonetheless clearly proselytes or Gentiles interested in Judaism, since they came to Jerusalem for the feast. See further Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/ London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1972, p.427; Martyn, 'Mission', p.128.



later terms and concepts actually derive from Jesus himself, but simply that these later expressions of Christians' understanding of Jesus represent a valid, legitimate expression of who Jesus was.<sup>60</sup> Thus Moule argues that Jesus was such a one as to be appropriately called 'Lord' and even in some sense 'God'. The point for him is not whether these designations were first used early or late, but rather that they represent genuine insights into who Jesus actually was and not an evolution away from that starting point.<sup>61</sup> In a similar vein Dunn concludes his study of the development of Christology by asserting that, although the evidence does not suggest that Jesus understood himself as 'the incarnate Son of God', this way of viewing him was 'an appropriate reflection on and elaboration of Jesus' own sense of sonship and eschatological mission'.<sup>62</sup> Some scholars in this category, while recognizing that the Christology of John is significantly different from that of earlier writings, would nonetheless go so far as to say that, were Jesus to read the Gospel of John, he would be pleased with its presentation of who he is and what he did.<sup>63</sup>

The major advantage that this type of explanation has over the History of Religions explanations surveyed in the previous section is that it does justice to the links between the distinctive Johannine motifs and images and earlier christological formulations. While John uses them in different ways, the presence in both John and earlier literature of designations such as 'Son of Man', and of the use of imagery connected with Wisdom, suggests that what we find in John is a more developed form of what earlier Christians said and believed. However, the organic model is at a disadvantage when it comes to explaining why it is that such significant developments occurred. In the case of Brown, we have a scholar who considers on the one hand that christological development is

<sup>60</sup> Moule, *Origin*, p.5.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4. So also R. T. France, 'The Worship of Jesus: A Neglected Factor in Christological Debate?', in Harold H. Rowdon (ed.), *Christ the Lord. Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie*, Leicester: IVP, 1982, p.24; 'Development', p.77; Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995, pp. 369–70.

<sup>62</sup> Dunn, *Christology*, p.254. See also Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990, pp. 275–7 (who cites Raymond E. Brown, 'Did Jesus Know He Was God?', *BTB* 15 (1985), 77–8). Brown, *Introduction*, pp. 102, 109 emphasizes the close relation between earlier and later Christology, despite his belief (cf. *Community*, pp. 35–40, and our discussion immediately above) that an influx of Samaritans acted as a catalyst to the development.

<sup>63</sup> So e.g. Witherington, *Christology*, pp. 276–7.