APPENDIX B

INTERNAL DATA ON JOHN’S EYEWITNESS STATUS

The discussion in this appendix necessarily supposes that the Beloved Disciple was an actual, historical, person, and this contra those exegetes who would interpret him as merely a symbolic figure or literary device.\(^1\) The Gospel of John clearly presents the Beloved Disciple as someone who existed in historical time. Only if we suppose that John does not intend a genuinely historical narrative can we assume that he intends the figure to be construed as anything other than an actual human being. Yet, we have already considered in this chapter compelling evidence that the author does intend a genuinely historical narrative. More to the point, the Beloved Disciple interacts with other characters in the narrative, most notably Jesus and Peter. It is difficult to imagine that John wants us to construe Jesus and Peter as non-historical symbolic figures. What warrant, then, is there to suppose that John wants us to place the Beloved Disciple in an ontological category distinct from other characters in the narrative?

Probably the most crucial datum for consider the identity of the Evangelist is 18:15. If we suppose that 18:15 refers to the Beloved Disciple, and that this individual is to be identified with the author of the Gospel,\(^2\) what

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\(^2\) Obviously, one must demonstrate rather than simply suppose both that John’s Gospel identifies the Beloved Disciple as the author of the Gospel, and that this other disciple (ἄλλος μαθητής) mentioned in 18:15 is the same person as the Beloved Disciple. The former point has already been addressed above, and it was judged as probably the case, and thus we will here focus upon the latter. Objecting to the perspective that this “other disciple” is the Beloved Disciple, Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:1091, argues that “the nearly uniform opposition of the Judeans, especially those of the Jerusalem elite, earlier in the Gospel makes an identification with one of Jesus’ Galilean followers more difficult to conceive.” It must be observed that this argument rests upon his prior conclusion that the Beloved Disciple was Galilean, *viz.* John, son of Zebedee; cf. the discussion in Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:84–105. Here Keener explicitly follows the classic argument for Zebedeean authorship advanced by B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John: The Authorized Version with Introduction and Notes* (London: J. Murray, 1881), v–xxxi; on the history of scholarship for Zebedeean authorship, cf. Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, 197–213. Keener is here begging the question. Rather than use his prior conclusion that the Beloved Disciple was Galillean to judge whether the Beloved Disciple is the other disciple of 18:15, Keener should first
can we learn about him from 18:15? Minimally, as Keener suggests, he was a casual acquaintance of the high priest, although the more casual one construes his acquaintance with the high priest, the more difficult it is to account for how he was able not only to enter but also to bring in Peter (cf. 18:16).\(^3\) In John A.T. Robinson’s memorable phrase, the other disciple had in the high priest’s home “connections below stairs if not above.”\(^4\) That is to say, he was either a member of the Jerusalem elite, or a servant member of the Jerusalem elite. Either explains well his access to the high priest’s home. Although the choice between elite and servant is not absolutely certain, the former seems more likely than the latter.\(^5\)

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\(^5\) If he was a servant accompanying his master, then the master’s presence and even existence are elided entirely in the text, although admittedly we cannot rule out the possibility that he slipped in without his master, or that John simply did not think it necessary to mention that he was a servant. Yet, that he was himself known to the high priest should incline us more naturally towards thinking that the Beloved Disciple was a member of the