

wrote his Gospel as a theological commentary on the other three and from a background of Greek philosophy, as shown by his highly abstract prologue (1:1-18). It is also considered to be too advanced theologically to have been written by a Galilean fisherman. Many of John's statements and concepts seem to pertain to a second-century heresy, Gnosticism, proving that the book was written at that time to refute those views and could not therefore be an eyewitness account.

However, if John wrote in Ephesus, as tradition says, he may not have even known of the other three Gospels. Any similarity between his Gospel and the others in the order of events they present is due to the order of those events in Jesus' life, not to literary dependence upon Mark or Luke. (There is so little material in common with Matthew that not even those scholars who say that John used the other Gospels claim he used Matthew.) Many of the differences supplement their accounts (For example, Jesus dismissed the crowds after feeding the 5,000 because he knew they wanted to make him king by force.) John, therefore, comes to be seen as an independent historical source. It is true that the background of the prologue appears to be Hellenistic philosophy, but after 1:18 little else has a Greek flavor.

The Gospel of John is as Jewish in background as the other Gospels. The book's purpose is to show that Jesus is Messiah (Christ): Old Testament prophecies are quoted; Aramaic words are used and then explained. Any Greek elements could have arisen out of the Palestinian Hellenism of Galilee. The Gnostics did appeal to John as supporting their heretical teachings, but evidence from Qumran (the Dead Sea Scrolls) shows that the author's theological background was that of Palestinian Judaism of the first century, not necessarily of second-century Greek or Gnostic thought.

In considering the question of authorship and date more closely, it is interesting to note that although James and John, the sons of Zebedee, are prominent apostles in the Synoptics, they are never mentioned in John. John the Baptist is simply called John, suggesting that the author saw no reason to distinguish the Baptist from the apostle. Finally, there is constant reference to the "beloved disciple", leading us to understand that the author identified himself as this person.

With reference to the date, fragments of papyrus from Egypt containing verses from the Gospel date from before 150 AD. If John wrote in Ephesus, copies of his Gospel would have been transported to Egypt, read, copied, and lost before AD 150. Between 50 and 55 years doesn't seem too long a period for all this to have taken place, which reinforces the idea that the Gospel was written before the turn of the century.

Thus there are no convincing reasons for discarding the