The examination of possible received tradition and expository elaborations should as a next step go beyond John 5:1–18 and deal with the chapters 5–10, which seems to be a structural unit.

The “Biology” of the Gospel of John

The Gospel of John is the outcome of expository activity. The most important components are the life of Jesus and the Scriptures, transmitted as traditions and subject to applications and other forms of interpretation. The expository activity followed certain methods. Thus a dynamic process was at work so that the metaphor of “biology” seems more adequate than the metaphor of “anatomy” that has been used (R. A. Culpepper 1983).

In my book Bread from Heaven, published in 1965 (reprinted 1981) I studied the Old Testament text quoted in John 6:31b, “as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat,’” and the subsequent exegetical exposition. Based on this analysis I have raised a further question about Jesus’ words and works in the Johannine tradition. In my essay “The Scriptures and the Words and Works of Jesus,” published in 2007, I stated: “In early Christian tradition, the Scriptures had authority and were subject to exegetical exposition. One might ask whether the works and words of Jesus were in the process of being treated in the same or similar way. The answer is ‘yes.’ For example, a ‘Jesus logion’ may serve as the basis for various forms of interpretation.” (P. Borgen 2007, 49) The expository uses of the logion on agency in John 13:20, 5:23; 12:44, etc. may serve as examples.

Units of tradition and related exposition and context are examined in the present study of John 5–10. I examine the use and meaning of the

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1 A paper presented at the Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Atlanta 2010. I am pleased to note that R. Alan Culpepper is in agreement with this guideline of mine, as seen in his study presented at this Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Atlanta in 2010. Hopefully, our initiatives will lead to more studies which can give us increased insights in the gospel tradition found in The Gospel of John. Cf. P. Borgen, 1992b, 1815–33.
concept of agent and agency primarily within these chapters, since they
form a structural unit. Finally, the question is asked whether these insights,
together with relevant points from elsewhere, are of value in the quest for
the historical Jesus.

The Structure of John 5–10

In the book *Bread from Heaven* I formulated the following principle: “The
exegetical paraphrase . . . fuses together words and fragments from differ-
ent traditions into traditional forms and patterns. This method of exegeti-
cal paraphrase, then, leads to a dynamic process of new combinations
within the framework of tradition” (P. Borgen, 1965/1981, 59). Is there a tra-
ditional structural form which holds all of John 5–10 together? It appears
so. The basic structure is a case story with subsequent judicial exchanges
of views. John has increased the number of the exchanges into a series
and added two units of documentation, chapter 6 and chapter 9. The
structure runs as follows: The basic unit of tradition is the story of Jesus
healing the paralytic, 5:1–10. The subsequent judicial exchanges cover the
rest of chapter 5, vv. 11–47, chapter 7, 8:12–59, and chapter 10.

In 5:11–18 words from the case story are repeated and explained. Jesus’
explanation is, “My Father is working still and I am working” (Ὁ πατήρ
μου ἕως ἄρτι ἐργάζεται κἀγὼ ἐργάζομαι), v. 17. Jesus clarifies this statement
in vv. 19–47, where the main terms are ὁ υἱός/“the Son” and ὁ πατήρ/“the
Father.” Three witnesses testify to the Son: (a) the works given to the Son
by the Father, (b) God, the Father himself, and (c) the Scriptures. The
documentation of these witnessing functions is given in John 6.

The comment made by the evangelist in John 5:18 that “the Jews” sought
to kill Jesus, ἐζήτουν αὐτὸν οἱ Ἰουδαίοι ἀποκτεῖναι, is not repeated in chapter
5, nor in chapter 6. The chapters 7 and 8 and 10 pick up and explicate this
theme in an introductory section in 7:1–13 and then in a series of judicial
exchanges in 7:14–51 and 8:12–59, and 10:1-42. Documentations are given
in chapter 6 and in chapter 9 respectively. Building on the documenta-
tion in chapter 9, Jesus presents a speech on the theme of the shepherd
in chapter 10. Again he faces the threat of being stoned.

The list of such phrases, and their contexts, about the wish and attempt
to kill Jesus are:

7:1 ἐζήτουν αὐτὸν οἱ Ἰουδαίοι ἀποκτεῖναι) (7:1–13).
7:19 τί με ζητεῖτε ἀποκτεῖναι; 20 τίς σε ζητεῖ ἀποκτεῖναι; (7:14–24).