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On the Implausibility of Identifying the Disciple in John 18:15–16 as a Galilean Fisherman

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Abstract

John 18:15–16 mentions an unknown disciple of Jesus who "was known to the high priest" giving him access to the events in Caiaphas's courtyard. A minority of scholars maintain the identity of this disciple is consistent with John, the son of Zebedee, whom they also maintain was the author of the Fourth Gospel. To support this position, the commonplace fiction of Galilean fishermen belonging to an aspiring "middle-class" is asserted. This article reviews the arguments and suggests that a more robust representation of class stratification in the ancient world demonstrates the implausibility of such a scenario.

Keywords

Gospel of John – authorship – beloved disciple – fishing – class – agrarian society

1 Introduction

Who wrote the Fourth Gospel? As is well-known, the superscripts of all four canonical Gospels were added after the fact and the Gospel "according to John" was originally anonymous. Despite the Gospel also cloaking the "disciple

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whom Jesus loved" (cf. John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20) in a shroud of anonymity,[1] many readers have tried to uncover his or her identity from the internal clues within the text.[2] Various church fathers, including Irenaeus of Lyon, deduced that John, son of Zebedee and the Lord's disciple, was the privileged person who reclined next to Jesus in John 13:23–25 (cf. *Haer*. 3.1.1), and this continues to be a live option for several Johannine commentators.[3] Alternatively, a number of scholars have countered that the profile of the beloved disciple may be more compatible with an upper-class individual from southern Judaea than a rustic fisherman from northern Galilee.[4] In particular, the appearance of

1 We will henceforth use "beloved disciple" in lower-case as a convenient shorthand, but it should be noted that this designation was not a title and was purposefully employed to conceal this character's identity. See D.R. Beck, "'Whom Jesus Loved': Anonymity and Identity, Belief and Witness in the Fourth Gospel," in *Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John* (ed. C.W. Skinner; LNTS 461; London: Bloomsbury, 2013) 222.

2 The most thorough survey of scholarly hypotheses about the beloved disciple is in J.H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John?* (Valley Forge: Trinity, 1995) 128–223; see also J. Kügler, *Der Jünger, den Jesus liebte: Literarische, theologische und historische Untersuchungen zu einer Schlüsselgestalt johanneischer Theologie und Geschichte* (SBB 16. Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1988) 438–448; J.A. Grassi, *The Secret Identity of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist, 1992) 5–18; R.A. Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000) 72–84. Even so, none of these authors have exhausted all the interpretive options.

3 For some modern commentaries, see B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel according to St. John* (Thornaple Commentaries; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1980) ix–lxvii; C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978) 116–19; R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII* (AB 29; New York: Doubleday, 1966) lxxxviii–xcvii; R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (3 vols.; HTKNT; New York: Seabury and Crossroad, 1980) 1.75–104; D.A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 68–81; L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 4–25; H. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 2–3, 672–83; C. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001) 22–41; C.S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003) 1.81–139; A. J. Köstenberger, *John* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004) 6–8. As can be seen in the next footnote, both Schnackenburg and Brown changed their opinion in subsequent publications.

4 For example, see Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 3.381; P. Parker, "John the Son of Zebedee and the Fourth Gospel," *JBL* 81 (1962) 41, 44; O. Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle: Its Place in Judaism, Among the Disciples of Jesus, and in Early Christianity* (Bloomsbury: SCM, 1976) 78; R.E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1979) 34; Grassi, *Secret Identity*, 115; G.R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Word 36; Waco: Word, 1987) lxx–lxxv; K. Quast, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple: Figures for a Community in Crisis* (JSNTS 32; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989) 17; M. Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (London: SCM, 1989) 76–80, 124–126; idem, *Die Johanneische Frage*: *Ein Lösungsversuch mit einem Beitrag zur Apokalypse von Jörg Frey* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993) 306–309; B. Witherington III, *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel*

"another disciple" whom "was known to the high priest," mentioned in 18:15–16, has played a central role in the discussion.[5] While the unnamed figure in verses 15–16 is not explicitly tagged as the one "whom Jesus loved" (and so caution about conflating him with the beloved disciple is certainly warranted),[6] both ancient and modern commentators have detected an implicit reference to the beloved disciple, with some also continuing to hold to the traditional identification of John, the son of Zebedee.[7] In several cases, assertions are

(Louisville: WJK, 1995) 14–15; R.A. Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000) 62, 64, 75, 84; R. Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007) 76; J. Bernier, *Aposynagōgos and the Historical Jesus in John: Rethinking the Historicity of the Johannine Expulsion Passages* (Leiden: Brill, 2013) 147–148; M.M. Thompson, *John: A Commentary* (Louisville: WJK, 2015) 18; R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017) 325–326, 431, 433, 435, 440; M.J. Kok, *The Beloved Apostle? The Transformation of the Apostle John into the Fourth Evangelist* (Eugene: Cascade, 2017) 18–20, 28–29. For a review of nineteenth and early twentieth-century scholars who held this view, see F. Neirynck, "The 'Other Disciple' in Jn 18,15–16," in *Evangelica Gospel Studies—Études d'Évangile* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters; Leuven University Press, 1982) 343–347. However, M. Theobald ("Der Jünger, den Jesus liebte Beobachtungen zum narrativen Konzept der johanneischen Redaktion," in *Studien zum Corpus Iohanneum* [WUNT 267; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010] 523) makes the counter-argument that the anonymous follower of Jesus in John 1:35–40 may be the beloved disciple, thus implying that this figure was silently present throughout the whole of Jesus's ministry, and that Jerusalem is merely the setting for the majority of the references to the beloved disciple's activity (13:23–25; 18:15–16; 19:26–27, 35; 20:2–10; but cf. 21:7, 20–24).

5 One of the more fanciful suggestions in recent years is that the author was none other than the resuscitated Lazarus, "a person of high status and known to Caiaphas's entourage." In mobilizing this argument, the author notes that "[i]t was always problematic that the Beloved Disciple had ready access to the high priest's house …Who could he have been to have such access? Surely not a Galilean fisherman!" B. Witherington III, "What's in a Name? Rethinking the Historical Figure of the Beloved Disciple in the Fourth Gospel," in *John, Jesus and History, Volume 2: Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. P.N. Anderson, F. Just, and T. Thatcher; Atlanta: SBL, 2009) 208.

6 Several exegetes have expressed reservations about this conflation. E.g., Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 823; Morris, *John*, 666; Blomberg, *Historical Reliability*, 35, 234. Many scholars have raised objections against it. E.g., R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971) 483; Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 3.235; B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (New Century Bible Commentary; London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1972) 32, 548; Kügler, *Der Jünger*, 425–427; Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, 336–341; J.R. Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010) 18, 898; Keener, *John*, 2.1091.

7 See Brown, *John I–XII*, xcvii; Morris, *John*, 666 n. 37; Carson, *John*, 74–75, 582; Ridderbos, *John*, 580–581; Köstenberger, *John*, 513, 513 n. 14. For the pre-modern *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of John 18:15–16, see Nierynck, 336–341; Culpepper, *Son of Zebedee*, 61–62; J.C. Elowsky, *John 11–21: Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture New Testament IVb* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007) 276–277.

made concerning the class position and opportunities for social ascendency available to John—identified in the Synoptic tradition as a fisherman from the village of Capernaum (Mark 1:19–20 // Matt 4:21–22 // Luke 5:10)—in order to combat the oft-repeated counter-argument that first-century fishers were typically poor and illiterate. On the contrary, this article revisits the marginal socio-economic status of the Galilean fishermen to affirm the incompatibility between the unnamed disciple in John 18:15–16 and John, the son of Zebedee. Simply put, social, economic, and political forces regulating rural village life in first-century Roman Palestine would have generally excluded Galilean fishermen such as John from social ascendancy, and so it is highly improbable that he or any rural fisherman would have had the kind of relationship with an aristocratic office-holder envisioned by this pericope.

The article begins by surveying the evidence for and against the disciple mentioned in John 18:15–16 being identified as the beloved disciple. Following this, the socio-economic status of fishermen and their households is reconsidered in light of broader patterns of production and exploitation in the agrarian political-economy of first-century Palestine. The commonplace fiction of fishermen belonging to an aspiring "middle-class," which has been mobilized to assert the possibility of a Galilean fisherman being known by the aristocratic high priest, is thoroughly critiqued in favour of a more robust representation of class stratification in the ancient world.

2 "Another Disciple" in John 18:15–16

Peter was the sole member of the Twelve who was present in the courtyard of the high priest after they were all initially scattered in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 14:50, 54 // Matt 26:56, 58 // Luke 22:54), but John 18:15–16 documents that "another disciple" (ἄλλος μαθητής) preceded Peter into the courtyard and persuaded the "doorkeeper" (θυρωρός) to open the gate and let Peter into the vicinity too. The explanation given for why she granted this disciple's request is that he was "known" (γνωστός) to the high priest. Although Hermann Ridderbos contends that this disciple had only a minimal level of acquaintanceship with the high priest and his servants in order to gain access to the courtyard,[8] the lexical data suggests that the adjective may connote a more intimate bond between friends or kinsmen (cf. Homer, *Il.* 15.350; LXX 2 Kings 10:11; Ps 54:14;

8 Ridderbos, *John*, 581.

Neh 5:10; Luke 2:44; 23:49).[9] There may be signs of editorial activity in this section, such as the alternation between γνωστὸς τῷ ἀρχιερεῖ (18:15) and γνωστὸς τοῦ ἀρχιερέως (18:16) or the addition of ἡ παιδίσκη before ἡ θυρωρός (18:17; cf. Mark 14:66, 69),[10] but we will focus on a synchronic analysis of the final form of the text rather than a diachronic analysis of its editorial layers.[11]

Rudolf Schnackenburg's commentary offers the following rebuttals against enlisting John 18:15–16 as one of the key passages about the beloved disciple.[12] First, there is textual evidence that the article was secondarily interpolated into the manuscript tradition of John 18:15 to align its wording with 20:2.[13] James H. Charlesworth dismisses the variant reading as "the guesswork of scribes who lived hundreds of years after the composition of the GosJn."[14] Hence, the inference that "the other disciple" (ὁ ἄλλος μαθητής) was an original title of this character (cf. 20:3, 4, 8) and that later editors tacked on the phrase "whom Jesus loved" (20:2) out of their admiration for this figure may be problematic.[15] Second, it is hard to find a reason for why the words ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς or ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς would not be included in 18:15–16 to clarify the

9 See C.H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963) 86–87, 87 n. 1; Barrett, *St. John*, 525–526; Culpepper, *Beloved Disciple*, 343.

10 For a review of redaction-critical studies, see Neirynck, "The 'Other Disciple'," 349–362. The purpose of Neiryck's article is to identify the "other disciple" as the beloved disciple and demonstrate that the evangelist inserted him into the episode in the Synoptic Gospels where Peter was the solitary follower of Jesus in the high priest's courtyard. Other scholars, such as Bultmann (*John*, 483) or Schnackenburg (*St. John*, 3.235), regard the "other disciple" as a minor character who was already in the source that the evangelist inherited. Hartwig Thyen has championed a third approach, namely that all the passages about the beloved disciple including 18:15–16 are part of a uniform redactional layer added by the author of the Johannine epilogue. See H. Thyen, "Entwicklungen innerhalb der johanneischen Theologie und Kirche im Spiegel von Joh 21 und der Lieblingsjüngertexte des Evangeliums," in *L'Evangile de Jean: Sources, redaction, théologie* (ed. M. de Jonge; BETL 44; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1977) 274–292.

11 However, for a recent commentary that stresses the diachronic development of the Johannine tradition in three successive editions of the Fourth Gospel, see U.C. Von Wahde, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (3 vols.; Eerdmans Critical Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

12 The three main arguments in this paragraph are listed in Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 3.235. See also Bultmann, *John*, 483; Barrett, *St. John*, 525–526; Lindars, *John*, 32, 548; Kügler, *Der Jünger*, 425–427; Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, 336–341; Michaels, *John*, 18, 898; Keener, *John*, 2.1091.

13 For a helpful text-critical discussion, see Neirynck, "The 'Other Disciple'," 337–339.

14 Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, 337.

15 Contra Cullmann, *Johannine Circle*, 73; Brown, *John I–XII*, xciv; Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 983; F.J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (Sacra Pagina; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998) 7; Witherington III, *John's Wisdom*, 17; Blomberg, *Historical Reliability*, 32.

disciple's identity. Third, it seems farfetched that someone from the historical Jesus's inner circle had contacts in aristocratic priestly circles, though, within John's text, Jesus has covert admirers even from among the Judaean religious establishment such as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea.[16] Finally, there may be no signs of the competitive rivalry between this disciple and Peter that tends to characterize the relationship between the beloved disciple and Peter; this anonymous disciple may only have the limited function of getting Peter into the courtyard.[17]

Some exegetes go further in arguing that this so-called "disciple" was not a positive example to be emulated. This disciple's loyalty was divided between Jesus and the high priest, was not recognized as a follower of Jesus by the maiden at the gate, and failed to defend Jesus when he was being interrogated and abused at his Sanhedrin trial.[18] Charlesworth has built a case for Judas as the anonymous disciple in 18:15–16. Judas colluded with the high priest, accompanied the band of soldiers to the high priest's courtyard, and was often paired with Peter (6:60–71; 13:24–26).[19] Peter "was following" (note the singular verb ἠκολούθει) the arresting party from a safe distance after attacking the high priest's slave (18:10–11) and Judas, who was already in the courtyard, was then made aware that Peter was standing outside the gate.[20]

The issue with this theory is that it is not clear why Judas was not named.[21] Moreover, it seems unlikely that the evangelist still considered Judas a "disciple" at all. Jesus branded Judas a "devil" (6:70–71); the narrator impugned Judas's motives as a "thief" (12:6) and suggested he was possessed by Satan (13:27). In contrast, there is no negative parenthetical aside about how the

16 Keener deems it especially doubtful that a Galilean fisherman would have had any rapport with the Jerusalem high priest on the presumption that the Apostle John was the beloved disciple. See Keener, *John*, 2.1091.

17 See, for instance, Bultmann, *John*, 483; Lindars, *John*, 548; Michaels, *John*, 898.

18 See Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, 339, 340, 344, 345, 347, 352, 354.

19 Ibid., 342–359; cf. T.L. Brodie, *The Gospel of John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 529; P.C. Counet, "Judas, the Disciple Who Was Known to the High Priest: A Deconstruction of the Betrayal Based on John 18:15," *HTS* 67 (2011) 7 p. The last article by Counet is not attempting to recover the "authorial intent" of the evangelist or the interpretative strategies of the earliest readers of the Fourth Gospel, but is deliberately deconstructing and reassembling the component parts of the narrative in order to rehabilitate the character of Judas.

20 Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, 348–351.

21 Keener, *John*, 2.1091 n. 209. Charlesworth (*Beloved Disciple*, 353) contends that the evangelist wanted to depict Judas as diabolical and naming him might humanize him. However, the evangelist could have easily kept the name of Judas in the account and just added commentary about how Judas had some other devious plan behind letting Peter into the courtyard.

"other disciple" kept their allegiance to Jesus a secret to not run afoul of the religious authorities (cf. 9:22; 12:42–43), nor does the brief notice that the disciple was "known" to the high priest seem to have any ulterior purpose besides explaining why the doorkeeper listened to him or her.[22] A possible rationale for why Peter was suspected as an associate of Jesus was due to his Galilean accent (cf. Mark 14:70 // Matt 26:69 // Luke 22:59), and perhaps his accuser vaguely recalled Peter's violent action in the garden as well (cf. John 18:26), while the "other disciple" as a native Judaean slipped by undetected.[23] Finally, Charlesworth wonders how a loyal disciple could be "standing nonchalantly nearby" the scene of Jesus's trial without speaking up.[24] However, the beloved disciple stood by silently when Jesus revealed the identity of the betrayer in 13:26–30 or when Jesus hung on the cross in 19:26–27. The beloved disciple had the wisdom to not intervene to stop the events of Jesus's passion and alone comprehended the theological significance of Jesus's sacrificial death (19:35).

There is a strong case in favour of equating the disciple in 18:15–16 and the beloved disciple.[25] The beloved disciple is a somewhat elusive figure. Yet if we factor 18:15–16 into the picture, a pattern emerges where the beloved disciple was an idealized witness for the major events of the passion narrative including Judas's betrayal (13:23–25), Peter's denials (18:17, 25–27), Jesus's crucifixion, and the empty tomb (cf. 13:23–25; 19:26–27; 20:2–10).[26] Moreover, the beloved disciple's competitive edge over Peter is maintained since the former arrived at the courtyard first and did not succumb to the pressure to deny Jesus like the latter. John 18:15–16 may contain a literary echo of the good shepherd discourse in 10:1–18; unlike the idealized "other disciple" who stayed faithful to the shepherd from the courtyard to the cross, the gatekeeper (θυρωρός) opened the "door" (θύρα) of the "gate" (αὐλή) for Peter to enter, but Peter got

22 Kok, *The Beloved Apostle*, 17.

23 Culpepper, *Life of a Legend*, 62.

24 Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, 347.

25 The following arguments draw on Westcott, *St. John*, 18, 357; Cullmann, *Johannine Circle*, 72; Brown, *John xiii–xxi*, 822, 841; Thyen, "Entwicklungen", 281; Neirynck, "The 'Other Disciple'," 358–362; E. Haenchen, *John* (ed. R.W. Funk and U. Busse; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 2.167; Hengel, *Johannine Question*, 78–79; Hengel, *Frage*, 216, 216 n. 30, 308; Quast, *Community in Crisis*, 77–81; Grassi, *Secret Identity*, 56, 64; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 324; Witherington iii, *John's Wisdom*, 288; Culpepper, *Life of a Legend*, 62–63; Moloney, *John*, 487, 521; Theobald, "Der Jünger," 500–501; Bauckham, *Testimony*, 78, 86; Ridderbos, *John*, 581; Köstenberger, *John*, 513, 513 n. 13; Von Wahlde, *Gospel and Letters*, 2.757; Beck, "Anonymity and Identity," 228; Thompson, *John*, 368; Kok, *Beloved Apostle*, 16–17.

26 Thompson, *John*, 19; Kok, *Beloved Apostle*, 19.

frightened by the ravenous wolves threatening his life.[27] There are further echoes in 20:2–10 to the episode in chapter 18: the article in chapter 20 before ἄλλος μαθητής (vv. 2, 3, 4, 8) may be anaphoric in referring back to this same disciple's previous appearance in 18:15–16,[28] the beloved disciple outruns Peter to the tomb and exhibits better discernment than Peter in grasping the import of the linen clothes left there (20:4, 8), and there may be a reversal of 18:16 as Peter was inside the tomb while the beloved disciple stood outside.[29] While Martin Hengel and Richard Bauckham suppose that the epithet "whom Jesus loved" was omitted in 18:15–16 because the disciple was placed in too close of proximity to the high priest,[30] it should be reiterated that there is no value judgment attached to the notice, and it is no more necessary to account for the omission here than in 20:3, 4, or 8.

John 18:15–16 posed new challenges for Patristic intellectuals who championed the Johannine authorship of the Fourth Gospel. Although Augustine advised caution about identifying the unnamed disciple of John 18:15–16 (*Tract. Joh.* 313.2), other Patristic theologians such as John Chrysostom (*Hom. Jo*. 83.2), Cyril of Alexandria (*Comm. Jo*. 11.12), and Theodore of Mopsuestia (*Comm. Jo*. 7.18.16) were more confident about the matter and lauded John's authorial humility in his effacing self-reference.[31] Polycrates, the bishop of Ephesus, was one of the earliest thinkers to reconcile the Irenaean tradition about John as the one who reclined on the Lord's bosom and was buried in Ephesus with the statement about the "other disciple" who was known to the high priest, which was likely the basis for Polycrates's claim that John wore the πέταλον (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.31.3; 5.24.2). Bauckham underscores this was the distinctive feature of the high priest's headdress when officiating at the temple (e.g., LXX Exod 28:32; Lev 8:9; *Letter of Aristeas* 98; *T. Levi* 8:2).[32] In addition to John 18:15–16, Bauckham postulates that Polycrates was drawn to the name Ἰωάννης in the high-priestly family in Acts 4:6. In the second edition of Bauckham's *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, he clarifies that Polycrates' deduction from Acts 4:6 was

27 C. Bennema, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014) 301, 307; J.L. Resseguie, "The Beloved Disciple: Ideal Point of View," in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 541–543.

28 Neirynck, "The 'Other Disciple'," 361. Kügler (*Der Jünger*, 425) contests Neirynck's view that the article is anaphoric.

29 For this last point, see Beck, "Anonymity and Identity," 228.

30 Hengel, *Johannine Question*, 78–79; Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 312.

31 Elowsky, *John 11—21*, 276–277.

32 Bauckham, *Beloved Disciple*, 41–50; Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 347–352, 447.

obviously incorrect, yet it may show that he distinguished the Ephesian John from the son of Zebedee.[33]

On the other hand, it is possible that Polycrates was a particularly careless reader who conflated the John in the high-priestly family with the Apostle John, even though the two appear as antagonists in the pericope in Acts.[34] It is also possible that Acts 4:6 was not the proof-text that Polycrates relied on. By harmonizing the names of the women present at the crucifixion in Mark 15:40, Matt 27:56, and John 19:25, some Christian readers reasoned that Salome was the mother of James and John and the sister of Jesus's mother, Mary.[35] If the priest Zechariah was part of Mary's extended family (cf. Luke 1:5, 36), perhaps it could be assumed that Mary's "nephew" John had a priestly line running through his family history as well.[36] Bauckham objects that Polycrates does not just claim that John was a descendant of a priest, but had been installed into the office of the high priest.[37] Bauckham may be too quick to reject the option that Polycrates used high priestly imagery as a metaphor for John's ministry (cf. 1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6; *Did*. 13.3).[38] Similar to how Polycrates concentrates on the high priest's headdress, the seer of Rev 21:19–20 focuses on the jewels on the high priest's breastplate to communicate how the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem signify a priestly community.[39]

In the *Paraphrase of John* by the fifth-century Greek epic poet Nonnus of Panopolis, the disciple in John 18:15–16 was known to the high priest's court as a fisherman.[40] Likewise, according to the fourteenth-century *Historia passionis Domini* (fol. 35r) that was owned by the late Bernhard Bischoff, the so-called "Gospel of the Nazoraeans" explained that the son of the poor fisherman

33 Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 447.

34 Michaels, *John*, 9.

35 Westcott, *St. John*, xlvii; Brown, *John i–xii*, xcvii; Carson, *John*, 616; Morris, *John*, 666 n. 37; 717; Ridderbos, *John*, 611; Blomberg, *Historical Reliability*, 35; Köstenberger, *John*, 513–514; 548. For criticisms of harmonizing the Gospel data in this manner, see Brown, *John xiii–xxi*, 904–906; Schackenburg, *St. John*, 3.277; Barrett, *St. John*, 551–552; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 348; Kügler, *Der Jünger*, 442.

36 A.J. Köstenberger and S.O. Snout, "'The Disciple Jesus Loved': Witness, Author, Apostle—A Response to Richard Bauckham's *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses," Bulletin for Biblical Research* 18 (2008) 223; cf. Morris, *John*, 666 n. 37; Blomberg, *Historical Reliability*, 35.

37 Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 349, 447.

38 Ibid., 349; Bauckham, *Beloved Disciple*, 47; contra Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 1.81; Keener, *John*, 1.85.

39 Kok, *Beloved Apostle*, 98–99.

40 M.A. Prost, *Nonnos of Panopolis: The Paraphrase of the Gospel of John* (Ventura: The Writing Shop Press, 2003) 194.

Zebedee brought fish to the palace of Annas and Caiaphas.[41] There is a great deal of debate among the specialists over whether there was one,[42] two,[43] or three[44] distinct Gospel writings underlying the Patristic citations of what was labelled as the "Gospel according to the Hebrews" in the works of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Didymus, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Jerome, and so on. However, the usage of the title "Gospel of the Nazoraeans" does not date before the ninth-century monk Haimo of Auxerre (*Commentary on Isaiah* 53.2) and reflects the influence of Jerome's discussion about the Nazoraeans; the authenticity of the medieval Latin fragments are uncertain at best and most likely spurious.[45]

There are more fanciful conjectures in the *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of John 18:15–16 in the middle ages such as that John acquired his wealth after selling the property of his deceased father Zebedee and settled in a prominent location in Jerusalem (e.g., Epiphanius the Monk, *Life of the Virgin* 18).[46] Nonetheless, to account for how a Galilean fisherman was acquainted with the high priest, these older theories about John's priestly heritage or Zebedee's economic means or social capital regularly resurface in modern commentaries.[47] This differs sharply from the impression that the Jewish religious leaders had of John, the son of Zebedee, in Acts 4:13, for they treated John like a stranger who

41 P. Vielhauer and G. Strecker, "Jewish Christian Gospels," in *New Testament Apocrypha 1: Gospels and Related Writings* (ed. W. Schneemelcher; Louisville: WJK, 1991) 164; A.F.J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1992) 144.

42 See J.R. Edwards, *The Hebrew Gospel and the Development of the Synoptic Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

43 P. Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish-Christian Sects and Gospels* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); A. Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Ebionites* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

44 Vielhauer and Strecker, "Jewish Christian Gospels," 135–136, 154–178; Klijn, *Gospel Tradition*, 27–42; H.J. Klauck, *Apocryphal Gospels: An Introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2003) 38–54; J. Frey, "Die Fragmente judenchristlicher Evangelien," in *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung. 1. Band: Evangelien und Verwandtes. Teilband 1* (ed. C. Markschies and J. Schröter; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2012) 590–592. We express gratitude to David B. Sloan, Andrew Gregory, and Jörg Frey for responding to our inquiries about this fragment by email correspondence.

45 For further discussion on the Medieval Latin witnesses, see Klijn, *Gospel Tradition*, 20–25, 144; Klauck, *Apocryphal Gospels*, 49–51; Edwards, *Hebrew Gospel*, 37, 121–122; Frey, "Die Fragmente judenchristlicher Evangelien," 569, 589–590; Gregory, *Gospel of the Ebionites*, 282–285.

46 Culpepper, *Life of a Legend*, 61–62, 175.

47 Brown, *John 1–xii*, xcvii; Brown, *John xiii–xxi*, 823; Morris, *John*, 666 n. 37; Carson, *John*, 74–75, 582; Blomberg, *Historical Reliability*, 35, 233, 233 n. 335; Köstenberger, *John*, 513, with n. 14.

was "uneducated" (ἀγράμματος) and "ordinary" (ἰδιώτης).[48] We will observe how, in this instance, Acts probably affords a more accurate picture of the socio-economic reality of first-century Galilean fishermen.

3 Middle-Class "Entrepreneurial" Fishermen?

It is not uncommon to find scholars situating ancient fishermen within some kind of "middling group" between peasants and retainers. R. Alan Culpepper remarks that "[a]t most, we can say that the fishermen operated a small fishing business that involved boats and hired workers. The evidence is insufficient to show that they were among the families of the upper class, but neither did they share the desperate lot of hired servants and day laborers."[49] One simply needs to open a major Gospel commentary to find anachronistic assertions the Galilean fishermen were "middle-class" or "relatively prosperous," despite no such class existing in any meaningful sense in the first century.[50] These claims are sometimes expanded to include the "relative prosperity" of the local fishing economy in and around Galilee. In a recent article by Raimo Hakola, for example, archaeological findings in Magdala indicating large-scale development are used to support a high level of prosperity among fishing households in the region through a kind-of implied "trickle-down" logic.[51] As he puts it, "the expansion of Galilean fish production and trade gave an economic boost to the local economy and … local collectives were able to benefit from this development."[52]

48 To defend Johannine authorship, some commentators propose that Acts 4:13 only meant to insinuate that Peter and John were religious laypersons without formal training. See Westcott, *St. John*, lxviii; Morris, *John*, 359; Carson, *John*, 73; Blomberg, *Historical Reliability*, 33–34. For a lexical study that challenges this view, see T.J. Kraus, "'Uneducated,' 'Ignorant,' or Even 'Illiterate'? Aspects and Background for an Understanding of ΑΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΟΙ (and ΙΔΙΩΤΑΙ) in Acts 4.13," *NTS* 45 (1999) 434–449.

49 Culpepper, *Life of a Legend*, 15.

50 E.g., Davies and Allison designate the Matthean fishermen as coming "from the (lower) middle class." W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew 1–7* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988) 397. Meier suggests "[i]t is well to remember that the fishing business on the Sea of Galilee was a lively and prosperous one, at least for those who owned or oversaw the operations." J.P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 2001) 214.

51 R. Hakola, "The Production and Trade of Fish as Source of Economic Growth in the First Century CE Galilee," *NovT* 59 (2017) 111–130. See the critical response by R.J. Myles, "Fishing for Entrepreneurs in the Sea of Galilee? Unmasking Neoliberal Ideology in Biblical Interpretation," in *Class Struggle in the New Testament* (ed. R.J. Myles; Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2019) 115–138.

52 Hakola, "The Production and Trade of Fish," 112.

Yet the evidence from the ancient world of fishermen making more than a modest living remains forthcoming.

To illustrate some unexamined assumptions about the fishing trade in Galilee, Craig S. Keener, for example, claims that "Galilee was not as backward as some have assumed" and suggests that "fishermen were hardly peasants, ranking instead with tax-gatherers, carpenters, and artisans as a sort of middle-income group that comprised much of the upper 10 percent of wage earning in antiquity."[53] To support his argument, Keener cites a popular-level book on biblical archaeology from the 1970s and cross-references two further studies which mention the fishing trade in passing, but none of which back his claims. The book he cites notes that "[t]he fishermen of Capernaum were probably prosperous by comparison with the farmers of Galilee," although it goes on to clarify that the houses of Capernaum "show that their life could hardly be described as luxurious."[54] Another intriguing example is an article on Galilean fishermen by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor. He suggests that two of Jesus's disciples, Peter and Andrew, "came from a prosperous, assimilated Jewish middle-class family," and that "[a]s experienced businessmen, they were astute enough to move their home in order to take advantage of a tax break. Such shrewdness, one can be sure, also manifested itself in the way they handled competition from the many other fishermen on the Sea of Galilee."[55] This description of ancient fishermen is a clear example of how anachronistic concepts are frequently and unproblematically read back into the ancient world: from the shrewd "business practices" of the first disciples, to "private entrepreneurs" attempting to meet the "demands of the market," the first-century Galilean fishing trade is variously described as a "lucrative market" in which "capitalistic enterprises"

53 Keener, *John*, 1.101, cf. 228–232. For the record, Keener notes that the "objection that a Galilean fisherman would not have known the household of the high priest, against 18:15–16, is probably (though not definitely) correct; but the 'other disciple' … is not explicitly the beloved disciple" (104).

54 J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It: Archaeology as Evidence* (London: Thomas and Hudson, 1978) 29–30. The two other studies are J.E. Stambaugh and D.L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986); S. Applebaum, "Economic Life in Palestine," in *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions* (ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 2.631–700. Contra Keener, Stambaugh and Balch actually situate their one paragraph description of fishing under the subsection of "agriculture" and not "crafts and commerce" or "the wealthy" (69). Similarly, Applebaum's article makes just a one-line reference to fishers, noting they generally retained a co-operative kinship organization in order to promote and protect their interests (685). This combined evidence hardly supports Keener's erroneous claim the fishers were distinct from peasants and of the upper 10 percent of wage earners.

55 J. Murphy-O'Connor, "Fishers of Fish, Fishers of Men," *BRev* 15, no. 3 (1999) 48.

played a significant role. According to Murphy-O'Connor, the scale of their operation was like that of a large family business: "They worked in partnership (Luke 5:7) with James and John, the sons of Zebedee (Luke 5:10), who had employees (Mark 1:20). They were free to start (John 21:1–3) and stop work (Luke 5:11) when it suited them."[56] Similar speculative arguments are used by some Johannine commentators to explain (or explain away) how someone like John was able to acquire the literacy skills and resources to write a Gospel, and to account for the unknown disciple's familiarity with the high priest's court.

In D.A. Carson's consideration of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, we find the most elaborate version of this argument that the beloved disciple is both the author of the Fourth Gospel and also the unnamed disciple in 18:15–16.[57] In order to satisfy the argument that John, the son of Zebedee, fits all three criteria, Carson turns to the class position of ancient fishers and their households. He suggests that "John sprang from a family that was certainly not poor (they owned their own boats, Lk. 5:3, and employed others, Mk. 1:20)."[58] Turning to the counter-argument that John, a simple fisherman, would not have had access to the aristocratic court of the high priest, Carson observes:

> That a Galilean fisherman could have access to the high priest's court is frequently dismissed on the ground that a fishmonger could not enter unquestioned into the waiting room of the prime minister. In fact, the social model is all wrong. We have already seen that John's family enjoyed some substance; it may have been rich, and in many societies money breaks down social barriers. The relevant social barriers of first-century Palestine may not have been that strong in any case: rabbis were expected to gain a skilled trade apart from their study (thus Paul was a leather-worker), so that the stratification that divided the teacher from the manual labourer in Stoic and other circles of the hellenistic world was not a significant factor in much of Palestine.[59]

56 Murphy-O'Connor suggests the fact that "they were men of substance who controlled their own lives is confirmed by the quality of their house at Capernaum" (27). He then refers to the House of Peter—a house larger than most others in Capernaum with nothing to tie it to the historical disciples except for a dubious tradition dating from the fourth century.

57 While he notes his arguments are "not beyond dispute," Carson (*John*, 75) nonetheless asserts "the internal evidence is very strong."

58 Ibid., 74.

59 Ibid.

Keener, Murphy O'Connor, and Carson's arguments outlined above are representative of oft-repeated statements concerning the economic status of the Galilean fishermen. As we will see below, however, fishermen owning their own boats or employing servants would not necessarily elevate them above their farming compatriots. Moreover, while Carson's suggestion that money breaks down social barriers may ring true to the modern ear, the overarching agrarian political-economic structure of ancient Palestine made social ascendency for non-elites virtually impossible. Fishers were born, lived, and died among the peasant masses.

4 Socio-Economic Analysis of Ancient Fishermen

Social-scientific research from the past several decades enables us to quash the above assertions once and for all. Indeed, once textual or archaeological evidence is contextualized within the prevailing patterns of power relations in Galilee, Palestine, and the Roman Empire, such assertions concerning the "relative prosperity" of ancient fishers is found wanting. A pivotal article by K.C. Hanson on the Galilean fishing economy published two decades ago continues to be a focal point of discussion.[60] Hanson's study built upon two earlier studies[61] to examine the role of fishing as a social sub-system within the political economy of first-century Galilee and Roman Palestine. Among the key contributions of Hanson's article is a detailed mapping of the system or network of "exploitative" relations of production and extraction that would have made social ascendency for individual fishers virtually impossible.

According to the fundamental dynamics of advanced agrarian societies, the class struggle refracted in the New Testament writings refers to the small class of aristocratic city-based elite who, controlling the means of production (that is, the infrastructure required to produce goods like land or fishing rights), extract surplus value from the work or labour-power of the remaining peasant and slave populations. Around the agricultural and other yields of this social formation grew an administrative and economic infrastructure that became imbalanced in terms of how those yields were distributed. Most resources

60 K.C. Hanson, "The Galilean Fishing Economy and the Jesus Tradition," *BTB* 27 (1997) 99–111; cf. A.J. Batten, "Fish Tales," *BTB* 47 (2017) 5–14.

61 W.H. Wuellner, *The Meaning of "Fishers of Men"* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967); M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (3 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

were channelled upwards to the elite minority.[62] The high priest and his household firmly sit within the aristocratic class.[63] Beneath the elite and above the peasant masses was a non-basic class of retainers who, although diverse in social roles, economic experiences, and political attitudes, functioned to enforce and regulate the economic and administrative mechanisms which resulted in the upward flow of resources.

What were the mechanisms implicating the daily lives of fishers? Whereas most economic activity within the ancient world was centred on the cultivation of land, the Sea of Galilee stands out as an important exception. Be that as it may, it would be strange to think the fishing trade operated as an exception outside the larger set of power relations in which a small class of aristocratic city-based elite who, controlling the means of production, nonetheless extracted surplus value from the work or labour-power of the remaining peasant and slave populations.[64] Fishers and their households were also subject to the same excessive taxation, discontent, banditry, warfare, and violent reprisals, that implicated the daily life of farmers and other villagers. We learn from Josephus (e.g., *J.W.* 2.95) and the Synoptic tradition that life in rural Galilee was hardly the idyllic peasant utopia we often see represented in Jesus films. The lack of monumental structures and poor quality of housing in the remains of ancient fishing villages around the Sea of Galilee testifies to this impression of economical marginalization.[65]

The suggestion that the fishermen were "middle-class" or "relatively prosperous" immediately raises the question: relative or middle to what? Certainly, when compared to many slaves and the expendable population that was surplus

62 G.E. Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966) 243–296.

63 While Neyrey does not explicitly comment on the identity of the unknown disciple (inferring that Annas is informed about Jesus and his disciples by his "secret service"), he does comment accurately on the socio-economic status of the priestly class's patriarch, Annas: "Like all elites, he is served by many retainers: porters who guard his gate (18:16), soldiers who enforce his will (18:3), police to attend and guard him (18:22), and slaves to maintain his household." Moreover, Annas "must have lived in a palace in Jerusalem" and so was by all indications "a rich, powerful elite of very high role and status." J.H. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John* (NCBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 292.

64 For a more detailed explanation of the economic cycles of production and extraction between the urban-based elite and rural-based peasant masses, see G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); R. Boer and C. Petterson, *Time of Troubles: A New Economic Framework for Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017).

65 J. Appold, "Jesus' Bethsaida Disciples: A Study in Johannine Origins," in *John, Jesus and History: Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. P.N. Anderson, F. Just, and T. Thatcher; Atlanta: SBL, 2009) 2.32–33.

to the demands for labour, one could suppose that fishermen were relatively prosperous. But in terms of their placement within the broader class struggle of an agrarian society, in which the overwhelming majority of the population, including independent producers like fishermen and artisans, lived below, at, or moderately above subsistence level, such comparisons seem less helpful. In his book on Paul and economics, Bruce Longenecker clarifies that while there might have been a small number of "middling groups" in the ancient economy, this "should not be seen as re-establishing the notion of a 'middle class' into our economic taxonomy of the ancient world."[66] Fishermen certainly had nowhere near the level of social prestige afforded to retainers who were mostly city-based. On the contrary, located in rural villages in the countryside, there is little evidence to suggest that fishermen were substantially more privileged than any other villagers with whom they interacted.

The fundamental dynamics of an advanced agrarian social formation noted above effectively precluded those living at or near subsistence from accumulating wealth in any meaningful way. According to the classicist G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, fishermen were subject to indirect and collective forms of exploitation, primarily through payments and services not rendered from individual to individual but rather extracted by the authority of the occupying regime.[67] Central to Ste. Croix's analysis is an urban-rural relation between the πόλις (*polis*) and the χώρα (*chôra*). The χώρα refers to the countryside with its villages, and the πόλις designates an urban environment. As Roland Boer and Christina Petterson note, in the colonial situation of the first century, "the *chôra* meant not the fields and villages in the vicinity of the *polis*, but all the colonized territory outside the *polis*, with peasant farming, village communities, as well as wider areas at the limits of human presence."[68] Whether under Roman imperial rule or the client-kingdoms of the Herods, this institutional regime was extractive in that the latter produced the material foundations for the former.[69] Ste. Croix remarks that "[t]he fundamental relationship between city and countryside was always the same: it was essentially one of exploitation, with few benefits given in return."[70]

66 B.W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010) 55.

67 Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle*, 205–206. See further, below. In fact, these groups were sometimes more vulnerable than landed peasants in that they were susceptible to these same basic demands but had no direct or indirect access to the resources of the land.

68 Boer and Petterson, *Time of Troubles*, 79.

69 Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle*, 9–19.

70 Ibid., 13.

Underscoring this spatial dichotomy between the πόλις and the χώρα was an accompanying set of ideological perceptions: the urban-based elite inside the πόλις viewed the peasants of the countryside with dismissive and undifferentiated contempt. The loaded question "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (John 1:46), for instance, underscores this point of view (cf. Sirach 38:24–34). Ancient textual evidence, overwhelmingly produced by the urban-based scribal elite, indicates that the precarious situation of those belonging to so-called "middling groups" in the χώρα was rarely envied. As Alicia Batten observes, ancient "[w]riters such as Plautus (*Rud.*), Ovid (*Meta*. 3.583–591) and others describe the fisher's life as impoverished and miserable. In some cases, men who fished were characterized as unmasculine, as their trade meant that they earned their keep by serving the indulgent pleasures of others, particularly rich fish eaters."[71] Like the overwhelming majority of peasants who worked the land, artisans also lived below, at, or slightly above subsistence level. Lucian of Samosata describes an artisan's life as "laborious and barely able to supply them with just enough" (*Fug.* 12–13).[72] Xenophon similarly describes the plight of marginal craftsmen as grim: "In small towns the same man makes couches, doors, ploughs, and tables, and still he is thankful if only he can find enough work to support himself" (*Cyr*. 8.2.5).

Ste. Croix actually excludes fishermen from his discussion of "other independent producers"—which includes a non-heterogeneous "middling" group of artisans, traders of different sorts, and the merchants who carried on commerce between cities to small local dealers[73]—instead classifying them as part of the exploited classes located within the broad peasant strata of Greco-Roman society. He writes, "[t]hose ancillary workers (such as artisans, building and transport workers, and even fishermen) who originate from and remain among the peasants may be considered as peasants themselves."[74] They are not found in the public assembly, the aristocratic courts, or among the rulers. Moreover, owning one's tools, shop, land, or boat would not be enough to guarantee economic security, although it would make one's existence slightly less precarious. The economic system was overdetermined in such a way that made it far more likely for small peasant leaseholders to lose their land or lease rights through debt or elite requisition than obtain more land or accumulate wealth.

71 Batten, "Fish Tales," 9.

72 Elsewhere, Lucian revealingly describes a leather-worker, Micyllus, as depicting his own impending death as a time when he will never go hungry or wander barefooted and naked on a winter's day (*Cat*. 20).

73 Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle*, 269–73.

74 Ibid., 211.

Irrespective of whether the fishing trade was a prominent or even relatively prosperous enterprise, given these prevailing relations of economic extraction it does not follow that the fishermen themselves—even boat-owning, servant-hiring fishermen—were primary, or even secondary, benefactors. This would speak past their subordinate relationship to the means of production. A range of lucrative opportunities for entrepreneurially-minded Jewish peasants simply did not exist under the Roman occupation of first-century Palestine. Fishers could own boats and even hire servants, but this would not make them akin to aspiring small business owners with several employees. Possessing one or two servants would not be enough to make a peasant household considerably wealthy. Boer and Petterson note that it was not uncommon for peasants to occasionally make limited use of slaves or wage-labour.[75] The imagined social-ascendancy of entrepreneurially-minded individuals, in which prosperous business owners and their subsidiaries might rub shoulders with the aristocratic nobility, is thus a projection of modern capitalist society in which wealthy individuals may be thought to influence political decision makers.

It is also unlikely that John would be known to the high priest's retainers. Carson suggests that Galilee supplied fish for all of the country and that John sold fish directly to the chief priests in Jerusalem after hauling them through the Fish Gate (cf. Neh 3:3; Zeph 1:10). This being the case, John would have been familiar with this particular entrance and the personnel.[76] Of course, Carson here mistakenly assumes that it is John who would be transporting the fish to the city, and not merchants, transport workers, or other ancillary workers. In fact, a fishing syndicate was a long way down the production chain: after any catch was delivered to local processors, it would then be sent to distributors, who in turn would ship and cart it to buyers and sellers. At every stage of this process, taxes and tolls were extracted in order to facilitate the upward flow of resources.[77]

5 Conclusion

By the time of the writing of the Fourth Gospel, the Jesus movement had already begun to attract relatively wealthy and urban-based adherents of a fundamentally different social grouping than that of Galilean fishermen and peasants. This being the case, the Johannine text seems to idealize a character

75 Boer and Petterson, *Time of Troubles*, 71.

76 Carson, *John*, 74.

77 Hanson, "The Galilean Fishing Economy", 101.

affectionately designated as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" who was most likely located in an urban setting and had a privileged social standing. John 18:15–16 seems to supplement the picture of an individual who almost exclusively appears in the environs of Jerusalem (13:23–25; 19:25–26; 20:2–10) and may have even had a place of residence in the city (19:26). There may be some Johannine scholars who still express reservations about equating the beloved disciple with "another disciple" in John 18:15–16, wondering how the most loyal follower of Jesus could also be on good terms with Caiaphas. Such questions are beside the point if no more thought went into the notice that he was "known to the high priest" than to provide a reasonable explanation for how he was able to get into the courtyard to stay close to Jesus in the first place. The likelihood of this unnamed disciple in John 18:15–16 being John the fisherman, however, is next to impossible. Raymond E. Brown states the problem thusly: "How would a Galilean fisherman be known to the Jerusalem high priest?"[78] As Brown has suggested, such explanations can be imaginative but are hardly persuasive.[79] We add to this implausibility the above discussion regarding the stark socio-economic divide between village-based fishers and the aristocratic and city-based priestly elite.

78 R.E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1994) 597.

79 Ibid.