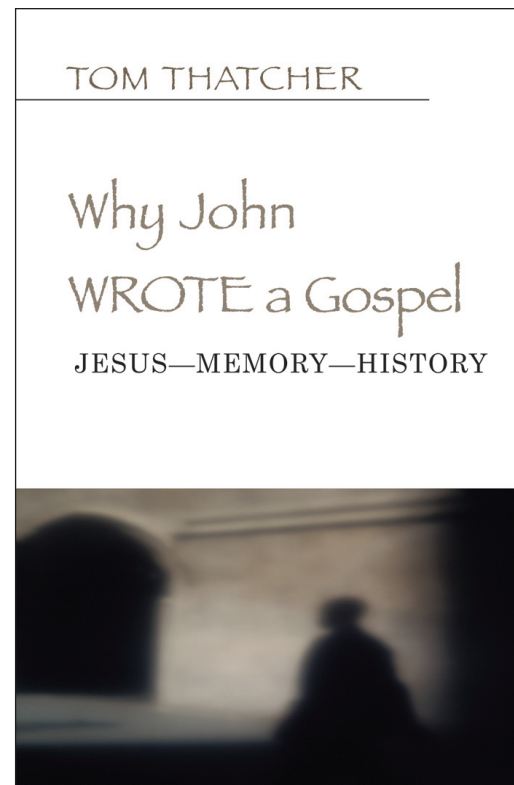


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Why John Wrote a Gospel

Jesus–Memory–History

Tom Thatcher

Nineteen hundred years ago, someone called the Beloved Disciple told stories about Jesus and his days on earth, including reports of what Jesus said and did. These stories had been told for decades, but then someone took the stories and wrote them down, turning them from oral tradition into the book we know as the Gospel of John. Scholars have long concentrated on the content of this Fourth Gospel, analyzing how it differs from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and wondering how the different Gospels relate to the Jesus of history.

Thatcher builds on all this previous scholarship to ask new and exciting questions: Why was this Gospel written? Why would these followers of Jesus turn the oral stories into written Gospel? In exploring the reason for writing the Fourth Gospel, Thatcher focuses on how stories and written texts operate to reflect and to create memory within groups of people. He uncovers how early Christians strove to remember Jesus in the decades after his ministry, and how Christians came into conflict with one another about which memories were best.

With this interest in the social memory of early Christians, Thatcher provides original insights into the Gospel of John and shows new answers to old questions. Written in an engaging and accessible style, Thatcher uses numerous diagrams and modern parallels to show how Gospel texts shape memory and identity of Christian communities, not only in the ancient world but today as well.

Tom Thatcher is Associate Professor of New Testament at Cincinnati Christian University. With Robert Fortna, he coedited *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, also available from Westminster John Knox Press.

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