

## Web Supplement to Commentary on John

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## Introduction

### Themes of John's Gospel

Ruth Edwards integrates John's themes and purpose crisply:

The heart of John's Gospel is its christology or presentation of Christ. Jesus dominates its narrative from start to finish, hardly ever being "off-stage." All the rest of John's theology—ethics, eschatology, ecclesiology, doctrine of God, the Spirit, and the Church—is so intimately bound up with his christology that any attempt to cover these aspects separately is likely to distort his thought (cf. Barrett 1978, p. 67; Carson 1991, p. 95) . . . Parts of his narrative presuppose a 'higher' christology than others, and there are tensions in his portrayal of Jesus as fully human and yet divine. (2003: 49)

It is difficult to delimit the primary and/or main themes in the Gospel since it is so richly textured and often symbolic. *Light, life, and love* punctuate the narrative and vie for prime position as well. Other readers might choose others as primary.

John's use of *Son of Man* draws on Daniel 7:13 and *I Enoch* 37–71 and thus suggests an apocalyptic element in John's Gospel. It explains John's unique emphasis on "from above" versus "from below" and/or the "ascending/descending" motif and/or the "earthly" versus the "heavenly" (see John 3:3-14). *Son of Man* occurs in other contexts with related emphases (1:51; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23-41; 13:31). Both Daniel and *Enoch* are significant for the use of the phrase in John. In 5:27 Jesus as *Son of Man* is given authority to execute judgment. In 9:35 and 12:34 the title occurs in relation to "light/seeing" and "darkness/blindness," and in the latter instance, "walking" in the light or in the darkness. This moral dimension links it to the Son of Man's role in judgment. The Gospel reflects imagery in *I Enoch* 46–49, 51, with 48:2-3, 6 the most significant, where "that son of man was named in the presence of the Lord of Spirits" and "chosen and hidden in his presence, before the age was created and forever" (Nickelsburg 2006: 97). The Son of Man's authority to give life and to judge connects to other themes in John (see Gabriele Boccaccini, ed., 2007). While *Son of Man* is a dominant title for Jesus throughout the Gospel, so also is *Son of God*. And this is the approved confession of the believer (1:49; 11:27; 20:31). As Nickelsburg (1992: 146) puts it, "A tension exists between Jesus' identity as Son of God and son of man." Both seem equally important in John (and this is true also in Mark and Matthew). However, Jesus identifies himself with the title "Son of Man"; "Son of God" is what the narrators represent as believers' commended confessions (e.g., Matt 16:16; Mark 15:39).

My choice of these multiple themes (see commentary on 21:6, 11) differs from what other commentators select. C. K. Barrett, for example, identifies eight topics in "The Theology of the Gospel" (1978:67–95; 1958: 56–82):

- Eschatology (4:25; 5:25 RSV: "the hour is coming and now is"; 14:23c: "we will come to them and make our home with them," cf. 14:2c-3).

- Christology (he notes that John's is really not "higher" than that of the Synoptics). Certainly, though, it is more dominant and "replete" in the narrative.
- Miracles (signs in John, the OT *'oth*). This is a distinguishing feature of the Gospel, but I would not call it a theme.
- Salvation/judgment. This is similar to my "life"/"judgment" theme.
- Sacraments. This depends on how one defines the term and how one understands the metaphors in the Gospel (see essay in TLC on ch. 6). Allusions to the Eucharist are evident in John 2 and 6, and perhaps in John 15 in "the vine" image.
- Mysticism. This too depends on the definition. Chapter 15, with its "vine and branches," points toward mystical union, but it is "in Christ" mysticism, not "in God" mysticism, to use A. Schweitzer's terms in discussing Paul's mysticism. In John the distinction, however, between Christ and God is translucent.
- Holy Spirit (the Trinity). This could be joined to "truth/testify." The Holy Spirit is foundational to the mission/peace thematic pair.
- The church and its life. Here I demur, since *church* does not occur in John. Rather, I would put "discipleship" in its place. Discipleship in John is the outcome of belief (Chennattu) [*Disciple(ship)*].

Assurance of salvation might also be regarded as both theme and purpose. Bogart cites eleven themes on assurance of salvation (1977: 66–76; cf. McDermond on 1 John 2:12-14).

In his narrative analysis, Culpepper sums up John's central theme, and the distinctive literary strategies employed to consummate that thematic purpose:

[T]he plot of the Gospel develops the conflict between belief and unbelief as responses to Jesus' central role as revealer. In a series of repetitive episodes the Gospel narrative explores various responses to Jesus. It exposes the errors of unbelief and its attendant misunderstandings, all the while guiding the reader toward a response of faith (John 20:30-31). The Gospel of John, therefore, is a dynamic, performative text. It engages the reader, elicits response, and then critiques deficient responses as the reader works through the episodes of the narrative sequentially and seeks to make sense of its theologically loaded language, its *double entendres*, its imagery and symbolism, and its pervasive ironies. (1991: 33)

### **Setting and Occasion of John's Gospel: Date and Authorship**

Discussion of the Gospel's time of origin and location, together with authorship, is intertwined with almost all the other topical headings of this introduction, especially when one looks to internal evidence for answers. To set the boundaries of scholarly opinions, one need only note that in the mid-nineteenth century, Tübingen scholar F. C. Baur argued that John was written ca. AD 150–70, long after the other canonical Gospels, thus roughly at the same time when numerous gnostic gospels were written. Over a century later British scholar J. A. T. Robinson argued at length and persuasively for a date in the AD sixties, before the fall of Jerusalem (1976, 1985). What a range of dates for the Gospel of John! An archaeological discovery in Egypt in

1935 tranquilized Baur's thesis, for a manuscript fragment of several verses of John 18 (31-33, 37-38) was discovered, with carbon test dating it ca. AD 125. This papyrus manuscript, known as p<sup>52</sup>, is housed in the John Rylands University Library, Manchester, England (with a look-alike in my living room, thanks to the multi-talented AMBS graduate Katsuya Kawano). The P. Egerton 2 manuscript dates from the same period.

The majority of Johannine scholars over the past half-century think the Gospel likely developed in Asia Minor around Ephesus (Papias's testimony ca. AD 130, third bishop at Ephesus, as cited by Eusebius, AD 260–340), and that its final form appeared between AD 85–95. O'Connell sets forth rather convincing evidence that Papias knew John's Gospel, since his naming of six disciples matches the order found in John 1:35-51 and 21:2. Only Nathaniel is omitted. The odds of getting this order randomly, with six names involved, is 1 in 720.

Most scholars today speak of a Johannine "Circle" (Cullmann 1976) or "School" (Culpepper 1975; Brown 1979), or more recently "Community" (many scholars). The *we* of John 21:24b refers to this larger circle of leaders in the Johannine community who *testify* to the truth of the witness of the beloved disciple. The Gospel developed from traditions which the beloved disciple taught and testified to as eyewitness. But the Gospel-in-the-making may have gone through five stages of composition (Brown 1966: xxxiv-xxxix; in his 1979 book his summary charts on 166–69 indicate how composition was affected by differing groups coming into the community at different times; Burge 2000: five stages with ch. 21 a later addition, 39–40; et al.) with editors (redactors) giving it final shape and emphasis. In his 1998 *Introduction to John*, Brown simplifies his earlier theory into three stages: oral traditions, beloved disciple's narrative, and narrator plus redactor (62–89).

Two leading scholars have challenged this veritable consensus: Martin Hengel (1989) and Richard Bauckham (2006, 2007). Both sort through the second century external evidence (Papias, Polycrates, Polycarp, Muratorian Fragment, Irenaeus, and others) to argue that John the elder (*disciple* of Jesus) wrote the Gospel, perhaps with scribal help. Bauckham notes that while scholars recognize that the beloved disciple is never *named* John in the Gospel and John's list of disciples (not named *apostles*) differs greatly from that of the Synoptics, yet most scholars do not seriously consider John the elder as author or the person to be identified with the beloved disciple (2007: 36).

The usual citation for John the elder as author of the fourth Gospel is that of Papias, as cited by Eusebius. Papias, living in Ephesus (ca. 110–20), says:

I shall not hesitate also to put into properly ordered form for you [singular] everything I learned carefully in the past from the elders and noted down well, for the truth of which I vouch. For unlike most people I did not enjoy those who have a great deal to say, but

those who teach the truth. Nor did I enjoy those who recall someone else's commandments, but those who remember the commandments given by the Lord to the faith and proceeding from the truth itself. And if by chance anyone who had been in attendance on (*parēkolouthēkōs tis*) the elders should come my way, I inquired about the words of the elders—[that is,] what [according to the elders] Andrew or Peter said (*eipen*), or Philip, or Thomas or James, or John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's disciples, and whatever Aristion and *the elder John*, the Lord's disciples, were saying (*legousin*). For I did not think that information from books would profit me as much as information from a living and surviving voice. (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.3–4, emphasis on *the elder John* mine; Bauckham, 2006: 15–16)

Hengel's and Bauckham's contributions are extensive and detailed. [*Authorship*]

Irenaeus almost always refers to John as a *disciple* of the Lord (more data in [*Authorship*]). The gnostics in their use of John were the first to identify the author as the apostle [*Gnosticism*]. In contrast, Paul is regularly referred to as an apostle, in Irenaeus and other writers as well. Normally and almost consistently Irenaeus refers to this author, whom he links to the eyewitness of 21:24, as “the disciple of the Lord,” which “is meant not so much to put John in a group as to distinguish him uniquely. It conveys his special closeness to Jesus, both historically during Jesus' ministry and theologically in his Gospel” (2006: 459).

In sum then, the “beloved disciple,” intentionally anonymous in the Gospel, turns out to have a name: yes, “John,” but not the apostle John whose role in the Synoptic Gospels is far from laudatory (Luke 9:51-53; Mark 10:35-37). Further, this solution regards the young beloved disciple in the Gospel as eyewitness to Jesus' ministry, especially in Jerusalem. In his later life he composed the Gospel in Ephesus.

But is Bauckham's solution based on external evidence definitive? Internal evidence in the fourth Gospel points to Lazarus as the disciple whom Jesus loved (11:1-5). Lazarus as author has numerous supporters [*Beloved Disciple*]. Other persons in the Gospel have also been proposed as author: Mary Magdalene (Schneiders 2003) and Thomas (Charlesworth 1995). Any of these reconstructions of the identity of the beloved disciple imperils Ruprecht's misleading claims about John's Gospel, especially his portrayal of young Mark and young John listening to Jesus, and then John setting out to change Mark's story into something very different (doing the same with Matthew and Luke to lesser extents). He builds much on John's omission of Jesus' Gethsemane agony, and sees John's Jesus as a God-figure who never feels pain, whose will never collides with God's, and who peddles a triumphal gospel that has plagued the church in subsequent centuries. John's monotheistic Jesus-God Gospel is good for mono-evangelicals, but not for humans who feel tragedy in human existence, evident especially in Mark (66–77). Ruprecht accuses John of *making fun of* or *mocking* Jesus' Gethsemane agony in Mark and Luke, especially in John 12:27-28 (106–117). He cites from second century gnostic gospels where Jesus

laughs a lot, even in facing the cross. John's "beloved disciple," writing arrogantly about himself, puts himself at the forefront of it all, even at the cross to receive and care for Jesus' mother as his own (118–20). He trounces Peter's authority and shames Thomas's authority with Jesus, saying to Thomas after his confession of Jesus as "My Lord and my God": "'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe'" (20:29) (120–24). Why bother to cite Ruprecht in a Believers Church Bible Commentary? Because some people in our churches, disaffected with John for his spiritual theology and Christological claims, wonder if Ruprecht gets it right. I think not. His bibliography shows no grasp of the Johannine scholarship of the last half century.

Ramsey Michaels's massive 2010 tome on John's Gospel presents a scintillating narrative of the many efforts to identify the authorship of "The Gospel According to John." Leaving almost no stone unturned, except for Hengel's and Bauckham's contributions—regrettable omissions—Michael's twenty-two pages (5–27) on "Authorship," "That Disciple," and the Gospel's "Truth Claims" in his engaging introduction of forty-six pages—contends that all efforts to name an author fly in the face of the Gospel's deliberate and consistent authorial anonymity. Whoever the author is—which we cannot know—"he tells his story freely . . . [yet] retains his privacy, a privacy that even the most inquisitive commentator will do well to respect" (24). Perhaps the beloved disciple *must* remain forever anonymous, in order for him to fulfill his gospel role [*Beloved Disciple*].

The lack of conflict with "the Jews" in the Epistles of John, but ever so present in the Gospel together with threatened expulsion from the synagogue and collision with Jewish and Roman authorities, raises questions about the "two-level reading" of the Gospel, proposed by Martyn [*The Jews*]. Rather than reflecting the history of a later Johannine community, fifty to sixty years after Jesus, the silence on these dimensions in the Epistles (written also in that time period) confounds, but does not completely nullify, Martyn's two-level proposal, in which the Gospel's Jesus-narratives are made to often allegorically reflect conditions in AD 80s–90s. Or, put in a more charitable phrasing, at least some of the Jesus-narratives are presented through the prism of the AD 90s rupture between synagogue and church (the word *church*, though, never occurs in John).

### **John's Relation to the Synoptics**

Theobald describes John as "metatext" in relation to the Synoptics. He identifies six Johannine motifs common to the Synoptics (9). Similarly, Anderson contends the relationship between John and the Synoptics is greater than first meets the eye. He sums up his findings in considering carefully the bioptic Gospel traditions, saying that "John has at least 30 accounts that bear

multiple attestation in all four gospels [to get this number the passion account is considered in individual units], that John has at least 44 contacts with memorable sayings in Mark, and that John and Q [content unique to Matt and Luke] share contacts at over a dozen places.” He concludes: “In many ways, John’s tradition provides a key to understanding the larger pictures involved—not only of theological, but also of literary and historical interest” (Anderson 2007: 127–73).

In modern historical study of the Gospels, as early as the 1850s, Mark has been regarded as the earliest and most historically trustworthy Gospel. In turn, John’s Gospel has been discounted, often naively, with little understanding of the Gospel (represented crassly by Ruprecht’s *The Tragic Gospel*, whose bibliography includes virtually nothing of Johannine scholarly study except the 1938 Gardner-Smith entry, which argues John is independent from the Synoptic Gospels!). But times have changed. John’s historical value is seen now more on par with that of the Synoptic Gospels, which are toned also with theological interpretation (Swartley 1994; Thompson 2001a: 334). Gail O’Day’s closing reflection in the 2009 volume on *John, Jesus, and History* makes the point:

[T]here is no unmediated memory of Jesus anywhere in the New Testament. To single out John on this score is naively to overvalue the Synoptics and to distort the unavoidable and tense interrelationship of history and theology throughout the New Testament. None of the Gospels is without interpretation; none of the Gospels is without a purpose other than historical reconstruction. To study John seriously from the perspective of historicity necessitates that the question of narrated historical memory is placed in the center of the conversation. That memory informs how history is recounted does not mean the historical plausibility cannot be assessed, but it equally means that questions of historical plausibility cannot be assessed apart from serious engagement with the diverse literary and theological forms through which these memories are communicated. (376)

O’Day’s point is widely embraced in current NT studies. The articles to which she responds explore well the historicity (and theology) of John’s passion narrative (Matson’s and LaBahn’s are notable contributions). In setting out his methodology for his *Theology of the New Testament*, Schnelle makes much the same point in his section, “History as Meaning Formation” (2009: 33–40). A 2009 SBL paper proposed understanding the relation of texts and history as: text as history and history as text; neither is separable from the other (Zimmermann).

What Dunn called for is pertinent: “Let John Be John” (1991). John has a distinctive voice among the canonical Gospels, presenting Jesus’ longer ministry in Jerusalem that we otherwise would not know. Further, each of the Synoptics has its own distinctive voice as well, historically and theologically (Swartley 1994). Each Synoptic Gospel utilizes OT Scripture traditions in similar patterns, but each has its own distinctive theological voice. John, more than

the Synoptics, develops its gospel message in symbols, inviting imaginative reflection on its “meaning-formation” (Schnelle’s term).

A collection of thirty fine essays that shows the breadth of significant topics in the study of John’s Gospel can be found in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, edited by Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher (2001). Leading Johannine scholars make valuable contributions. Many of the topics treated here will be taken up in context in the Commentary exposition.

### **John and OT Scripture**

Many scholars explicate John’s Gospel as an expression of Israel’s wisdom tradition. Sharon Ringe, in *Wisdom’s Friends*, blends this with the “friendship” tradition, and thus provides a distinctive angle to John. Others focus on John’s quotations and allusions to OT Scriptures. Schuchard’s study aptly titled *Scripture within Scripture* is more extensive than even his careful analysis of the OT quotations in John. John’s emphases on light, life, love, and peace draw on OT imagery. Unbelief, prominent in John, plants the evangelist’s feet firmly in OT prototypes, as John 6 and 12 exemplify. A. T. Hanson, in his 1991 monograph and his later essay in Evans and Stegner, demonstrates how extensive the OT influence is upon John’s Gospel. He rightly observes that John’s ethical ethos reaffirms the Decalogue.

Jaime Clark-Soles’s extensive study of “Direct Citations” from the OT in John concentrates on both the words used to indicate that Scripture is cited, and the person citing them. Jesus’ citations occur in two sections: four times between 6:45–10:34 and three times between 13:18–17:12, two of which relate to Judas. Except for one each by John the Witness, the disciples, and *the Jews*, the remaining citations are by the narrator. Clark-Soles identifies the Greek phrase introducing each citation and the situation in the narrative. The nineteen citations are: 1:23; 2:17; 6:31; 6:45; 7:38; 8:17; 10:34; 12:13, 16; 12:14-15; 12:38; 12:39-40; 12:41; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 19:24; 19:28; 19:36; 19:37 (222). She expositis each text in context (223–94), and then identifies the key concepts evident in Jesus’ own use of Scripture (294–310).

### **Festival Structure**

At least half a dozen monographs are devoted to this festival feature in John. Miyazaki demonstrates that Israel’s festivals structure the Gospel, and chiasms shape the content of that structure (21). Miyazaki (2004: 20) sees a consistent feast motif framework in the composition of the Gospel, with alternation between Jerusalem and Galilee (23). John’s Gospel is “the Feast Gospel.” The Gospel has three main festival units, the First Passover Narrative (2:13–4:45), the

triple Feasts' Narrative that includes a Passover in 6:2 (chs. 5–10), and the Great Passover Narrative (11:55–19:42).

- A Prologue (1:1-18)
  - b-1 (1:19–2:12) **7 days** (or 8 days)
    - B The First Passover (2:13–4:45) [**7 days implied**]—resurrection after **3 days**
      - b-2 (4:46-54) Jesus stayed **2 days** (4:40)
        - C Feasts Narrative (5–10) **the Middle Passover** (ch. 6) <the chronological center>
          - b'-2 (11:1-54) Jesus stayed **2 days** (11:6)
      - B' The Great Passover (11:55–19:42) **7 days**—resurrection after **3 days** (19:42–20:1)
        - b'-1 (20:1-31) **7 days** (or 8 days) (20:26)
- A' Epilogue (21:1-25)

Many scholars speak more broadly of Judaism's face in John. Burge's diagrammatic outline of John correlates the festivals with other institutions and worship practices (2000: 45). Burge suggests two lenses for viewing John's early chapters, in relation to Judaism, as follows (89):

- Institutions in Judaism (chs. 2–4)
  - A wedding in Cana (2:1-12)
  - The temple in Jerusalem (2:12-25)
  - A rabbi in Jerusalem (3:1-21)
  - A well in Samaria (4:1-42)
- Festivals in Judaism (chs. 5–10)
  - Sabbath (5:1-47)
  - Passover (6:1-71)
  - Tabernacles (7:1–9:41)
  - Hanukkah (10:1-39)

Segovia's "The Journeys of the Word" offers an attractive plot structure of four "Journey" cycles: three Galilee/Jerusalem and the fourth, "Bethany beyond the Jordan" to Jerusalem for 11:1–17:26 (1983: 50–51). Köstenberger stresses that John's thematic structural emphases seek to sustain Jewish Christian believers after the fall of the temple. The narratives of the Gospel reflect the impact of the dual reality of the loss of the temple and renewed understanding of those religious practices that the temple fostered. Hence, feasts and loss of the temple permeates his structure (2005).

Since the Pharisee party survived Jerusalem's fall the leadership of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai also sought a new way during this same time period to continue Jewish piety and practice, including festal observances. Hence, the historical situation facing both communities during the time of the Gospel's composition explains to a significant degree the collision between the Gospel's narrative and Pharisaic Judaism, the only Judaism that survived the temple's collapse.

Gale Yee develops this at some length, viewing this phenomenon as the cause of the anti-Judaism of the Gospel (16–22). Her work examines each of Israel’s major feasts in detail, illuminating the Gospel’s discourses connected to these feasts.

Another crucial insight links John’s two temporal schemes: the time scheme of the feasts punctuating the narrative with a distinctive Johannine time feature: *the hour* (Daise: 4–5; in his study, Daise draws on the work of Destro and Pesce, a major 1995 Italian contribution). Time markers are important in John. In the Gospel narrative festival timing intertexts with the “hour” of cross time. Feasts continue, but with new meaning through Jesus’ discourses linked to those feasts. John appears anti-Jewish at those very points where the Gospel is also most Jewish (Meeks 1975: 172; Yee: 27).

Combining the festival structure with the larger theme of John’s immersion in OT Scripture is Aileen Guilding’s proposal that John’s Gospel provides readings to match the Jewish triennial lectionary year. Guilding’s contribution has received little attention in recent literature, but her thesis merits consideration. Jesus’ major discourses match thematically the significance of the respective festivals (three Passovers) so that the literary design is “Feast—Miracle—Discourse.” She also suggests that many of John’s details (place and person names, e.g.) are inspired by the matching OT reading (231–32). Guilding refers to the prologue of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), and suggests that set Jewish synagogue readings (*sederim*) began in Egypt possibly as early as the fourth century BC (Josephus, *Contra Apionem* ii.7, provides evidence for such readings in the first century AD). The Torah was canonical Scripture (see Guilding: 229 for the weekly set of readings): Year 1, Genesis readings; Year 2, most of Exodus, Leviticus, and some of Numbers; Year 3, Deuteronomy. The NT testifies to regular OT readings in the synagogue (Luke 4:16-21; Acts 13:14b-41; 15:21). John’s Gospel locates Jesus’ discourses in the synagogue or temple, as Jesus says at his trial (18:20; Guilding: 230). Guilding demonstrates how particular themes in John fit respective Torah festivals:

Passover	The themes of John 6 are repeated in John 13.
New Year	The themes of John 5 are repeated in John 14.
Tabernacles	The themes of John 7–9 are repeated in John 15:1–16:24.
Dedication	The themes of John 10 are repeated in John 16:25–18:27.
Purim	The themes of John 11b are repeated in John 18:28–19:27. (49).

While this thesis is engaging and matches my unexpected conclusion about the Synoptic Gospels after study of their similar *Heilsgeschichtlich* structure set for an annual festival calendar (1994: 278–82), the integration of this notion with the other distinctive features of the Gospel is a stretch of the imagination (Swartley 1994: 281–92—other factors are at work also). Guilding insists, too, that John’s Gospel is not a Johannine literary genius: “The connexion, then, between

Jesus' teaching and Jewish liturgy is historical and not merely editorial" (230). This means *Jesus'* festival discourses are the genius of the fourth Gospel, a point to ponder (cf. Brown 1966: 278–80, 286 on John 6).

This thesis presents a conundrum: if John is linked so closely to a Jewish lection calendar, how does one explain the mounting tension between Jesus and the religious leaders of Judaism? Motyer's thesis may resolve this problem to some extent [*The Jews*]. Further, other thematic purposes, arising from a variety of socioreligious and political factors, are at work in John's narrative as well. The symbolic significance of the events, dialogues, and discourses carry several levels of meaning, in addition to the relation of the Jesus movement to Judaism. Some of these are:

- Christological disclosure;
- Jesus empowerment as water of life, bread of life, light of the world, good shepherd, etc.;
- the unfolding reality of belief and unbelief—and the significance of each;
- the gift of eternal life through Jesus; and
- the inclusiveness of the Jesus movement (Samaritan woman, Roman nobleman, marginalized sick man and blind man).

Guiding would likely respond: that precisely is the point of Jesus' discourses, which she calls *preaching*. Jesus calls Judaism beyond itself.

### **History of Interpretation (Origin and History of Development)**

Helpful overviews of this history are Smith's (2001) and Conway's, who both begin with Bultmann (1999:1–49). Thatcher has a more confined survey (2006: 1–17), as does Rensberger earlier, with Martyn's thesis in high regard (1988: 15–36).

The history of interpretation of John has many facets for consideration. The status of the fourth Gospel in the second century as understood by Johannine scholarship in the past century is what Charles Hill calls an "Orthodox Johanno-phobia theory," since the Gospel was used by gnostics. Hill comprehensively analyzes the standing of John's Gospel in the second century (2004). He points out that Heracleon's commentary on John (ca. 190) is not as gnostic as twentieth-century scholars assumed. The issues are complex [*Gnosticism*].

John A. T. Robinson's landmark essays on John's Gospel in 1962 represent a shift from the "old outlook" to a "new outlook" in five areas. Robinson's theses are argued extensively and persuasively in his 1985 *The Priority of John*. The "old outlook" assumed what below appears in italics; the "new" approach is in normal type:

1. *John is dependent on sources, one or more of the Synoptics, and John is a late theological perspective.* This view is unproven and needs reexamination. The

Dead Sea Scrolls and John share common themes. John may be as close to the historical traditions of Jesus as Mark. His knowledge of Palestinian geography shines through incidentally (e.g., John 5:2). The Gospel is its *own* tradition.

2. *Dating*. Robinson (1985) argues for an early date for the Gospel, bucking the tide of mainstream scholarship then and now.
3. *John witnesses not to the historical Jesus, but to later theology*. This separates the evangelist from Jesus; Robinson calls for reconsideration.
4. *John's theology reflects late first-century beliefs*. Robinson's "new look" argues for John's relatively primitive tradition embedded in Judaism.
5. *Authorship*. The "old outlook" separates the Gospel from John as apostle or Elder as author or eyewitness. Again, Robinson calls for reconsideration of this matter. (Robinson 1962b: 94–106; cf. Smalley's summary, 1998: 8–9)

Robinson's views, however, soon were eclipsed by another development, J. Louis Martyn's *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* in 1968 (3rd rev. ed., 2003; see also his 1979 Essay, "Glimpses . . ."). Like the older "outlook" (Robinson), this proposal also distances the Gospel from the Jesus to whom it witnesses. Martyn proposes the Gospel be read on two levels: Jesus' time and the Johannine community's much later time and situation. Key texts reflecting the latter Johannine situation are 9:22; 12:42; and 16:2, which speak of expulsion or official excommunication from the synagogue of those who acknowledge Jesus openly as Messiah. He proposes that the Twelfth Benediction was added at the Jamnia Council. The Johannine community's experience reflects the time of the Gospel's writing and/or final editing, AD 90s [*"The Jews"*]. Critiques of his position began in the 1980s and 90s, and his theory continues at best only in modified form. One author explains its effects upon reading the Gospel: "Rather than understanding that a Jewish background brings the author of the Gospel of John [temporally] closer to the events he narrates, [Martyn's] approach understands that the text was born out of a later conflict with the Jewish community. . . [Thus Martyn's] theory . . . requires that the Gospel of John must be seen as removed and distant from the time and setting that it narrates" (B. Johnson 2006: 84–85). To illustrate the two-level reading: the *other sheep* Jesus speaks about in John 10:16 represent the evangelist's inclusion of the Johannine community into the sheep of Jesus' flock of disciples (see Klink's extensive analysis and critique of this view). Martyn's thesis, however, has now virtually collapsed in Johannine scholarship. I narrate its status in the essay [*"The Jews"*]. John's frequent use of the term *the Jews* appears seventy-one times, with forty-eight uses negative [*"The Jews"*]. The term carries differing connotations. Not all Jews appear in negative light. The puzzle is to discover who *the Jews* who seek to kill Jesus are, while yet stressing the fact that almost all the main characters are Jews, including Jesus.

Here, however, I identify the ground-swell objection to the Martyn/Brown thesis of a two-level reading. The catalyst for rethinking the later “community” lens through which to interpret the Gospels, applicable especially to John, has been Bauckham’s edited book, *The Gospel for All Christians*. Watson, in his essay, regards this a form of allegorical interpretation—that rather than understanding the text as referring to the words and deeds of Jesus, it becomes a code reflecting the experiences and theology of a particular “community” at the time of its writing or final redaction. “Secret believers or disciples,” for example, Joseph of Arimathea (19:38)—and Nicodemus may also be so classified—refers not to what really was the case in Jesus’ time, but a class of believers in John’s “community” time, especially in view of the tension between the “community” and the synagogue. Watson critiques this form of exegesis and interpretation. It is basically unfounded, and without controls. Hägerland’s 2003 article “John’s Gospel: A Two-Level Reading?” questions the two-level reading on different grounds. He searches for analogies in ancient literature, but none are to be found (a later appropriation of the text to an era contemporary to the interpreter is not the same). He examines John’s Gospel for clues to interpret it in this way and concludes: “The hypothesis of a Johannine two-level drama is highly implausible” (309, 316–22). Klink’s monograph *The Sheep of the Fold*, contends against Martyn’s notion that the Johannine community represents the *other sheep* of which Jesus spoke (Martyn 1979: 115–21). His work is a *tour de force* critique of the assumptions, method, and conclusion of Martyn’s particular type of a two-level reading (Klink 2007).

A second influential voice, jeopardizing Martyn’s contribution, is Robert Kysar’s. At the start of his career he embraced the two-level reading of Martyn’s proposal (even in his 1993 article). But later his thinking changed. In a fascinating article, he describes his journey in five stages of influence within Johannine scholarship. The article’s subtitle is “The Tale of a Theory” (2005: 237–45). See also his musings on the future of Johannine studies, “The Whence and Whither of the Johannine Community” (2005: 65–81), which identifies further the originating influences on the Johannine community as a minority sectarian group (cf. Meeks 1972).

Contributions that emphasize the Gospel’s early use in Christian gatherings as Scripture (e.g., Smith 2000) also raise questions about the two-level interpretation. While such reading and use of Scripture sets up an appropriation of Scripture to the situation and needs of the hearers, that is different from seeing a later second level of meaning inscribed in the text that “over-coats” Jesus’ words and deeds, so that the text derives its true meaning from the experience of the community that produces the Scripture. This bears similarity to Qumran’s *pesharim*, but even that is not the same (Witmer). The Qumran Covenanters saw themselves as the fulfillment of the prophetic scriptures. They saw “code terms” in the text describing their experience, but that is not

the same as the Covenanters writing those texts and putting those codes in the text so that the text is about them and not the people of the time about which the text reports.

The distinctions here need to be treated with care. For efforts like Dunn's to reconstruct the religious, literary, and theological influences upon the uniqueness of John's Gospel are necessary and helpful. Indeed, he reads the text to "project" what those influences were. In short, he sees three streams:

1. rabbinic traditions stemming from the post-Jabneh (AD 70) period that account for the conflict of Johannine believers with the synagogue (in 9:22; 12:42; 16:2);
2. an "ascent/descent" motif stemming from both Daniel (7:13-14) and the *I Enoch* "Son of Man" traditions. The Gospel's extensive emphasis on *from above* and *from below*, as well as *the Jews'* persistent questioning about Jesus' origin plays into this motif. Further, Jesus claims special relation to God, his Father (5:18), saying, *the Father and I are one* (10:30). *The Jews* accuse him of "making himself equal to God," which shocks and offends them (cf. Meeks 1972, 1990); and
3. the conflict between Jesus in his intimate "Father-Son" relationship as the true Wisdom/*Logos*, which Judaism has already accepted into its monotheism, and the contemporary rabbinic trends to put the Law (Torah) in that place, which Jesus now claims for himself. Thus much conflict in John revolves around Jesus and the law (1991: 293–322; see "Ethics in John" following, and also Pancaro).

In this debate about the two-level drama, the experience of the Johannine community and its thought-world cannot be denied as a significant factor in the Gospel's uniqueness, especially when compared to the Synoptics to which Dunn also sees many connections. The crucial factor is audience. Were the Gospels produced primarily for their own community's nurture and "aha" self-understanding, or were they written through varied historical situations to awaken and nourish faith in churches that read or hear them in Christian mission and nurture? Both options are possible, but the Gospels have sustained and strengthened Christian believers in global cultures era after era. That is why Bauckham's and Klink's emphasis on the Gospels for all Christians is a needed corrective to an "intra-community" focus only.

The distinctiveness and purpose of the Gospel cannot be reduced to an analysis of its origins, whether historical or literary (focusing on sources). It encompasses much more. Motyer identifies seven areas of sensitivity in John's Gospel: the temple and the festivals; the law; revelation and apocalyptic; Judea and *the Jews*; the creation of faith—John's purpose statement

(20:31); the signs; and the distinctive aspects of John’s language and argumentation, with its ironies and “misunderstandings” (1997: 36–73).

The plot players in the Gospel narrative are many, and so are the historical circumstances conditioning the form and characters dotting the landscape of the Gospel. Compared to the Synoptics—and in addition to Motyer’s seven “sensitivities”—the Gospel is particularly sensitive about the role of John the Baptist, a point prominent already in verses 6-8 and 15 of the prologue. This sensitivity indicates that John the Baptist (though John’s Gospel never designates him as “the Baptist”) has his own disciples, some of which he turns over to Jesus in 1:35-40. From later appearances of John’s disciples in the narrative, however, they continue as John’s disciples, even after Jesus’ death and resurrection (cf. Acts 20). The Gospel, more than any other, seeks to clarify John’s relation to Jesus. It is striking that John the Witness bookends Jesus’ public ministry (1:19–10:42). John 11 is a hinge between Jesus’ public and private ministries.

The groups of people with bearing on the fourth Gospel are remarkably diverse. It includes Jews who rejected Jesus, Jews who were impressed with Jesus but were disciples of John, Jews who were disciples of Jesus, twelve disciples (6:67), seven disciples (21:2), Samaritans, and Roman and Greek Gentile seekers who had been attracted to Judaism and to John’s Jewish Jesus (John 4; 12:20-23).

An extensive cast of “players” dot the Gospel narrative. Wijngaard identifies fourteen “reference groups” that bear upon the content and tenor of the narrative: five represent “pre-Christian gnostic Jews,” characters, and other Christian groups besides the Johannine (15). But alas, neither Jesus’ mother nor the beloved disciple appear in his diagram, though they could be included with his group identified as “Johannine Christians.” Nor does it include the canonical OT books, which indeed play a major role in the shaping of the narrative and interpretation of the events. Such a global analysis of influences is hazardous. Current emphases would likely replace the “Hermetica” writings with parabolic *Memra* theology in the synagogues (see Boyarin’s 2001 *Memra* contribution in the commentary on the prologue).

The effort to identify sources behind the present Gospel has also had a checkered history. For many years, with Fortna’s contribution (1970), a “signs source” was thought to lay behind the present Gospel, predating the Gospel by twenty or more years. Several levels of redaction (editorial revisions) were also in vogue. Much has changed in Johannine scholarship in the last twenty—even the last ten—years, however, and the current consensus focuses on understanding the narrative unity of the Gospel in its canonical form. At the same time, older scholars continue to seek understandings of the Gospel’s origins. For example, John Ashton, in his 2007 revised edition of *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, says that since the 1980s “there has been no major

advance in Johannine studies” (1). The field has seen new developments, such as narrative criticism, but Ashton recalls in the mid-1990s that he “tentatively forecast” that narrative criticism “would be unlikely to survive beyond the turn of the century” (11–12). Since that has not occurred, Ashton acknowledges the place for narrative analysis of the final form, but he objects to any assumption that the text is a unified composition. For him, the text’s faulty flow or “disconnects” (*aporias*)—Burge, too, makes a big point of these (2000: 37–38)—are clear evidence that the Gospel was composed in stages over many years and cannot be read as a homogenous text. Yet rather than suggesting that the Gospel was created by multiple authors and editors, Ashton concludes that, apart from chapter 21, it is predominantly the work of one author, who uses sources and writes over a long period of time (2007: 53). Ashton accepts the centrality of the *revelation* theme, but connects it to the apocalyptic—quite a switch from C. H. Dodd’s emphasis on “realized eschatology” [*Eschatology*].

The three-volume publication of Urban von Wahlde devotes volume 1 to separate analysis of his reconstructed “three editions” of the Gospel together with examination of developments in eleven Gospel themes through those editions (2010). Another 2010 commentary, *The Gospel of John* by J. Ramsey Michaels, attends to the Gospel in its canonical form, seeking to understand its richness. The efforts to reconstruct the history of the Johannine tradition and to understand afresh its canonical form never cease.

In *What Are They Saying about John?*, Sloyan sums it up:

They are saying any number of things: some wise, some profound, some historical, some theological; some homiletical, some *religionsgeschichtlich*, a genre which at times is neither historical nor religious. And, yes, some are saying religious things about the Fourth Gospel (1).

Or, as Schnelle puts it: “Everything is in flux, not only the methodological presuppositions of Johannine exegesis, but all the central issues” (2001: 352). Many new perceptive insights have come from narrative analysis and spiritual reflection of the Gospel.

### **Literary Features**

In his classic work Culpepper lists the many misunderstandings arising from double meanings in the Gospel (1983: 161–62; Culpepper cites eighteen; cf. Carter 2006: 114–16). Double meanings occur in 3:3, 5, 13; 4:10, 14; 6:54; 8:21, 51, etc. Duke’s volume on irony demonstrates how thoroughly this technique laces the plot (see also Ito). Further, the Gospel is filled with symbols, metaphors, and imagery of all sorts. These features of John have spawned entire monographs (Koester 2003; Lee 1994, 2002, 2010, here the “five senses”).

Gail O’Day describes well the Gospel’s distinctive literary features:

[John's Gospel is] characterized by a literary style that interweaves narrative, dialogue, and discourse to create lengthy drama-like scenes (e.g., 4:4-42; 6:1-69; 9:1-10:21; 11:1-44) . . . Story and theological interpretation are inseparably intertwined in John. The "I am" sayings that are a trait of Jesus' speech in John; the Gospel's rich metaphors and images; the poetic language of the Prologue; the theological reflections of the Farewell Discourse; Jesus' repeated statements about his unity with the One who sent him into the world, the One who loves him; the repeated identification of God as Jesus' Father—all ask the reader to ponder who Jesus is and who God is. (1995: 494)

With its rich imagery and artistry, Loren Johns says of the fourth Gospel:

The literary artistry of John is powerful. Witnesses for and against Jesus come on stage in such a relentless stream that the drama into which the reader is subtly drawn suddenly turns out to be a *legal drama*: Jesus is on trial, with witnesses for and against having their say. Only it turns out that it's really the *witnesses* who are on trial, and Jesus is the one bearing witness in *their* trial. But wait! The author has yet another surprising turn in store: It's neither Jesus nor his protagonists nor his antagonists that are on trial. It turns out finally that it is the *reader* who is on trial. The *reader* must say yes or no to Jesus . . . and the reader already knows whether she is justified or condemned by God on the basis of her own response.

The Gospel of John resembles a medieval mystery play. The mystery of its dramatic character is that on stage there is a suspension of movement. The stage is completely veiled in darkness except for a single focal light that shines on Jesus, who alone draws the light. He is the focus, in fact, of *all* light, because he is the source of all light in a world suffocated by its own darkness. We may recall here the similarity between John and Rembrandt's dramatic use of light and darkness [*chiaroscuro*] to make Jesus shine in the midst of darkness, the only subject matter of the canvas. In John, Jesus' words and actions are couched as monologues and soliloquies. The other voices and situations in John are nothing but stage props—occasions for Jesus' speech and action. They never cause the spotlight to move, because they come from the darkened part of the stage and recede again into the background once they have fulfilled their function of causing Jesus to speak and to move the narrative along. Regardless of who comes onto the stage, they are never to be taken too seriously—never more than stage props, opportunities to reveal more of the central character, Jesus. (correspondence)

Brant (2004) proposes that John's Gospel contains many features that suggest the Gospel functions well on stage. John uses *deictic* language: words that point toward, such as *come* and *go*; words that signify, such as *that one* (*ekeinos*) and *this one* (*houtos*); and frequent use of intensives: *I* (*egō*); *we* (*hymeis*) and *you* (*sy, hymin*). Deictic language invites the listener/reader into the subjectivity of the characters. It emphasizes time, space, and modality. Of the dozen features of "speech-action" Brant discusses, the most fascinating is "flyting," characteristic of discourses in both Greek tragedies and John. Flyting is a form of argument in which opponents duel, besting the other's position and reasoning. The discourses in John 5, 6, 8, and 10 consist of flyting between Jesus and *the Jews*. These discourses gain in intensity. Brant notes that in Greek tragedy the winner in the linguistic flyt-duel often ends up losing the battle, since the opponent(s) resort(s) to mortal violence—exactly what happens in John. Brant builds on this insight to

understand Jesus' excoriation of *the Jews*. In the performance a person, perhaps representing a group, plays the antagonist role in order to create the plot-dynamic of the theatric production. Characters constitute the plot; roles in real life differ significantly from that depicted in the text. This makes *the Jews* not a historical reality but a role in the drama, which should dispel inclination toward anti-Judaism. Further, understanding the Jewish "beloved disciple" in an opposite stage role may resolve two enigmas of the Gospel [*Beloved Disciple*]. Further, as a dramatic strategy (cf. Greek literature) the enigmatic 14:31 will be seen in a new light through Parsenios's contribution (see commentary on John 14:31) [*Drama in John*].

Adding to these intriguing literary techniques are the many festivals, each of which has layers of theologically symbolic meaning. Further, the widely embraced claim that John can be understood in part or whole as chiasmic in structure intensifies the blend of history, theology, and narrative artistry (Brouwer, Ellis, Miyazaki, Howard-Brook, et al.).

Numerous commentators present John 9 in seven scenes. This presentation in "seven sevens" is somewhat arbitrary, since to respect the shifts of two persons/groups on stage at any one time, one would need eight scenes. Also, one can present Peter's role in the Gospel in seven scenes, as my sermon, "Standing by the Fire" in TLC for chapter 21 does. But both these examples are clearly imposed upon the text, whereas the seven selected are in the text as perceived by readers.

Schnelle sums up well the Gospel's literary patterns:

Through the literary techniques of repetition, variation, and amplification, through quotations, number symbolism, and expressions with multiple layers of meaning, through symbolic sayings and speeches, wordplays and irony, through key words and concepts, John opens to his hearers/readers, as they make their way through the gospel, a symbolic universe oriented to incarnation, the Spirit and the theology of the cross. In a reflective, meditative mode, the evangelist circles around the primeval mystery of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and creates a new symbolic picture-language of faith, at the center of which stand symbols and metaphors that are at once simple and intuitive. This symbolic language works directly on the hearers/readers, since it simultaneously facilitates understanding at both the intellectual and emotional levels. John takes up the fundamental phenomena of religious life that are common across many different cultures—such as God and world, above and below, light and darkness, death and life, truth and lie, birth and rebirth, water, bread, hunger and thirst, eating and drinking—in order to fill them with new positive content in Jesus Christ. This metaphorical Christology reaches its high point in the "I am" sayings . . . and is so oriented that it illuminates the mystery of Jesus Christ without binding itself to a particular linguistic implementation. It thus facilitates and guides that thought process triggered by reading the gospel as an introduction to the basic issues of Christian faith. (748–49)

## **Plot and Characters**

Minor characters appear in the plot as well (cf. Carter's helpful presentation of plot and "Characters" [2006: 21–85; with a political lens, 2008: 144–75], as well as Culpepper's [1983: 78–148] and his later quite different analysis of plot [1998: 67–86] in interaction with Stibbe and Segovia).

Colleen Conway's careful assessment of characterization in John focuses on a comparative analysis of the roles of men and women (1999). Her work is rich in many dimensions, including an extensive history of research on John's Gospel. She selects five women and five men for careful analysis and compares how they appear as characters in the plot [*Women in John*].

### **Ethics and Politics in John**

Another ethical issue ignored in virtually all Johannine studies is "the poor" (*hoi ptōchoi*) as presented in John's social world, especially John's Judean culture and religious virtuosity. Ling contends that both the Johannine community narcissism and the "sectarian social thesis" regarding John have "neglected the Gospel's particular witness to a distinct social world, evident in its striking geographical focus on Judaea (166–67). He notes that John has been sidelined in NT discussions of the poor: "This is despite the Gospel's portrayal of a blind beggar (9:1–41), rather than a Galilean fisherman, as an archetypal disciple" (171). In the context of the Bethany family, *poor* occurs three times (12:5, 6, 8; later, 13:29—all denoting alms for the poor). Ling cites a list of texts ("Mark 12:42f./Luke 21:3; Jas.2:3–6 and Luke 16:19f, cf. Rev. 3:17") that associate *the poor* with virtuosity and Judaea (132). Ling's work fills this gap in scholarship, opening a new door into John's social world, and certainly the Gospel's ethical import.

Seeing John in political perspective provides a lens to appreciate Alan Verhey's description of Jesus' death:

Jesus does not go to the cross as a victim, humiliated and powerless; he is 'lifted up' on the cross. . . . Such a narrative turns our conventional judgments of glory upside down and inside out. We behold his glory, 'glory as of the only begotten of the Father'—on the cross in his self-sacrificing love! And this is the glory that Jesus shares with those who follow him (17:22) as indicative and imperative. They too are lifted up to be servants exalted in self-giving love. There is indeed a 'new commandment' born of the Christological and eschatological reality that John perceives and reports. (1984: 144)

Carter contributes much to understanding John's political perspective. He does not propose that John's use of *Father* for God derives from the emperors' claims to be "Father of the Country," but he focuses rather on how *Father* in the Gospel intersects with the Roman Emperors' claims that bear on political loyalty (2008: 236). Carter also suggests that Jesus'

victory over and judgment of *the ruler of this world* (12:31) is not without significance for emperor claims and Jesus' interaction with Pilate (2008: 337). Though Moore identifies this "ruler" as Satan (2006: 70–73), Carter sees it as referent to Pilate, the face of the empire in Jerusalem (ibid.). In my judgment that choice is unnecessary, for Satan, the "world" that hates Jesus, and earthly rulers constitute a three-headed monster, to use Thatcher's imagery, applied differently. Consequently, salvation, eternal life, and union with the Son and the Father (John 17) take on a political edge. In this light, past tendencies to dismiss John's Gospel for "ethical" relevance miss the "truth" of Jesus' call for his followers to embody an alternative community of light, life, love, and peace, which the "world" cannot give (16:33) [*World*].

### **Symbolism and Spirituality in John**

Jane Webster does a superb job of summarizing the literature on and distinguishing between metaphor, symbolism, and motif in John. She surveys previous contributions on symbolism, from C. H. Dodd (1953), to Wead, Schneiders, Painter, Culpepper, Koester, Lee, and Jones (1–26). Jones focuses on one symbol: (living) water and its relation to the Spirit. She wisely notes Léon-Dufour's rejection of the notion that one must choose between the historical and the symbolic, illustrated in his exposition of three key texts: 2:1-11 (wine); 3:1-13 (new birth); and 6:1-65 (bread from heaven).

Schneiders, perceiving the spirituality of John's symbols and metaphors, says:

It was a particular *lived experience* of union with God in the risen Jesus through his gift of the Spirit/Paraclete within the believing community (spirituality) that gave rise gradually to a particular articulated *understanding* of Christian faith (theology). This theology was encoded in the Gospel text, and through it we gain access to the experience, the spirituality, that gives this gospel its unique character. (2003: 48)

Earlier, in distinguishing between signs and symbols, she says, "A symbol is "1) a sensible reality 2) which renders present to and 3) involves a person subjectively in 4) a transforming experience 5) of the mystery of the Transcendent" (1977: 374).

### **Guidance to the Reader** (an AMBS student's reflection in mid-life career change)

[W]hen I began this course—my first book study—I had real trouble accommodating the commentators' various readings of the texts. As a journalist of more than thirty years I was accustomed to dealing with so-called "facts" and fitting them into stories that strove to represent one "reality" to the greatest extent possible. I'm not exaggerating to say that this course for me was a case of culture shock. However, I am becoming more comfortable in looking for the themes, patterns, and motifs in the text, and more willing to admit and reflect on the disparate readings [among commentators]. It is a growing wonder to me how a biblical text can speak across the centuries and be an inexhaustible source of enlightenment, invigoration, inspiration, creativity.

I am coming to appreciate the rich tapestry—so many colors, so many threads, so many themes, motifs! That is the Gospel of John. A book whose overriding theme is belief is helping me to believe at a deeper, more elemental level. The Gospel is too rich, too deeply textured to have been merely the design of a man. The work itself seems to me to be a living "sign": Surely this is a work inspired and shaped by God collaborating with humankind! (Gunnar Carlson, 2006)

**John 1:1-18**  
**Prologue: Overture to the Gospel**

**Preview**

See photograph of the Eagle Lectern from the fourteenth century Buckland Church, St. Andrew, in Brant 2011: 3.

**Structure of the Prologue**

Many helpful proposals have been advanced. Numerous commentators put this passage in chiasmic form with verses 12-13 the center. [*Chiasm*] Culpepper's chiasm (1998: 116), with interpretive titles for paired units, has both economy of words and maximizes pictorial display:

The Chiasmic Structure of the Prologue

1-2	18 The Word with God
3	17 What came through the Word
4-5	16 What was received from the Word
6-8	15 John announces the Word
9-10	14 The Word enters the world
11	13 The Word and his own people
12a	12c The Word is accepted
12b The Word's gift to those who accepted him	

Two points in verse 18 of this chiasm, the *Word with God*, may be questioned: the *Son*, not *Word* is in the *Father's bosom (kolpos)* and the emphasis falls not on *with God* but the Son's *revealing* the Father in incarnation (v. 14). Verse 12 nicely fits the center of the chiasm, emphasizing *to become children of God* (cf. John 1:47; 8:31-59).

Howard-Brooks's chiasm (1994: 51) reflects different emphases, similar to mine:

A 1:1-5: Relationship of Logos to God, creation, humanity
B 1:6-8: Witness of John (the Baptist) (negative)
C 1:9-11: Journey of light/ <i>Logos</i> (negative)
D 1:12-13: Gift of empowerment
C' 1:14: Journey of <i>Logos</i> (positive)
B' 1:15: Witness of John (the Baptist) (positive)
A' 1:16-18: Relationship of <i>Logos</i> to humanity, re-creation (Law), God

Brown regards the verses about John the Baptist (6-9 and 15) as later insertions into an earlier poetic hymn; verses 17-18 are also prose, a concluding expository reflection on the hymn. Numerous commentators distinguish the two John narratives (vv. 6-8, 15) from the other poetic portions in the prologue. While a few regard the John portions the earlier source (Robinson 1962c: 127; 1976: 282), most regard the poetic portions the original, with the John portions

inserted later (Brown 1966: 3-4, 22-23). Brown's original poem has four strophes: the Word with God (1-2); the Word and creation (3-5); the Word in the world (10-12b); "the community's share in the Word" (14, 16). Burge's outline resembles Brown's, but he does not regard the John portions as insertions nor distinguish stages in composition (53-54). His units are 1-2, 3-8, 9-13, 12-18.

Hengel, following Gese, divides the poem into six strophes, with verses 10-11 the third; 12-13, the fourth; 14, the fifth; and 16, the sixth. He regards verses 17-18 as epilogue (2008: 272-88). O'Day, similar to Burge, regards the present form the writer's composition (1995: 517-18). Other scholars also view the prologue as a seamless whole (Dodd 1953: 272; Barrett: 151; Bruce: 28; Carson: 112). The prologue derives its present form from the author who bears true witness to what he has seen and heard (19:35; cf. 21:24). As witness to the light, John is subordinate to the light. He is not a rival to the light, but a historical figure who testifies to the *true light*.

From a different context, that of para-rabbinic midrash in the first century, Boyarin (2001) argues the prologue is not a hymnic poem, but an instructive homily, with verses 1-5 a midrash on Genesis 1:1-5 and the rest a tripartite expansion of that midrash. Gordley takes up Boyarin's contribution and contends that while Boyarin's insights are perceptive, they do not exclude the case for a poetic *didactic* hymn. Gordley's analysis appeals to ancient hymnody traditions, and holds that this poem falls within didactic hymnody, as does Wisdom 10. He regards the John portions (vv. 6-8, 15) as a separate coherent part of the prologue. His analysis puts the didactic hymn into seven poetic strophes, based "on thematic and chronological development," with a link-word in the last line of the former strophe and the first line of the next strophe (786-87). The link-word between strophes 5 and 6 is weak: *born* (*gennaō*) and *became* (*ginomai*) are different verbs, which he labels "contrasting images related to birth" (792). The seven strophes (the first time *seven* has been proposed) are: 1-2, 3-4, 5 and 9, 10-11, 12-13, 14, 16-17; verse 18 is an editorial explanation and summary (787-90). He supports his thesis with Jewish and Hellenistic parallels of didactic hymnody. Boyarin's thesis of homiletic midrash and Gordley's thesis of didactic hymnody converge on crucial points, but differ on the issue of poetic form. Gordley identifies three advantages of his analysis: it sets the stage for the Gospel's narrative by linking into the Jewish theological heritage (as does Boyarin's thesis of midrashic homily); it fits with the wider didactic hymnody of the first century in which teaching and praise are not antithetical (contra Boyarin's separation of the two functions); and it anticipates the issues facing the community in the Gospel narrative (800-02).

### **On the Unity of the Prologue with the Gospel**

The literary unity and the place of the prologue in relation to the whole Gospel have been questioned (for a good survey of these issues, see Voorwinde's article). How does one read the prologue: as a sequential schema from the eternality of the *Logos*, to the *Logos*'s agency in creation, to preexistent presence in the world, to historical presence in the world in the *Logos*'s incarnation (1:14)? Or should one read the prologue, whether it is a didactic poetic hymn or a midrashic homily, as an overture to the motifs of the Gospel's narrative plot, rather than narrating a pre-temporal to temporal sequence? Various scholars argue that the prologue introduces essential themes of the Gospel.

### **A *Logos*, not a *Sophia* Gospel**

Why is John's Gospel, in presenting Jesus as Revealer, a Word/*Logos* and not a Wisdom/*Sophia* Gospel? Both Luke and Matthew connect Jesus to Wisdom (*Sophia*). The Hebrew word for the Greek *logos* is *dabar*; and for the Greek *sophia*, *hokma*. That John never explicitly links Jesus to the wisdom tradition is a puzzle, since many commentators readily blend the Word/*Logos* and Wisdom/*Sophia* traditions [*Sophia* and *Logos*]. Evans cites eleven parallels between John's prologue and Sirach 24 alone, as well as seven more parallels between Sirach 24 and the rest of John's Gospel, and twenty-four parallels between the prologue and other wisdom texts (1993: 84–92). Further, he cites seven parallels between the prologue and Genesis 1 (1993: 78). Here arises a conundrum: with all these parallels, why doesn't John mention wisdom/*sophia*?

Carter, Talbert, Brown, Scott and others assume that *Logos* is analogous to wisdom since much of what is said in the prologue about the *Logos* is also said about wisdom in the *Sophia* traditions. Indeed, the similarities between the *Sophia* tradition and John's prologue are impressive [*Sophia* and *Logos*], as Talbert (68–70) and Carter (2006: 137) set them in parallel columns. Carter follows his list with a fine exposition of the Gospel's emphases, utilizing the *wisdom* paradigm, but he fails to say that John never designates Jesus as *Wisdom* (137–39), even though *Logos* echoes that tradition. *Why* does John not identify Jesus with *Sophia*? Talbert perceives the issue and suggests two possible reasons: *Logos* in John 1:1 matches Genesis 1:1; both begin with *in the beginning* (*en archē*; Gen LXX). Genesis 1 narrates God's creation by divine *word*. Second, the masculine *Logos* fits better with the Father-Son emphasis dominant in the Gospel. *Jesus as Sophia* (feminine) would hardly fit with masculine imagery (74). While his first reason is valid, the second is not. The positive roles of women in John negate his rationale of gender-match [*Women in John*].

Boyarin's extensive analysis of the Jewish background to John's prologue supports Talbert's first reason. The prologue in verses 1-5 is a midrash on Genesis 1:1-5. In both texts

*Logos*/Word, and light are closely intertwined (2001: 250). The Targumic *Memra* tradition further highlights *Logos* as a form of God-hypostasis. The intertexting between John 1 and Genesis 1 disposes the Gospel toward the *Logos* tradition, even though many parallel conceptions exist between *Logos*/Word and *Sophia*/Wisdom.

Howard-Brook has a different take on this conundrum:

[W]hereas the Wisdom tradition implicitly includes Moses among the many "sons" of mother-Sophia (e.g., Wis of Sol 10:16; Sir 4:11; 15:2), the fourth gospel insists upon the exclusive sonship of Jesus. This also serves to undermine the hope in a Davidic messiah, through which all of Israel's kings, including the messiah, would be enthroned as a "Son of God" (2 Sam 7:12-14). Jesus is not simply another in a line of "sons" of either Wisdom or David. (1994: 92) [verses 1:49 and 7:42 likely assume Davidic lineage, but the latter is irony.]

This does not mean that John disconnects Jesus from Moses or kingship, for as Meeks has shown (1967), John presents Jesus as prophet in the Moses tradition and king in Israel's kingship traditions (1:49; 19:19-22). What it does mean is that John manages Jesus' fulfillment of both the Moses and kingship traditions with utmost care, to highlight Jesus' uniqueness. Not only is Jesus never "Son of David" in John, but John's silence on *sophia* puts distance between Jesus and the Solomonic traditions as well.

After noting numerous similar functions of *logos* and *sophia*, Stephen Need describes the vast range of meaning of *logos*: in Israel "'the word of God' was essentially a metaphor for God's activity in creation and history" (398); in Greek thought it signified "'rationality' and 'discourse' and this certainly included speech" (399). For the Stoics *logos* was the eternal principle of the rational order—the ultimate structure of reality—which ordered the universe and held it together. It denoted both "'inward thought' and 'outward expression' or speech" (399–400). Commentators who readily blend *logos* with *sophia* often lack exposition of the significance of *logos* in the Hebrew tradition. Need's recent article recovers in current scholarship the significant contribution of Hebrew thought for the meaning of *Logos* in John.

C. H. Dodd fully recognizes the meaning of *Logos* in John as stemming from the Hebraic tradition (1957:10–13). His fuller treatment of "LOGOS" (1953: 263–85) also lists *wisdom* parallels to the prologue (274–75), but he regards the wisdom tradition subservient to the larger *Logos* tradition, both Hellenist and Hebraic. He also notes that *Logos* in John is linked with another term of great significance: *glory* (*doxa*), which adds new depth of meaning to *Logos*. Just as musician Abe Vogler made "of three things not a fourth, but a star," so Dodd sees John making out of the two *logos* hemispheres of thought and experience (Hebraic and Greek), a new "star," for both the Hebrew and Greek worlds (Dodd 1957: 12). Boyarin notes that Dodd describes Philo's synthesis of Platonic and Stoic *logos* conceptions with Hebrew wisdom and word

traditions as a “unique and new synthesis of all of these” (2001: 251). John’s *Logos* extends Philo’s contribution (Philo of Alexandria died ca. AD 45–50). As Dodd puts it, though, even with all the parallel functions between *logos* and *sophia*, in *sophia* “we are still far from anything which could justify the statement [*the Word was God*] *Theos hēn ho logos*, even though the functions assigned to wisdom are often clearly those which are elsewhere assigned to God” (1953: 275; transliteration mine).

John perceives an incomparable richness in Word/*Logos* and draws richly from the OT (Meeks 1967; Hanson; Lincoln 2000; Manning). This is why John does not link Jesus to *sophia*. The many parallels between *logos* and *sophia* do not make John a wisdom Gospel, when the term is never mentioned, perhaps intentionally avoided. John’s quotations are not from wisdom literature but from the prophetic. For other probable theological reasons, see my essay [*Sophia and Logos*].

John’s silence on *sophia* is quite likely related to another issue: whether John’s Gospel contributes to the development of early Gnosticism or whether it refutes those strands. Elaine Pagels argues the former by showing that the gnostics found John congenial to their theology, and so utilized it (1989). M. Williams, however, counter-argues and undermines this view. The *Logos* Christology protects against gnostic error, as Talbert points out “to insure the permanent union of the pre-existent Word and the human Jesus” (74). John’s linking of the *Logos*/Word’s incarnation to Jesus’ glorification in the *hour* of his death contends against Gnosticism. Further, Gnosticism had no martyrs; Christianity did (note John 21:18-19 regarding Peter’s future). Faithful discipleship may result in martyrdom. *Logos* Christology is historical and political in consequence; *Sophia* Christology is not. The *Logos* Christology readily links to and empowers discipleship—hence the significance of verse 12 at the center of the prologue’s chiastic structure [*Sophia/Logos*].

### **Understanding John’s Use of *World***

One way of construing John’s uses of the word *world* is not to emphasize different inherent meanings, but to examine from what or whose perspective is presented. God loves the world (*kosmos*). Jesus and the disciples live *in* the world and offer salvation to it. But the world as unbelief rejects Jesus and his disciples.

Burge comments on verse 10, reflecting the translation, *enlightens every person*. “The light invades the darkness, shining on every person and exposing them for who they are. No one is exempt, and in the course of this Gospel the divine revelation divides the audience” (58; so also in 3:19-21). The first line of verse 10 may be viewed in tandem to verse 1, which says, *the Word*

*was with God* (v. 10, *he was in the world*). This does not infer separation from God, for the world is God's world (3:16). The second line clarifies: *the world came into being through him*, reiterating 3a.

### **An Alternative View on *His Own***

Thompson sees 1:11-12 in continuity with—forecasting as it were—the disciples' resistance to God's proffered salvation, focalized especially in Peter's resistance to God's grace in Jesus' washing of his feet. Jesus, however, *loved them to the end*—even Judas (13:1d). Peter's denial and Jesus' postresurrection response show the depth of both human resistance and Jesus' never-ending love (2003: 262–272). But this seems to be an arbitrary read. The better option, given the overall emphasis of the Gospel, with the commentary in chapter 12 and the larger NT emphasis, is that the *Logos* comes to God's own people, and they (*the Jews* in John) reject it. But, nevertheless, a faithful remnant continues (Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and all the disciples, who were also Jews). This view accords also with emphases in the OT prophets and later Jewish apocalyptic writings [*"The Jews"*].

### **John's Focus: Flesh or Glory**

Bultmann held 1:14a to be the pivotal point of John's prologue—*the Word became flesh*. Käsemann held that 1:14b is the pivotal point—*we beheld his glory*. Käsemann mistakenly connects this glory only to Jesus' preexistence (contra John's replete linkage of glory to the cross), and thus sees Jesus in John striding over the earth as a divine being. He thus charges John with incipient gnostic theology: John's Jesus rides on the clouds of glory and barely touches the earth; the "world is only a point of transit" (Käsemann: 12). Jesus' incarnation is not a *kenosis* or humbling unto death (10–19), the cross is not a tree of shame (10), nor does John have a "truly subordinationist Christology" (11). Rather, John's Christology is naively docetic (45, 70). I contend otherwise [*Gnosticism*]. John counters gnostic emphases. He uses some similar language: Jesus as Revealer, and high regard for *Logos*, which is however a third emanation from the Father. John subverts gnostic theology. In reality, both emphases need to be held side by side.

### **Seeing in John**

Phillips (85), in his study "Faith and Vision in the Fourth Gospel," puts this vision verb (*theaomai*) fourth highest in denoting spiritual vision, next to *believing* (*pistueō*), which he includes in the "vision" category, even though *believing* is not normally classified as a *seeing* verb. Phillips identifies also other related Greek words in John's *seeing* vocabulary (see also

Brown 1966: 501–03). The second highest is the verb *beholding/contemplating* in 1:14. Other connotations, in descending order of significance for faith are seeing with understanding (*horan/horaō/idein*), used in 1:18; to see with concentration on an object (*theorein*); and simply seeing something, material sight (*blepein*). These latter three appear frequently also in John. The RSV translation of *beheld* (from *theaomai*) in 1:14 connotes contemplation, echoing the Israelites gazing upon the glory of Moses when he descends from Mount Sinai.

In 1:18 the verb *see* (*heōraken*) for *No one has ever seen God* is from *horaō* which presents a problem with Exodus 24:9-11 where Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders “saw the God of Israel” (NRSV). The same verb form (*eidon*, second aorist of *horaō*) is used in the LXX. The LXX translators of the Hebrew must have sensed discomfort, for the LXX reads that “they saw *the place* where the God of Israel stood” (10a; emphasis mine). The same phraseology occurs in 11b also, apparently to protect from seeing God directly (cf. Exod. 33:21-22).

### ***Witness in John***

Harris contends that the meaning of *witness* is not adequately grasped by *confessing* (1:20) Jesus’ identity (Wink’s 1968 contribution), or by legal *testimony* (Harvey’s contribution). Wink describes *witness* as generating faith and drawing people to confess Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God (so stated in 20:31). Harvey identifies *witness* as certifying the claims of Jesus as one sent from God and doing the works of God. These meanings are present in John, but they do not comprehend John’s full theological understanding of *witness* (Harris: 39–48).

Harris also argues a minority view that verses 16-18 continue John’s witness, as does 3:31-36 (a more widely held view; see commentary on 3:31-36). The prologue ends with a summary statement of John’s witness in 1:19a. Further, she suggests that 1:19b–3:36 functions as a historical prologue to the whole Gospel, with John’s voice again closing the section in 3:31-36 (Harris: 60–62).

**Genesis/John Parallels: Evan's Table:**

LXX Genesis 1–2	John's Prologue
"In the beginning [ <i>en archē</i> ]" (v. 1a).	<i>In the beginning</i> [ <i>en archē</i> ] (v. 1a; cf. v. 2).
"God [ <i>theos</i> ] created the heaven and the earth" (v. 1b).	<i>and the Word was God</i> [ <i>theos</i> ] . . . <i>all things came into being</i> [ <i>egeneto</i> ] <i>through him</i> (vv. 1c, 3).
"and darkness [ <i>skotos</i> ] was upon the abyss . . . and God said, 'Let there be light [ <i>phos</i> ] and light [ <i>phos</i> ] came into being [ <i>egeneto</i> ]" (vv. 2-3).	<i>and the world came into being</i> [ <i>egeneto</i> ] <i>through him</i> (v. 10).
"and let [the stars] be lights . . . to shine [ <i>phainein</i> ] upon the earth" (v. 15).	<i>And the light</i> [ <i>phos</i> ] <i>shines</i> [ <i>phainein</i> ] <i>in darkness</i> [ <i>scotia</i> ], <i>and the darkness</i> [ <i>scotia</i> ] <i>did not overcome it</i> (v. 5; cf. vv. 7-8).
"And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living [ <i>zōsan</i> ] life'" (v. 24).	<i>In him was life</i> [ <i>zōē</i> ] (v. 4a). "concerning the Word of life [ <i>zōē</i> ]" (1 John 1:1).
"And God said, 'Let us make a human [ <i>anthrōpos</i> ] according to our image and likeness'" (v. 26).	<i>And the life</i> [ <i>zōē</i> ] <i>was the light</i> [ <i>phos</i> ] <i>of humans</i> [ <i>anthropoid</i> ] (v. 4b).
"And God made the human [ <i>anthrōpoi</i> ] according to the image of God [ <i>kat' eikōna theou</i> ] he made them" (v. 27). "And God formed the human [ <i>anthrōpos</i> ] from the dust of the earth and breathed into his face the breath of life and he became a living [ <i>zan</i> ] soul.	<i>He was the true light</i> [ <i>phos</i> ] <i>which enlightens every human</i> [ <i>anthrōpos</i> ] <i>coming into the world</i> (v. 9).

**NT Texts: Jesus Christ, Agent of Creation**

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Col 1:15-17)

[I]n these last days God has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. (Heb 1:2-3a)

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; . . . singing with full voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and *glory* and blessing!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, "To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and *glory* and might forever and ever!" (Rev 5:11-13; see also Rev 7:9-12; cf. 19:1-2, 6-7)

**Christmas in John**

Unlike Matthew and Luke, Mark begins Jesus' historical life with his baptism and the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus; John begins it with the Word becoming flesh. Mark and John respectively witness to the Way of the Lord and to the Word made flesh. The elaborate birth narrative of Luke and the briefer prophecy-oriented birth narrative of Matthew have no parallels in John or Mark. What are we to make of these differences? The answer lies in the variety of early Christian (mostly oral) traditions that Gospel writers could draw upon and the theological purposes of each writer, as well as the divine inspiration of Scripture.

Each of the four Gospels has its own creative and distinctive way of presenting Jesus as the Son of God (cf. this volume with my 1981/1999 book on Mark). Each canonical Gospel has its own distinctive way of "unfolding" this truth in its narrative. Further, each connects this disclosure to both OT messianic hope and gospel mission, which highlights Jesus' identity as "Son of God," a title claimed by several Roman Emperors. Each Gospel is thus political, or *neopolitical*, presenting Jesus the Savior who really saves and is worthy of adoration and worship—a direct critique of emperor worship.

To grasp the full meaning and power of the Christmas story we need all four Gospels and each distinctive contribution. These four Gospels differ from the non-canonical Gospels specifically on two crucial points: a *narrative* grounded in fulfillment of *OT Scripture* that discloses Jesus' unique *identity as Son of God*, sharing *divine identity*; and a *king*—different though he is from the world's kings—whose titles subvert emperor claims. "O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord" subverts imperial claims to Lordship, by a Lordship manifest in both cradle (Luke 2:10) and cross.

### **Toward the Trinity**

*The prologue to the Gospel of John stands the challenge of possibly being the most influential biblical text shaping the theological perspectives of the church. From the Alexandrian community in second century Egypt to the feminist understandings of faith today, this text remains alive and offers good fodder for the fires of belief to continue burning as a beacon of light for the world. (AMBS student, Pam Short)*

Alexandria, a major commercial center of grain exports to Rome and the intellectual center of the Roman world—with its famous library of six million volumes—played an important role in the development of early Christian doctrine. Clement established a school for teaching Christianity, and his pupil Origen continued the Alexandrian intellectual reputation, moving later to Caesarea ca. AD 240 and beginning another school there.

Gnosticism also flourished in Alexandria. Gnostics Basilides and Heraclides challenged beliefs that later became the orthodoxy of the church, in the third and fourth centuries. Heraclides

was interviewed by Origen and the bishops of the day concerning “The Father, the Son, and the Soul.” Heraclides cites from the prologue of John in his defense of his understanding of the relationship between the Father and the Son. Origen himself cites a later text, “The Father and I are one” (John 10:30). The writings coming out of Alexandria were saturated with trinitarian discussions. Cyril of Alexandria and Basil are among those who write “everything is from the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit” (LaCugna: 25).

In the fourth century Arius posed his challenges to the doctrine of the Trinity, claiming, among other things that “the Son, begotten timelessly by the Father, *created* and founded before the ages, *was not* before he was begotten” (LaCugna: 31; emphasis mine). What he challenges is the Son’s eternal existence with the Father. Further, Arius appeals to Proverbs 8:22 (a *sophia* text) and Jesus’ words in John 14:28, “the Father is greater than I,” to support his case, that the Son is not coeternal with the Father (LaCugna: 33). By regarding the Son as “less than” God, Arius, while affirming God’s transcendence, also held that God did not suffer: “The Logos who suffers is divine (*theos*); however, the Logos is less divine than *ho theos*, the highest God who, it is taken for granted, *cannot* suffer” (LaCugna : 34–35).

Athanasius of Alexandria and others argued that “Christ was not simply the bridge between the eternal God and human history, but the coming of *very* God into the world” (LaCugna : 35). In light of the Arian controversy the emerging orthodoxy voiced its views in the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed, affirming that “Christ is true God of true God.” The church’s creed (much dependent on John’s Christology) says the Son, preexistent from all eternity with/in the Father, was “begotten, *not made (created)*” (Nicene Creed, emphasis mine). The Cappadocians, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus emphasize the unity within the Trinity, chiefly between the Father and the Son, while the Council of Constantinople (381) focuses also on the Holy Spirit.

Menno Simons takes up the argument against Martin Micron, a Zwinglian Reformer, on the coexistence of two natures of Christ. Menno provides a lengthy response in his 1554 thesis “Incarnation of Our Lord” (see TLC for John 6). The issue is also linked to salvation in the Reformation disputes, evident in Carlstadt’s defense:

John speaks here of two natures in Christ, namely, the word and the flesh, and the word becoming flesh. Therein is our salvation. Therefore we must look at this properly and consider it well: for anyone who does not understand this will hope in vain for eternal life. Those who do not have the understanding of the two natures in Christ are children of death and the wrath of God is upon them [John 3:16]. On the other hand, all who understand why the word, i.e., the eternal Son of God, became flesh, i.e., a human being, are children of God.” (Carlstadt: 388)

A love-relationship between Father and Son is implicit in the prologue (vv. 14, 18). The Son in the bosom of the Father (1:18), ever turned toward the Father, is a knowledge- and love-relationship. My preferred title for the commentary is *John: Gospel of Life, Light, and Love*.

## John 1:19–2:12 A Week of New Creation

### Structure of John 1:19-51

Numerous scholars have proposed a chiasmic structure for 1:19-51, for example, Ellis's:

- A The Baptist **witnesses** to Jesus (1:19-39)
- B Andrew **finds** Simon (1:40-41)
- C Jesus **changes** Simon's name to Peter (1:42)
- B' Philip **finds** Nathanael (1:43-45)
- A' Nathanael **witnesses** to Jesus (1:46-51)

While Ellis's chiasm highlights important points (*finds* and *witnesses*), it also obscures others. His chiasm does not show the significant christological disclosures in this section. Nor does it recognize the recurring feature, *the next day*, as significant for structure. Burge (70) provides a structure that emphasizes location, day-sequence, and the growing number of disciples:

- A. One disciple in Perea [Bethany across Jordan] (1:19-34) [Days 1–2]
- B. Two disciples in Judea (1:35-42) [Day 3]
- C. Two disciples in Galilee (1:43-51) [Day 4]

What the prospective disciples say about Jesus—who he is—is more prominent in the text than the fact that they follow him. The emphasis falls on learning to *know* Jesus. Following Nathaniel's affirmation of Jesus' christological identity, Jesus assures him that he “*will see heaven opened with angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man*” (1:51). The unit ends with Jesus revealing his *glory*, and his disciples believing in him (2:11).

### Meaning of Jesus as Lamb of God

O'Day's and Hylen's interpretation is persuasive until one digs into the linguistic match between *amnos* in 1:29, 36 and Hebrew word-use and its LXX translation in Exodus 12:3. In the Passover text the Hebrew is *seh* which means simply an animal from the flock—lamb, of course, is a good specification. But the LXX translates *seh* with *probaton*, the word normally for sheep. English translations, though, have usually translated it *lamb*. Also, the term used for sin offering (also singular) in Leviticus 5:7 is *kesbah* (cf. *kebes*), meaning lamb or ewe lamb. The distinctions O'Day and Hylen make don't stand, though the emphases of saving the world from its alienation fits well with John's theology.

### Mutual Indwelling

In light of this mutual indwelling and the text's emphasis on Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit, a curious question arises. Benema (36–37) questions whether this means that Jesus himself will bestow the Spirit on Israel or whether God will send the Spirit as the *effect* of the Messiah's coming, citing such anticipations (Isa 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 36:26-27; 39:29; Joel 2:28; Zech 12:10). This distinction, while technical and based on Jewish messianic anticipations, may seem to evaporate in the "mutual indwelling" theology of John developed in Jesus' upper room discourse. But precisely that distinction is what gave rise to the split between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches over the "and the Son" (*filioque*) clause. See the Paraclete texts in TBC for 16:5b-33, where those in John 14 speak of the Father sending the Spirit, and those in John 15 and 16, where Jesus sends the Paraclete.

### **John's Gospel and Stage Performance**

The stage-character of this scene augurs for Jo-Ann Brant's thesis that John has theater/stage qualities in his narrative. The *behold/look* of verse 36, together with the two earlier occurrences of *this is* (vv. 30, 34), is *deictic* language, speech that *points out* who it is or *what is* going on (Brant: 80-81). Such language occurs often in stage script. John's Gospel is replete with this language, leading Brant to suggest that John's Gospel uses the genre of Greek drama since many scenes otherwise puzzling become transparent in meaning when viewed in this manner.

### **Further Views on Stone and Ladder**

Rowland (1984), drawing on apocalyptic stock, sees in this analogy that the ascending angels, who left Jacob after he deceived his brother, told other angels who came down bearing the image of the man in heaven, fixed on the heavenly throne. Further, the one whom Nathaniel acknowledged as Son of God is the very One whom the angels desire to look upon. "The denial of all previous ascents to heaven (3:13) and the unequivocal emphasis on Jesus as the focal point of revelation make the heavenly ascent and the paraphernalia of apocalyptic superfluous" (Rowland: 505–6).

Jeremias earlier proposed another view, drawing on rabbinic reflection on the Jacob narrative. The word *it* refers to the *stone*, Jacob's pillow (2–5). This stone was the place of God's presence—*Bethel*—and the door to heaven. Jesus thus identifies himself as Son of Man with the sacred stone—in Israel's literature that stone becomes the altar of sacrifice (Jesus elsewhere identifies himself with the "rejected stone," Ps 118:22//Mark 12:10). Another scholar takes the thought-thread another step to build upon a play of words in Hebrew, where "Son of Man" (*ben adam*) in rabbinic sources links with "stone of blood" (*eben dam*) (O'Neill: 379–81). This word

play seems to me to go too far for what John 1:51 intends. The stone-altar connection suggests a sacrificial work for the Son of Man, which nicely forms a bookend inclusio to the opening scene where John the Baptist introduces Jesus as *the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*.

Employing a synonym, “Philo calls this rock ‘manna,’ the divine Logos, most ancient of beings, which [*Logos*, like “manna”; cf. *legume allegoriae* ii.86] is named the most generic possible something, from which two cakes are made, one of honey and the other of oil” (O’Neill: 380). Interpretations become fanciful.

### **Patterns of Initiation and Catechism**

See Versluis’s proposals. Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, developed a four-year program of Christian formation through a sequence of Christian educational experiences. Howard Wagler, pastor of the South Hutchinson Mennonite Church, Kansas, has adapted this material for use in its congregational nurture program. Marion Bontrager, Bible Professor at Hesston College, has also modified it to include Anabaptist and Mennonite teachings. This program, in which new and older Christians participate together, consists of a four-year educational process so that mentoring relationships naturally develop. Year 1, when baptism normally occurs, focuses on “Knowing Christ.” When newcomers seek membership in the Catholic Church today, they go through a series of faith-formation experiences, with catechism strongly at the center.

### **Abiding in Jesus and Peacemaking**

Jesus’ *abide* invitation anticipates the Gospel’s “mutual indwelling” emphasis, developed in chapter 17. John’s *witness* to *seeing* the Spirit’s abiding in and with Jesus (1:32, 33) connects this theme to the prologue of 1 John where emphasis falls on the credentials of the author(s): “we have seen it [the word of life] and testify to it” (1:1e-2a).

Nouwen (2005: 44) says in peacemaking we hear: “‘Keep moving, Keep working, Keep pushing, Keep talking, writing, organizing . . . Be sure to get things done as soon as possible.’ But this voice is not the voice of the Lord of peace. Every time Jesus appears to his friends he calms their hearts and minds saying: ‘Don’t be afraid, don’t be agitated, don’t be doubtful’ (Luke 24:38).” This corrective to our activism comports with Jesus’ words in John 14:27 and 16:33 and with *abide in me* in John 15.

**John 2:13–4:3****From Old to New: Temple, Birth, Baptism; Communities in Conflict****Alternate Structural Analyses**

Should the temple cleansing be included in this section? If Mary Coloe and Mark Bredin are correct in their analyses, the sectional breaks may need to be reconsidered.

Mark Bredin (2003) argues for John's confession of Jesus as *Lamb of God* to be understood against the background of the sacrifice of Isaac and the prophetic castigation of defilement ("selling") in the temple. Bredin's point might be extended to suggest that Jesus' identification as *Lamb of God*, the initial portrait, finds its fulfillment (bookend) in Jesus' predicted death—the temple is his body—and resurrection in three days (2:19-22), thus logically extending the unit to the end of chapter 2. Coloe (2007: 36), however, regards 1:19–3:23 as one complete section, with the temple cleansing at the center. Her ring structure and insights are intriguing:

1:19-34	John (witness)
1:35-51	disciples of John/Jesus
2:1-12	wedding
2:13-25	my Father's house
3:1-21	birth
3:22-24	disciples of John/Jesus
3:25-26	John (friend of bridegroom)

Whereas Bredin portrays Jesus as the willing sacrificial victim (parallel to the rabbinic interpretation of Isaac knowing and accepting his self-giving in sacrifice), Coloe stresses *my Father's house* as the interpretive key to the larger section. This reframes the temple episode as the climax of the wedding—the nuptial pair customarily goes to the father of the bridegroom's house—*my Father's house* (2:16b), prefiguring 14:2, *In my Father's house there are many dwelling places*. Further, Moloney suggests a "Cana to Cana" bookend, seeing 2:1–4:54 as an integrated unit since the bookends are both miracles in Cana (1998: 51).

Despite the strength of the proposals to extend this segment to include all of chapter 2 or chapter 3 (or even 4), I take the "next day" structure as determinative. It concurs with a shift in the place structure as well: 2:13–3:36 is located in Jerusalem, quite distinct from the location markers in 1:19–2:12.

**John's Transformation of OT Institutions (Temple) and Festivals**

Köstenberger (2005: 207, 216) stresses John's emphases seek to sustain Jewish Christian believers after the fall of the temple. The narratives of the Gospel reflect the impact of the dual reality of the loss of the temple and renewed understanding of those religious practices that the temple fostered. Köstenberger's outline reflects the scope of effect:

- A. Jesus' Fulfillment of Symbolism Related to Jewish Religious Institutions . . .
  - 1. The Word made flesh: the new Tabernacle (1:14)
  - 2. Jesus and the open heaven: the new House of God (1:51)
  - 3. Clearing the sanctuary: the new Temple (2:14-22)
  - 4. The inadequacy of physical locations of worship: the new worship (4:12-24)
- B. Jesus' Fulfillment of Symbolism Related to Jewish Religious Festivals
  - 1. Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles: the new provisions (7:1–8:59)
  - 2. Jesus at the Feast of Dedication: the new liberation (10:22-39)
- C. Jesus as the Proper Focus of Worship
  - 1. Giving sight to the blind: a new way of seeing (9:38)
  - 2. Eliciting faith from the skeptic: seeing and believing (20:28)
- D. The Destruction of the "Holy Place":
  - The temple as a symbol of Jewish religious identity (11:48-52)
- E. A Telling Silence: The Setting Aside of the Temple (13–21)

Pharisaic Judaism developed at Jabneh under the wise and determined leadership of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai who also sought a new way during this same time period to continue Jewish piety and practice, including festal observances. Hence, the historical situation facing both communities during the time of the Gospel's composition explains to a significant degree the collision between the Gospel's narrative and Pharisaic Judaism, the only Judaism that survived the temple's collapse. Gale Yee develops this at some length, viewing this phenomenon as the cause of the anti-Judaism of the Gospel (16–22). Her work examines each of Israel's major feasts in detail, illuminating the Gospel's discourses connected to these feasts.

### **The Exodus-Passover**

To understand the significance of the Exodus-Passover setting for John's presentation of Jesus' action in the temple, recall the Lord delivered the covenant people from Egypt because he heard their cries of oppression. This freedom, framed by election, covenant, and Torah, Israel celebrated in worship, aided by the tent-tabernacle of God's presence, the Ark of the Covenant, and the temple. John presents Jesus' temple theology up front, with later episodes and discourses returning to temple and divine dwelling themes.

As the book of Hebrews develops it (Hardin: 110–14; see also Loren Johns's critical response, 2000: 124–27), Jesus' death marks the end of sacrifice.

### **Did Jesus Use Violence on People?**

The antecedent of *pantas* to *the sheep and oxen*? An adjective in Greek agrees with either a masculine or feminine noun but not with the neuter when differing case-endings occur (MacGregor: 18). The point is argued at length in an article by Jean Lasserre (35–48), translated by John Howard Yoder.

Even so, some might argue that Jesus used psychological, nonphysical violence in this “temple tantrum” (as Paula Fredricksen calls it—who also thinks the episode is not historical, in either John or the Synoptics). Boersma (92) argues some forms of violence are necessary, for God and humans, to maintain boundaries of hospitality. Jesus’ protest was “a rather violent action;” many of Jesus’ words and actions “encroached on people’s personal space and well-being.” This extends *violence* to speech effect and raises a difficult definitional agenda. Christopher Marshall (2005) reviews Boersma’s book and helpfully distinguishes between different types of violence.

### **Jesus’ Prophetic Word against the Temple**

Strikingly, the temple cleansing, placed early in John, matches Mark 2:1-12 where Jesus forgives sins and the scribes implicitly charge him with blasphemy. Further, in Mark the charge of blasphemy is explicit in the Jewish high priest’s trial of Jesus where witnesses say he said that he will destroy the temple (Mark 14:55-65). Jesus’ prophetic word in John also foresees the end of the Gospel narrative. The reader is fast-forwarded to the end of the story, so early in the narrative (the same recurs in 3:15 in the imagery of *the Son of Man [must] be lifted up*). For John, the end is in the beginning, for the first sign has revealed his glory (2:11; cf. 17:1-5), an emphasis permeating the entire Gospel. The beginning of Jesus’ ministry is also in the end, for Jesus’ last word in John’s Gospel is *Follow me* (21:22), looping back to *What are you looking for* (1:38) and *Follow me*, spoken to Philip (1:43). Jesus’ glory and training in discipleship permeate the story. The prologue too says it all, in a different genre. The *Word*, Jesus, is the *exegesis* of God, from beginning to end (1:18).

### **Nicodemus, Secret Disciple?**

In 19:38-39, Nicodemus appears with Joseph of Arimathea, who is described as a secret disciple of Jesus. But the same is not said for Nicodemus. Rensberger, following Alfred Loisy, says, “Nicodemus shows himself capable only of burying Jesus, ponderously and with a kind of absurd finality, so loading him down with burial [seventy-five pounds of spices] as to make it clear that Nicodemus does not expect a resurrection any more than he expects a second birth” (1979: 40). Nonetheless, Nicodemus’s act can also be viewed as devotion to Jesus.

### **The *Krisis* of God’s Love and Judgment**

Kelly and Moloney describe the *krisis* that God’s love and light bring into the world:

The Father and the Son reject no one. God’s loving gift of his Son places him beyond the domain of any “god” who judges and condemns. How, then, does judgment and condemnation occur, if such acts are not the business of God? . . .

When darkness is a familiar habitat, the world of light means the glaring exposure of worldly identities structured on what is contrary to God's self-giving love. The God of Jesus cannot but be a threat to those who have a stake in remaining in the dark. God's self-giving love for the world, therefore, does not ratify mundane self-promotion and violence. That ever-darkening world serves another "god." Within that world of darkness, "the ruler of this world" (14:30) holds sway. (85–86)

This is the logic of how God's unconditional love for all people, manifest in God's giving his only Son, and the reality of judgment for those who refuse to accept the revelation of light in Jesus fit together. It seems to suggest that Jesus' teaching in John's Gospel contains a dualism of light and darkness. But as Volf has argued, this is not an ultimate divide, but rather a temporal duality, since the darkness does not overcome the light and God's love is extended with universal intent (Volf 2005: 191–92; Swartley 2006: 292–93). In John's narrative climax, Jesus' death and resurrection, his glorification through the cross, mean that the light triumphs over the darkness, love triumphs over hate, and life triumphs over death.

### **Composition of 3:31-36**

Meeks regards this unit as the composition of the evangelist. Rather than seek to "rearrange" units in this chapter, such as inserting this portion immediately after verse 21 (Schnackenburg, Brown, *et al.*), John's narrative technique is to elucidate themes by progressive repetition (Meeks 1972: 55). Most commentators (e.g., Brown, Dodd, Hoskyns, Talbert: 107; Carson: 212) hold this view: in this unit the evangelist summarizes key points developed until now. John the Baptist's voice stops with verse 30.

But Wilson has persuasively argued otherwise: the evangelist intends verses 31-36 to continue the voice of the Baptist, as witness to Jesus and as polemic against those who continued to follow the Baptist (cf. Barrett: 219–20; 223–27; Lincoln, 2005: 157, 161). This would explain what Meeks observed: that verse 32 has a line identical to verse 11, but with a shift from the first person (Jesus in v. 11) to third person (John in v. 32)—*bearing witness to what we have /he has seen and heard*. We noted earlier, however, that in verse 11 Jesus begins with *I say to you*, but then shifts to the plural. The evangelist portrays Jesus as representing the Johannine faith community just as Nicodemus represents the inquiring Jewish community (v. 2). The first plural *we* in verse 11 is in *we know*, which matches Nicodemus's *we know* in verse 2, and which is omitted in verse 32. This fine detail of difference relates Jesus to Nicodemus, on one hand, and John the Baptist to Jesus on the other hand. John's voice is not speaking *from* his community but *to* his community, and *for* the Johannine-Jesus faith community.

Wilson identifies three features in these verses that substantiate his thesis. These distinctive features signal polemic against those who continue with John the Baptist (39):

1. his witness you do not receive
2. the title, *Rabbi*, applied to the Baptist, and
3. the phrase *wrath of God* (*orgē tou Theou*)

The first has the effect of the Baptist/Witness charging his followers: you are not receiving the one for whom I came as witness. In the second, by the title *Rabbi*, the evangelist recognizes and affirms the Baptist's followers' revering the prophetic role and authority of John. In the third, *wrath of God* is the Baptist's strong word of condemnation against those who fail to follow Jesus. On Jesus' lips earlier, we hear only *judge* (*krinō*), but *wrath* (*orgē*) of God is stronger, well-suited to John's fiery preaching of the wrath to come (Luke 3:7c). Thus John roundly condemns his own followers for not believing in Jesus Messiah.

Further, hearing the Baptist/Witness speak verse 31 makes the *from above* positioning point that Meeks observed even stronger. Similarly, to now hear the Baptist reiterating the claims Jesus earlier made of himself heightens its effect on the Baptist's followers and on us as readers as well. Two Johns witness to Jesus' stunning claims in verses 33b-36: John the Witness and John the Evangelist. Wilson has a point.

### **Jesus, Temple Builder**

Hence, in this Gospel scene in the temple,

the reader is given an explicit statement of Jesus' identity and mission. His body is a living Temple, a house wherein his Father dwells and although this Temple will be destroyed, he will raise it up. His mission is to be a Temple-builder, to create a new holy place wherein God may be worshipped and be in communion with humanity . . .

The cultic setting of a Temple building is superimposed upon the body of a human being. (Coloe 2001: 215)

### **John's Gospel: Abundant Life**

Quite appropriately, a book of memorial tributes to Raymond Brown, who greatly enriched contemporary understanding of John's Gospel, is entitled *Life in Abundance*, edited by John R. Donahue. Similarly, Beasley-Murray titled one of his books on John *Gospel of Life* (1991).

### **Cyprian's Testimony to New Life**

But after . . ., by the agency of the Spirit breathed from heaven, a second birth had restored me to a new man;—then, in a wondrous manner, doubtful things at once began to assure themselves to me, hidden things to be revealed, dark things to be enlightened, what before had seemed difficult began to suggest a means of

accomplishment, what had been thought impossible, to be capable of being achieved; so that I was enabled to acknowledge that what previously, being born of the flesh, had been living in the practice of sins, was of the earth earthly, had now begun to be of God, and was animated by the Spirit of holiness. (5) (Talbert: 99)

### Menno on New Life

Menno Simons says more on the change of person the new birth brings about:

If now you have desire to have your wicked nature cleaned up, and desire to be free from eternal death and damnation so that you may obtain with all true Christians that which is promised them, then you must be born again. . . . In baptism they bury their sins in the Lord's death and rise with Him to a new life. . . . They put on Christ and manifest His spirit, nature and power in all their conduct. They fear God with all their heart and seek in all their thoughts, words, and works, nothing but the praise of God and the salvation of their beloved brethren.

Hatred and vengeance they do not know, for they love those who hate them; they do good to those who despitefully use them, and pray for those who persecute them. (92–93)

### John 3:16 in Philosophical Analysis

John 3:16's profound message has also been analyzed philosophically. Aristotle's four aspects of causation are thus applied to John 3:16 and 1 John 4:9. The four dimensions of causation are formal (the essence or genus of the cause), final (the goal), material (how manifest historically), and efficient (agency). Applied to these two texts, we have:

#### Aristotle's Types of Causation

#### Philosophical

	John 3:16	1 John 4:9
Formal cause	God ( <i>ho Theos</i> )	God ( <i>ho Theos</i> )
Final cause	Act of loving ( <i>hēgapēsen</i> )	Divine love ( <i>hē agapē</i> )
Material cause	God's only Son ( <i>monogenē</i> )	God's only Son ( <i>monogenē</i> )
Efficient cause	God gave ( <i>edōken</i> )	God sent ( <i>apestalēn</i> )

**John 4:4-54**  
**Jesus' Peace Mission: Savior of the World**

**Varied Views of Structure**

True worship, the heart of the dialogue, immediately prompts Jesus' disclosure of his messianic identity, a most significant point. Most chiasmic analyses, however, fail to show this point. Bligh's simple but insightful chiasm (42) misses this point, which is corrected in the commentary's text:

- A Meeting of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well: 5-9
- B Dialogue on living water: 10-15
- C Dialogue on true worship: 16-24
- B' Dialogue on true food: 27-38
- A' Meeting of Samaritans and Jesus: 39-42

To make the same point Peter Ellis's chiasm (65–66) needs *d'* at the center and an expansion at both ends to include Samaria and Samaritans as frames *a/a'*.

- a Jesus must go through **Samaria**, to the historic Jacob's well (4:3-4)
- b Jesus, **wearied** (*kekopiakos*), sits at the well (4:5-6)
- c The Samaritan woman is **surprised** (4:7-18)
- d True worship is in spirit and truth (4:19-24)
- d' Jesus discloses his messianic identity (4:25-26)
- c' The apostles are **surprised** (4:27-34)
- b' Others have **labored** (*kekopiakasin*), and you have entered into their **labor** (*kopon*; 4:35-38)
- a' **Samaritans** come to believe Jesus is the Savior of the world through the **Samaritan woman's testimony** (4:39-42)

This analysis highlights the connection between Jesus' *weariness* in *b* and the mission-*labor* in *b'*; both use the same verb root in Greek, with different grammatical forms and shades of meaning. The *surprise* element in both *c* and *c'* is also notable. Ellis's analysis, lacking *a/a'* entries, is inadequate because it misses the final emphasis in 4:39-42, where climactically the *Samaritans* believe in Jesus and confess that he is *the Savior of the world*. It misses also Jesus' disclosure of his messianic identity.

An alternate chiasmic analysis presents fuller content and different emphases:

- A Jesus leaves Judea; crosses Samaria, on his way to Galilee.
- B The disciples leave; a Samaritan woman comes.
- C Discussion of water and the well—the woman asks for this *living water*; Jesus confronts one of her innermost secrets.
- D Declaration: *God is Spirit and those who worship must worship in spirit and in truth.*
- C' The woman notes that the Messiah will reveal truth; Jesus declares his deepest secret: *I am he [I AM]*.
- B' The disciples return; the woman leaves, leaving her water jar behind.
- A' Many Samaritans come to believe in Jesus; Jesus stays in Samaria, two more days.

### **Not Having “Things” in Common**

On the Greek verb in 9b (*synchrōntai*), Eslinger (182–83, n25), contra Daube, contends it means sexual intercourse; he also says the narrative nowhere hints toward such a consummation, but only the woman’s or people’s “spiritual or symbolic marriage with Jesus” (180). Hence it is not sexual literally, but figuratively of Jesus including the Samaritans in the covenant bond, which in the OT was often conceived sexually.

Botha (122) says the Samaritan woman, in 9a, “wants to get Jesus to desist in his socio-culturally unacceptable conduct.” The author, however, “wants the readers to accept the position of the woman that Jesus is wrong. The readers are to take an evaluative stance.”

### **The Image of Water**

Water imagery abounds elsewhere in Scripture (see TBC); it symbolizes life and salvation. Once the woman accepts Jesus’ gift, not fully knowing what she is accepting, Jesus, in the literal reading of the narrative, turns personal to probe the woman’s marital life in need of God’s grace and transforming power. At the figural level of reading, the Samaritan woman accepts from this Jewish man a betrothal gift, at the well! Thus the dialogue next logically focuses on “husbands” (Bligh: 335–37; Carmichael: 335–38).

### **Another Irony**

An irony occurs in the narrative, in the two uses of *come here (enthade)* in verses 15 and 16 (O’Day 1986b: 66). Once the Samaritan woman takes up Jesus’ offer to give her living water she interprets it to mean: fine, then I can leave and I won’t ever have to come *here (enthade)*! But then comes Jesus’ shocking response, *Go, call your husband, and come back [here (enthade)]*. Jesus did not come to this well for her to run off assuming she need never draw water again. She thinks on one level; he, on another. She thinks she need never come here again (Gr. *enthade*, she need draw water no more); he calls her to come here again (*enthade* again), now accountable with her full self and life!

### **The Several Levels of Interpretation of the Samaritan Woman**

This descriptive outline of various interpretations depicts the hermeneutic landscape:

1. Literal-historical interpretations:

*a. The traditional literal reading.* This interpretation takes the historical feud between the Jews and Samaritans seriously. Everything in the story opposes the cultural stereotype of the private role of women, for it transforms the female “private space” into a role in “public space” as she enters the kinship circle of Jesus’ disciples (Neyrey 1994). The woman has had five husbands, and the one she lives with now is not her husband—reason unspecified. The strength of this interpretation is that it shows Jesus subverting social boundaries (cf. Luke’s story of Jesus and the sinful woman in 7:36-50, a possible counterpart). John 4, however, does not speak about forgiveness, or the woman’s sins, a striking difference.

*b. The Samaritan woman is a victim of the Pentateuchal levirate prescription.* This interpretation argues we should not ascribe to this woman the moral guilt of adultery, either literally or symbolically. Rather, she is not a loose woman or a symbol of something else. She is a victim of the levirate law, forced economically to be attached to one man after another. Further, she is doubly victimized because her present partner will not give her marriage status; thus she is “stigmatized” (Schottroff 1998: 157–81). The strength of this interpretation is that Jesus is doing what he regularly does in his healing/saving mission. He reaches out to those oppressed by life’s crushing load upon them. It matches Jesus’ normative profile.

*c. The Samaritan woman is not judged as sexually immoral.* O’Day (1995: 567) says, “The text is not, as interpreters almost unanimously assume [here she cites Brown 1966: 171 as example], evidence of the woman’s immorality. Jesus does not judge her; any moral judgments are imported into the text by interpreters. There are many possible reasons for her marital history other than her moral laxity [see Day in TLC for this chapter]. Perhaps the woman . . . is trapped in the custom of levirate marriage (Deut 24:5-10 . . .), and the last male in the family line has refused to marry her.”

*d. The story reflects cultural hospitality; it is not about betrothal* (Arterbury). The entire story exemplifies ancient hospitality customs. Arterbury (72–74) regards many commentators wrong in regarding it a betrothal scene. The notion of a betrothal scene confuses hospitality and betrothal. Citing OT “betrothal type-scenes” (Gen 24, 29; Exod 2:15b-21) has provided “an unhelpful construct that exaggerates the relationship between wells and betrothals and relies too heavily on modern notions of courtship . . . Johannine scholars who have applied a ‘betrothal type-scene’ to John 4 have routinely followed false exegetical leads.” Josephus and Philo, he argues (69–71), saw this story as illustrative of hospitality customs; Greco-Roman literature provides analogies as well.

Every step in this encounter conforms to ancient hospitality practices: a stranger passing through Samaria (which notoriously was inhospitable to strangers), Jesus stopping at a well for water around noon, tired and requesting water from the first person who comes to the well. A woman comes and she is puzzled by his request because of his identity (a Jewish man). Hence she hesitates, even retorts on several matters (Jew/Samaritan; man/woman in public at a well; and you have no bucket, so how can you draw water). But Jesus' offer of the gift of living water piques her interest. She then tests the offer by conversation as to whether he thinks he is greater than Jacob who gave them this well. Since hospitality customs assumed the invitation to provide overnight lodging, Jesus instructs her to call her husband (this carries no notion of betrothal).

The request uncovers her marital history and present predicament, and Jesus' foreknowledge of this leads her to acknowledge him to be a prophet. So she tests him further on the dividing issue between Jews and Samaritans: the proper place of *worship*. Jesus transcends the *place* debate by the proper *type* of worship. She answers by saying, *I know that Messiah is coming* (v. 25). Jesus answers with *I AM he*, the full significance she may or may not have grasped. She runs off to her home people and they invite Jesus to stay (*menō*) with them. They then confess him as Savior of the world, accepting him, not Zeus, as Savior (Antiochus IV had commanded the Samaritans to identify their Gerizim temple as the temple of Zeus-the-Friend-of-Strangers and the Jerusalem temple as Olympian Zeus). Jesus as prophet-Savior then remains (*menō* again) two days with them, conforming to the stay-limit set for prophets in that culture (see *Did.* 11.4-5; 12.2).

Arterbury is persuasive, except that Jesus as stranger offering a gift (living water) at the outset deviates from the normal hospitality pattern, which Arterbury recognizes (74–76). In the OT stories, the hospitality host, the male head of the house extends a gift as a relationship develops: a daughter as bride. If such an analogy is to be found in John 4 then the Samaritan folk confessing Jesus as *Savior of the world* are a spiritual betrothal gift. The Samaritans cease worshipping the five idolatries of their ancestors and Zeus as well, and offer themselves to Jesus as their Savior—thus the next level of interpretation.

## 2. Symbolic meaning A (keyword: “idolatries”):

*a. The woman represents Samaritan idolatries.* Numerous commentators interpret the narrative symbolically (Bligh, Cahill, Eslinger, Carmichael, Schneiders 1999, Moore). The woman represents Samaritan worship. Her five husbands (*anēr* in Greek, meaning “man” or “husband,” as *der Mann* in German) represent the five religious idolatries of five foreign nationalities, settling in Samaria after Israel's deportation to Assyria in 721 BC. These idols are

named in 2 Kings 17:29-31; they have corrupted Samaritan worship. When Jesus says to the woman, *the one you have now is not your husband*, he is judging idolatry: “Jesus’ declaration that Samaria ‘has no husband’ is a classic prophetic denunciation of false worship, like Hosea’s oracle . . . , expressing God’s sentiments toward unfaithful Israel, says ‘Plead with your mother, plead—for she is not my wife and I am not her husband’” (Hos 2:2). God rejects syncretistic worship.

*b. Five husbands represent five gods/goddesses worshiped by Samaritans.* Affirming also the symbolism of point 3 (following), the narrative as a betrothal-type (cf. Gen 24, 29), Sandra Schneiders contends that the main point of the narrative is the “incorporation of Samaria into the New Israel . . . a ‘wooing’ of Samaria to full covenant fidelity in the New Israel by Jesus, the New Bridegroom” (1997: 248; cf. 2003: 140–41; Eslinger: 180). Mark Edwards (56) cites this interpretation: “The frequent association of promiscuity with idolatry (Ezek 16:51, etc.) lends some weight to the conjecture, endorsed by Hoskyns, that these husbands are the five cults which the Assyrians are said to have installed in Samaria (1947: 242, citing 1 Kings 17:24-9).”

The strength of this symbolic interpretation is that the dialogue is a seamless whole: the middle unit concerning “five husbands” critiques the Samaritans’ veneration of patriarch Jacob. Jesus’ offer of *living water* makes him greater than Jacob, *who gave us this well*. If we read verses 16-18 symbolically, it is “a statement about the religious infidelity of Samaria itself, represented by the woman” (Moore 1994: 47). This symbolic interpretation not only critiques Samaritan worship, historically if not in the present, but also puts under judgment its violation of the first two of the Ten Commandments. In this interpretation there is no intrusion of Jesus’ “preternatural knowledge into the woman’s sexual life” (Schneiders 2003: 138–39). The dialogue is seamless, not jumping from one topic to another, but touching on crucial theological differences between Jews and Samaritans (139; Bligh; Carmichael).

*c. Jesus’ I AM disclosure affirms Jewish monotheism.* The proper place of worship, Mt. Gerizim or Jerusalem, as well as the expected Samaritan Taheb (i.e., Restorer) versus the Jewish Messiah, is transcended by Jesus’ self-revelation. Jesus’ *I AM* self-revelation transcends the differences, appealing to God’s *I AM* self-disclosure to Moses that both the Jews and Samaritans hold precious. A manifesto of monotheism, this important *I AM* self-revelation of Jesus first to a Samaritan woman directs the dialogue toward theological orthodoxy. From the narrator’s point of view, it explains Jesus’ lengthy teaching in verses 21-24. After Jesus’ self-disclosure as *I AM*, the dialogue ends. The woman runs off to testify to her home folk of this astounding encounter with one she now believes to be the Messiah/Taheb.

3. Symbolic meaning B (keyword: “bridegroom”):

This story signifies a wedding/bridegroom relationship between Jesus and Samaritans. Seeing this narrative as betrothal form links it with the designation of Jesus as bridegroom in John 3:29. Some commentators, while they do not connect the five husbands to Samaria's five idolatries, affirm the betrothal genre-type of the narrative. Witherington (1995: 118), for example, details five features of similarity between this story and those in Genesis 24, 29, and Exodus 2:15b-21. His first and last points are especially striking: the bridegroom travels to a foreign land and betrothal is consummated by the stranger eating a meal with the bride's people— implied in 4:40 (cf. McWhirter's fuller exposition, 59–76). Carmichael (335) regards the scene as John's "symbolical equivalent of a marriage." In this light, we revisit its thematic continuity with the wedding at Cana. In this flow of imagery, why must Jesus pass through Samaria and seek out this woman? Is he looking for a *Samaritan* bride? No, not at the historical level of reading. But on the figural level, perhaps yes, in that Jesus comes as bridegroom to form a covenant relation with the people the woman represents. At this figural level his conversation partner has to be a woman, and yes, at a well, since he comes as bridegroom!

### **Earlier Missions to the Samaritans**

To what extent the Jewish Christian mission to the Samaritans is in view here is not clear. In early Acts, Philip the Jerusalem deacon (Acts 6:5) takes the gospel to the Samaritans, and the apostles then go to confirm the work (8:14-15). Hence the question: when did the Samaritan mission began? With Jesus himself, as depicted in John 4? Or did it begin with Philip's mission in Acts (early AD 40s)? Brown (1979: 34–39, 166) proposes that Samaritans, the second group, entered the Johannine community of Palestine's messianic believers sometime between AD 50 and 80.

The Samaritan mission in the early church may have been underway even earlier, inspired by the story of Jesus' journey through Samaria as it was circulated in oral tradition already in the first decade after Jesus' resurrection. The Gospel's narrative thus carries dual functions: to locate the beginning of the Samaritan mission in Jesus' own ministry (cf. Luke 9:51-54; 10:25-37; 17:11-19), thus authorizing ongoing mission to the Samaritans; and to remind those later undertaking mission into Samaria that others have labored there before them. They go to reap the harvest.

Further, we must acknowledge the *possibility* that the Gospel itself speaks for Samaritans—that Samaritans are a significant core within the Johannine faith community when the Gospel was written. In that case (see Bligh; Munck: 285–304; Brown 1979: 34–39, 166), the story recounts and celebrates the community's birth into the Christian faith. It remembers its beginnings with joy while inspiring ongoing mission to Samaritans. Some commentators

emphasize the significance of *a woman* as the first Samaritan believer, and thus suggest that in John's Gospel's time the text subverts male believers' assumptions and claims to be guardians of the church's mission. The story reminds them that "they are neither the originators nor controllers of the church's mission" (Schneiders 2003: 145).

### **Jesus and the Ancestors**

Insights in this section and at the end of the first TLC section come from efforts to reap the fruitfulness of groups seeing this text through their cultural eyes: in *Through the Eyes of Another* (ed. Hans de Wit, Louis Jonker, Marleen Kool, and Daniel Schipani). The *eyes* are many: Dutch, Nicaraguan, North American, Latina inmates in U.S. jails, Catholic groups of Bogotá, Indonesian, and South African (pp. 513–19 list the hundreds of study groups from countries in every continent).

Voicing the findings of the international team engaged in the three-year study of the Jesus and the Samaritan woman story, Louis Jonker sums up comments on *ancestry*, highlighting its importance in the narrative and in certain groups of Bible readers/interpreters (de Wit, et al.: 513–19). John's Gospel is filled with intertextual allusions and citations. The narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman is one such text. Jacob is mentioned three times and implied in a fourth (vv. 5, 6, 12, 20). OT Jacob-related texts shaped the identity and religious beliefs of the Samaritan woman. For the Samaritan woman, whose Scripture was the Torah, Jacob is mentioned over a hundred times between Genesis 25 and 50, and another fifty times in Exodus to Deuteronomy. "God of Jacob" appears with crucial importance in Exodus (3:6, 15, 16; 4:5), and also in the Psalms (20:1; 46:7, 11; 81:1, 4; 114:1, 7; 132:2, 5, to mention only a few; see Nelson's NRSV concordance). The key texts are:

- Genesis 33:18-22. Jacob comes to the city of Shechem, purchases a plot of land for one hundred pieces of money, pitches his tent, and erects an altar, calling it *El-Elohe-Israel*.
- Genesis 48:22. Jacob gives Joseph one portion more of land than that given to his brothers. This portion (Heb. *shekem*) is most likely the area of Shechem.
- Joshua 24:32. Joseph's bones are brought up from Egypt and buried at Shechem. Why? Because Jacob bought this land; it "became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph."

None of these texts tell us that Jacob dug a well at Shechem. The Palestinian Targum, however, reflecting traditions likely current in first century AD, says, "After our father Jacob had lifted the stone from the mouth of the well, the well rose to its surface and overflowed and was overflowing twenty years: all the days our father dwelt in Haran" (Jonker: 317). That this Jewish stranger could provide water better than Jacob's well is offensive to the Samaritan woman's religious tradition.

Indeed, ancestral traditions are significant. For the Nigerian Port Harcourt study group the text raised issues pertinent to their own identity and struggles: “hospitality, ancestorhood, motherhood/womanhood; polygamy, and the Osu caste system in Igboland . . .” (Jonker: 323). The group’s report notes that “the Samaritan woman minced no words in presenting to Jesus the Samaritans’ belief in their ancestors whose deeds and benevolence are worthy of remembrance: “Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well?” Later, her statement, “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain,” builds the case for ancestral respect. The women in the study group saw this Samaritan woman as “an apostle of ancestorhood” (Jonker: 324). Since ancestral veneration connects with traditional African religion, “African Christians would hold on to Christ as ancestor whose words and deeds must be the guide for their daily living” (324). The Siyaphila group from South Africa similarly valued the ancestral theme in the narrative. The text for them raises “tensions between Jesus and traditional (African) beliefs in ancestors and the veneration of ancestors by slaughtering an animal” (325). The Port Harcourt’s partner group in Peru was surprised at and interested in the Nigerians’ focus on ancestorhood, for while the Peruvian group’s culture includes praying for the dead, veneration of ancestors is not significant. Both groups concur, though, that “women tend to be the ‘apostles’ who transmit the history, traditions, wisdom, and culture” and “also . . . the faith” (Jonker: 326).

### **Symbolism of Water in Cross-Cultural Study**

In many of the various cultural groups the theme of *water* and Jesus’ offer of *living water* evokes much comment. Here are a few representative insights (compiled by Lois Siemens; if in quotes, exact statements; if not in quotes, Siemens’s wording):

- Water that has life must be ‘rolling’ not stagnant; stagnant water is like consumerism (Dyk: 379, 381).
- She came to draw water but went back to share with the person she had met.
- You have to drill a well within yourself to get to the heart of the story (Dyk: 384).
- When we drink of that water we no longer have to seek for solutions in ourselves or in material things (Dyk: 382).
- “The water jar symbolized the burden of existence, the wrong things in her life. She left her jealousy and discrimination behind. . . . [L]eaving the decanter behind invites us to leave behind the concrete reality in our life which prevents us from proclaiming: ‘you are my Lord.’” (Dyk: 390)
- A group in Sri Lanka working with prostitutes expressed concern about how the woman dealt with her social isolation ( Snoek: 307). In reading texts social location makes a difference.
- “In Jeremiah 2:13 God says: ‘They have forsaken me, the spring of living water.’ When one relates this to John 4, it means that Jesus uses the metaphor of living water

to refer to himself as in the image of God. Developing this further, one person comments that people are also created in the image of God and that the metaphor therefore contains a command to be a source of living water.” (Snoek: 309)

- “What is silenced in these interpretations is the link between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, the fact that racism and sexism is not only a matter of boundaries that have to be crossed for communication to be successful but that these boundaries have a colonial history of terror” (Rathbone: 289).
- ALL groups from ‘third world’—independently—interpret John 4:7-15 as a mandate to evangelize. There is a shortage of water in many places along with a spiritual shortage (Snoek: 307).

### **Other Interpretations**

Musa Dube, a woman scholar from Botswana (not a part of the de Wit study), contends that this story represents mission at the cost of colonizing and imperialistic domination. She sees Jesus’ entry into Samaria as a story expressive of colonial terror—Jesus invades the Samaritan woman’s land (1996: 37–58; also 2006: 297–318). With the perspectives in the de Wit volume and Day, I find the story liberating for women and a classic on mission through peacemaking. A factor overlooked in these interpretations of the various cultural groups is articulated well by Sandra Schneiders:

By the time the gospel was written converted Samaritans were an integral part of the Johannine community. It seems more than a little likely that this detail about the disciples being shocked at Jesus’ dealing with a woman, since it is in no way necessary to the story itself, is aimed at those traditionalist male Christians in the Johannine community who found the independence and apostolic initiative of Christian women shocking. The point is quite clearly made, however, that they knew better than to question the profound purposes (indicated by the verb ‘to seek’) of Jesus for his women disciples. Jesus alone decides to whom he will reveal himself and whom he will call to apostleship. Jesus is evidently filled with joy at the woman’s work (4.35) which he recognizes as a realization of his own mission to do the will of the one who sent him (4.34) and as an anticipation of the later work of the other disciples (4.38). (2003: 103–4)

Taking into account this factor for interpretation sheds a different light on the imperial colonialist comments about the text. The Samaritans gratefully own this text!

### **Mission and Peacemaking**

Witherington (1995: 124) writes eloquently on the need for linking mission with crossing cultural boundaries, criticizing the “target audience” emphasis in the church growth movement, but he fails to see enemy-love dimensions of the text:

The story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman is extremely potent to use as a tool for sharing the Gospel across socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial barriers and for exhorting Christians to get on with doing so. Jesus in this story not only rejects the notion that he shouldn’t associate with Samaritans, he also rejects the notion that he shouldn’t talk with a “strange”

woman in public, and furthermore rejects the idea that one shouldn't associate with notoriously immoral people. Besides that, Jesus' act involves witnessing to a person that many of his fellow Jews would have written off as both unclean and theologically out of bounds, a hopeless case.

Sheeley, believing that Jesus' mission charge to his disciples is deliberately set in this context of breaking down the walls of ethnic and gender relationships, focuses the challenge of this text for our witness today, in the North American context:

Jesus challenges us to hear his command to look up and be observers of the world in which *we* live. Countless "foreigners" live in our midst, and the church tends to ignore their needs just as easily as the disciples ignored the Samaritans. The American church faces opportunities for service with alarming regularity. We drive and walk past people who need ministry—"living water" is more than an evangelistic witness—each day; they live in our communities, but they are separated from us by invisible barriers every bit as real as those which separated the Samaritans from the Jews. The call to minister demands that we do all we can to eliminate barriers. That call demands that we look up and observe as we make our way through the fields which are ready to be harvested, even if such alert observance forces us to stop and remain for a while. (86)

## **John 5**

### **Jesus Does God's Work; "Trial" Begins**

#### **Structure of Text**

Various "ring structures" or chiasms have been suggested for this portion: Ellis for 5:1-18; 5:19-30; 5:31-47 (92-94); Talbert for 5:18-30 (124); and Keener for 5:38-47 (I.658). Burge's outline for the chapter is superb (172), which together with Lincoln's contribution on *The Trial* motif (2000) inspired the commentary's outline. Other outlines show parallelism (with certain antithetical emphases) between this healing and Jesus' healing of the blind man in John 9. Keener sees this story as "a direct foil for the miracle story in 9:1-14" (I.639). Schneiders discusses the two narratives in one chapter and highlights significant contrasts between the two stories, both in the cause or reason for the illness and the healed men's responses to both the healing and to Jesus (2003: 149-70). Further, water plays a significant role in each, for both pools, Bethzatha and Siloam, are large purification pools.

#### **Differing Assessments of the Lame Man**

Brown (1966: 209) sees in the lame man a lack of determination: if he really wanted to he could have gotten into that water with someone's help before now; he is a complainer. Brodie sees in him a failure of will (Brodie 1993: 238). He stands in sharp contrast to the blind man in chapter 9 who, rather than betraying Jesus' identity to *the Jews*, confesses Jesus to be a prophet, one surely not a sinner, and indeed *the Son of Man*. In contrast to Jesus absolving the blind man's illness from any causative sin, this man's illness may be a result of sin, since Jesus commands him, *Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you* (v.14). Schneiders also judges the man negatively:

The difference between the blindness of the man in chapter 9 and the paralysis of the man in chapter 5 is striking. In one case the blindness is congenital and not due to or reflective of sin; in the other the paralysis is of long standing and apparently the result of personal sin. In the former case [John 9], Jesus heals and the man responds freely and responsibly, integrating his new-found vision into his spiritual identity. In the latter case [John 5] Jesus virtually imposes healing, which the man receives without enthusiasm and fails to integrate into his identity and actions. (2003: 163)

Schneiders says the man's "final act" was "turning Jesus in to the authorities." In the commentary, however, I contend that these scholars are wrong in holding a negative view of this lame man in John 5. P. Bruce's arguments are persuasive.

#### **Healing the Sick/Responding to Disability**

Even though the primary emphasis in John 5 focuses on Jesus' identity, the text also portrays Jesus compassionately responsive to one socially marginalized because of physical illness and disability. Our modern word for *paralytic* is *paraplegic*. Those suffering from this disability cannot feel signs of illness in their lower body, and are thus quite vulnerable to other illnesses. Jesus' initiative to help this person challenges us in our attitudes and practices of life. To what extent do we relate meaningfully to such persons in our congregations and families? While we seldom have Jesus' power to heal instantly we can become healing helpers to such persons, doing what we can to accommodate to their needs. This applies to schools, churches, and the workplace. For those hospitalized or in nursing homes, do we visit and include them in our social circles?

The writings and DVDs of Jean Vanier, who lives among the disabled in L'Arche communities inspire, lifting the veil from our eyes to see beauty in these persons: their loving appreciation of personal relationships, their desire to be connected and feel personal worth (see here Vanier's DVD on the Gospel of John). Bredin (2007), in teaching those severely disabled, has come to recognize true beauty in them. By relating to those with disability (of whatever type), we discover a new dimension of God's grace.

Drawing on Moltmann's writings, Bredin (4) remarks that the false notions of our modern culture—the image of the ideal body—prevent us from seeing the beauty in those disabled and disfigured. We thus need an attitudinal change. By taking up the servant stance, exemplified by Jesus, and committing ourselves to seek shalom (well-being) for all, we will personally experience transformation and transformed relationships with those disabled. We will seek community for and with them. Such relationships will challenge our competitive approach to life, and open up deeper and more satisfying life experiences. By providing community for the disabled we learn what interdependence is and perceive our own poverty of spirit. Our poverty and loneliness is exposed; we identify with Jesus' spirit of compassion that brings healing to human brokenness. (See Hauerwas and Vanier, *Living Gently in a Violent World*.)

While adequate healthcare will be of major concern for the sick and disabled, Jesus goes further, to provide compassionate presence with and healing of the sick. This will mean praying for the healing of the sick (James 5:13-18) and sustaining relationships of love and care. Healthcare will mean not only insurance coverage or mutual aid, both extremely important, but also inclusion of the sick and disabled into our community life, when possible. Accessibility issues will be addressed and cared for. We will do what it takes to include them “at the table” of fellowship, communion, and grace.

## John 6 Jesus Is the Bread of Life

### Jesus Feeds the Multitude

This story is *only* one of several that occur in all four NT Gospels (see Brown 1966: 240–43 for a detailed analysis of the parallels, which includes the second feeding in Mark and Matthew).

Parallel printing of the four texts helps visualize the differences between the Lord's Supper accounts in the synoptic Gospels and Paul (1 Cor 11). Though there are also significant similarities between John and the Synoptics (and Paul), Jesus' words in John in the feeding of the multitude (6:11, note also 6:23) contain some similarity:

### Parallel Gospel Accounts of the Lord's Supper

#### Matt 26:26-29

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

#### Mark 14:22-25

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

#### Luke 22:17-20

Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

#### 1 Cor 11:23-25

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

### **Kingship Important in John**

*Kingship* in the narrative plot of the Gospel appears again upon Jesus' entry into Jerusalem when a *great crowd* welcomes Jesus and shouts, *Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel* (12:13, and again in v. 15). The theme laces the trial narrative in John 18–19, culminating in Pilate's inscription on the cross, *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews* in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek!

### **Jesus' I Am Sayings**

“As with all the ‘I Am’ sayings with a predicate, Jesus is not describing who he is but what he does: he nourishes with bread that produces life” (Moloney: 214). But belief in him (Jesus) is the call:

Jesus claims that he is perfecting the former gift, the life-giving nourishment provided by Torah . . . No longer will Moses, the manna, Wisdom, or Torah provide sufficient nourishment. Jesus, the bread of life (v. 35a), will satisfy the deepest needs of humankind, all hunger and all thirst (v. 35b) . . . He replaces the manna and the Torah, but the people have not believed in this revelation even though they have seen it. The Father sends those who come to Jesus in faith, and Jesus willingly accepts “everyone” . . . [*Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty . . . anyone who comes to me I will never drive away (35b, 37b)*]. He will not “cast out” (*ekballō*) anyone or anything given to him by the Father. (Moloney: 214–15)

### **Eat My Flesh: Eucharistic?**

James Dunn discusses several scholars (Bultmann, Bornkamm, Lohse) who hold that this passage is sacramental *and* is a later insertion (Dunn 1971: 328–29). Cullmann too regards it eucharistic and sacramental, but he argues (with G. Richter and E. Ruckstuhl) that it cannot be shown to be non-Johannine on linguistic grounds. Dunn extends this analysis, showing how vocabulary in this unit appears elsewhere in the Gospel (1971: 329). Schürmann and Borgen (1965) exposit the text showing its unity with the rest of the chapter (Dunn: 330). Anderson (1996) evaluates the arguments for inauthenticity in the context of unity and disunity in the christological portrait of John 6.

### **Exception to Brown's Conclusion**

A caveat to Brown's reasoning comes with Brant's suggestion that the text heats the “flyting” duel. The shocking cannibalistic language is understood quite differently when the narrative is viewed as drama to be performed theatrically:

The use of the verb *trōgein* renders the antithesis between eating Jesus' flesh and not eating it a grotesque reference to a cannibalistic meal that is both life-giving and deadly. The absolute contrast between bread that brings life and bread that leads to death may,

then, be more a function of the drama than doctrine. Such sarcastic language is designed to end speech by being so offensive that the crowd is prepared to reject him.

When Jesus says that he will not turn away any who come to him and then proceeds to turn as many away as possible, he fits Charles Segal's portrait of Sophoclean heroes who "invite suffering into their lives by a dangerous excess." The dramatic irony of the gospel makes it possible for the audience to avoid this judgment because it knows that Jesus intends to die. His last offensive speech in the bread-of-life discourse is predicated upon the paradox that in order for the Jews to have eternal life, they have to kill Jesus. To accept him would foil the plan. So when the crowd would make him king, the police would rather listen than arrest him, and Pilate would release him; Jesus is provided with a motive for his belligerence. . . . If we attend to the theatrical conventions of the dialogue's composition, we ought to regard the crowd and the Jews as deserving pity rather than condemnation. (156–58)

This analysis of Jesus' shocking words gives any interpretation pause, since it asks us to view the scene as one would within the conventions of theatric drama. This narrative, as with others in the Gospel, functions on stage as a crux in the unfolding plot, leading surely to Jesus' death. The grotesque language offends in order to "heat" the plot to its denouement, Jesus' death that is paradoxically also his glorification. As Brant cautions, the narrative viewed in this light does not lead to doctrine regarding eucharist or sacrament, but serves a specific purpose in the tragedian's vision, to show the inexorable march to Jesus' destiny, with the contrasting responses of belief and unbelief playing into the execution of the plot and person!

While worthy of consideration, who in the late first century and subsequent centuries would read it in this way [*Drama in John*]?

### **Allusions to OT Texts**

Koester sums up these allusions:

Expectations for the appearance of a miracle-working prophet were also shaped by traditions about Elisha and especially Elijah, who was supposed to appear before the day of the Lord (Mal 4:5-6; John 1:21, 25). Like Moses, these prophets miraculously fed people with bread (1 Kings 17:8-16; 2 Kings 4:42-44), parted water (2 Kings 2:8, 14), and performed miracles similar to those that captured the attention of the people thronging to Jesus, such as bringing a boy back from the threshold of death (1 Kings 17:17-34; 2 Kings 4:32-37; John 4:46-52; 6:2). (95)

### **Meeting People's Physical and Spiritual Needs**

I write this section several weeks after the devastations of the cyclone in Myanmar and the earthquake in China, in which together over two hundred thousand people lost their lives, with twice as many more left homeless. When Jesus feeds the five thousand, he meets physical needs. People are hungry and he feeds them. Granted, this feeding is intended to lead to spiritual insight—who Jesus is. Some get it; others don't.

After Jesus meets their physical needs he reveals to the crowd that he is the bread of life. He offers food that will sustain them forever. Jesus first relieves their physical hunger and then seeks to give them spiritual food. This suggests that basic physical and emotional needs are to be met. People must be out of immediate harm, have a place to live, clothes to wear, medical attention when sick, and safe water. The majority of the world's peoples struggle to meet basic needs for themselves and their families, especially with wars, famine, natural disasters, and the AIDS epidemic ravaging the most vulnerable in our world today. We cannot claim to be Christians and ignore this. When we take the Gospel to persons whose basic needs aren't met—ignoring their physical needs while solely trying to address spiritual needs—we miss what Jesus teaches us.

At the same time, if we don't concern ourselves with the spiritual needs of these same people, we also miss Jesus' point, indeed, the opportunity to have their deepest needs met. We cheat them if this is glossed over. For Jesus offers more than physical food; he calls us to do so as well.

The church needs Christian organizations that do development and relief work *and* those who do church planting and evangelization. Both serve vital needs of the world and God's people. Both have their appropriate time and context, sometimes side by side, sometimes following each other and sometimes completely separate. And sometimes it is precisely through meeting physical needs that eyes open to welcome spiritual teaching and example. Loving people through caring for them may lead to Jesus' gift of eternal life.

### **Menno Simons on Jesus' Incarnation**

Menno's treatment of the incarnation and how we view the divine and human in Christ leans on John's theology more than on the virgin birth narratives of Luke and Matthew, though he enlists those in his argument. If the flesh originated from Mary's humanity, Jesus would be of the *fallen* adamic seed with split natures. Menno's argument cuts fine distinctions, which may or may not edify us today. However, by seeing Christ as a unified divine-human man in the flesh, Menno connects doctrine with ethics, since those *born from above* now live as Christ lived. Jesus gives his life for the salvation of the world, which means new creation, living as *children of God* (1:12).

**John 7****Jesus: Living Water, at the Feast of Tabernacles****The Roman Perspective on Jesus' Security**

In John, Jesus has already been hailed a rival to the emperor, in the Samaritan's confession, *this is truly the Savior of the world* (4:42c). This title was first claimed by Roman Emperor Julius Caesar, and subsequently combined with other adulatory modifiers by "Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, Titus, Trajan, and Hadrian" (Cassidy: 13). Little wonder that Jesus in this Gospel written in the 90s, after six of these emperors, weighed the decision: is this the Father's timing for my ministry?

**The Celebrations of the Tabernacles Festival**

Numerous OT texts were read during the festival, including the famous Water Gate passage in Nehemiah 8, when this feast was reestablished upon return from exile. Public reading of the Torah lasted from dawn until noon, or perhaps even dusk, on the first and last days. Special psalms were read, with Psalm 118:15-29 likely read daily since it keynotes two symbols of the procession to the temple: light and palm branches (v. 27). Psalms read on given days were:

Day 1: Psalm 105	Day 5: Psalm 94 again
Day 2: Psalm 29	Day 6: Psalm 81
Day 3: Psalm 1	Day 7: Psalm 82
Day 4: Psalm 94	

On the morning of each of the seven days a procession led by priests and singing Levites, accompanied by a milling crowd of people, went down to the Pool of Siloam to gather water in a golden container. Accompanied by the milling people and blasts of the *shofar*, the procession returned to the temple area through the Water Gate. According to rabbinic literature, the Water Gate had an eschatological significance [Ezek. 47:1-5 portrays waters of life flowing out of the temple through this south gate]. . . . On arrival at the temple area they processed around the altar and sang Psalms 113–118 (the Hallel). The *lulab*, a collection of twigs of myrtle, palm, and willow, bound together with a citron, was waved at the words of Ps 118:1: "O give thanks to the Lord for he is good," and again at v. 25: "Save us, we beseech you O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success." On arrival at the altar the priest . . . poured the water from Siloam and wine into two vessels positioned on the altar, allowing water and wine to flow out on to the altar (cf. *m. Sukk.* 4:9). On the seventh day of the feast the procession round the altar was repeated seven times (cf. *m. Sukk.* 4:5). (Moloney 1998: 234)

**Further Interpretive Issues on 7:37-39**

*Subpoint on second problem.* A new, related issue is raised by the NRSV translating the Greek *koilias/belly* as "heart." To change *belly* to *heart* updates the "seat of emotion" from belly to heart

and also emphasizes *heart*-transformation in the one who believes. While this point describes the spiritual efficacy of believing, the loss is great: it severs the link between this verse and 19:34 where water gushes out of Jesus' side (belly) as he dies on the cross, the *last* recorded action of/from Jesus prior to the resurrection. And then the *first* thing the resurrected Jesus does for his disciples is to breathe on them the Holy Spirit (7:39 anticipates 20:19-23). Further, since *koilia* might play upon another image, Jerusalem as "the navel of the earth" (Jub 8.19; cf. Ezek 38:12), the text could suggest that Jesus stands in place of Jerusalem in the OT text quoted (note the relation of navel to belly), as the source of water to nourish the earth and quench human thirst (Kerr: 239–40; Torrey and Jeremias have connected *belly* and *Jerusalem* via the similarity of the two words in Aramaic, see Lindars: 302). If we decide that *autou* refers to the believer, *heart* is fine, where water symbolizes spiritual transformation. But if we decide *autou* refers to Jesus, then it's important to translate *koilia* with *belly* to connect this verse with 19:34 and the possible relation of Jesus to Jerusalem as the navel of the earth.

Contending against Brown's and Kerr's view that line 1 (*thirst*) and 2 (*drink*) are parallel, Cortés, Fee, and Hodges argue that the first two lines are not in perfect parallelism. Further, Brown's and Kerr's view welcomes those to *drink* who already *believe*, which cuts against the narrative's call to believe. But this point hardly stands, because the phrase *let the one who believes* can be invitational, a call to believe. Arguments for either side are not decisive, though Kilpatrick (who argues that *just as / kathos* [in 38b] normally directly follows a main clause, not a dangling phrase) has a point.

*Christological interpretation.* The *christological* interpretation that *his* (*autou*) refers to Jesus is widely held: "Ashton, Brown, Burge, Bultmann, Beasley-Murray, Boismard, Dodd (1963), Hoskyns, Moloney, Schnackenburg" (cited by Coloe 2001: 127). The punctuation and translation favored by Brown and Kerr, however, does not rule out the possible referent of *his* (*autou*) to be the believer—that *his* refers to *those who believe* in Jesus (NRSV), even though it puts the *believer* phrase with the *drink* clause. The quoted Scripture could support either Jesus' claim about himself or the believer's response. The punctuation alone does not settle completely the referent for *his* (*autou*).

Perhaps the narrator clarifies the matter in 7:39: *Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.* Fee (117) argues that *Now he said this* (*touto de eipen*, 39a) makes *his* refer to believers. The water thus symbolizes spiritual refreshment within the believers. But the Greek and English texts say, *he said this about the Spirit!* If this verse would read *Now he said this*

*about the believers to whom the Spirit had not yet been given . . .*, the *his*=believers theory would win the debate. But the object of *about* is *Spirit*, not *believers*. Three of the four phrases in this verse relate to the time of Jesus' bestowal of the Spirit, only one to believers who receive the Spirit. Hence this verse, if anything, points to the option of *autou* referring to Jesus, since Jesus gives the Spirit. Further, Jesus gives both the water and the Spirit; these two flow together in John's and NT theology.

### **Regarding the Scripture Jesus Quotes**

Hoskins emphasizes the Exodus typology in Isaiah, which provides the link between the riven rock and the water flowing from the temple in the eschatological age:

[T]he water from the rock . . . is also an image that Isaiah associates with the blessings of the new age when Israel will once again experience God's acts of salvation (48:20-21). Isaiah's explicit reference to the water from the rock is a significant clue that his anticipation of abundant water in the new age is rooted in Exodus typology. . . . Isaiah's unique contribution is his frequent mention of this blessing and the clarity with which he links this abundant water with the outpouring of the Spirit in the new age. Thirst, water, hunger, bread, light, and Spirit are all significant elements in Isaiah's Exodus typology, which anticipates the new age. These elements make Isaiah's expectation of abundant water in the new age a likely bridge between the events of the Exodus and the rivers of water that Jesus offers in John 7:37-39. (163–64)

Hoskins then connects this tradition with Zechariah 14:8 and the waters flowing out of the temple. The water of the Tabernacles Feast both remembers and anticipates the new age where water flows out of the temple (Ezek 47:1-12; Rev 22:1-5).

Hodges (239) describes John 7:37 as "One of the most dramatic statements ever made by the Lord Jesus Christ." Vanier (136) cites as its parallel Jesus' invitation in Matthew 11:28: "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy burdened and I will give you rest." Both texts are joyful welcoming words to those weary and thirsty.

The exposition of this text cites numerous OT texts utilizing water imagery (Pss 36:9-10; 46:4; Isa 48:21-22; 55:1-3; 58:11; Ezek 47:1-12; Zech 14:8, as well as the riven rock of Num 20:7-13 or "miracle well" in Num 21:16-20). Others have been suggested also (Exod 17:5-6; Ps 78:15-16; Prov 4:23; 5:15; 18:4, from the wisdom tradition; Isa 12:3; Zech 13:1; Sir 24:30-33). For Zechariah 14:6-8, St. J. Thackeray says:

an unfailling water-supply and perpetual daylight inevitably recall the Water-drawing and the Illumination. Nor can we fail to note with reverence that it is just these two ideas—Water and Light—which the greatest Visitor to the feast, fastens on and applies to Himself. (cited by Kerr: 240)

The imagery of these OT texts certainly lies behind the great passage of Revelation 22:1-2, in which the “river of the water of life” flows

from the throne of God, and of the Lamb  
through the middle of the street of the city.  
On either side of the river is the tree of life  
with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month;  
and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

### **Knowledge and Obedience**

Moberly quotes from von Rad’s *Wisdom in Israel*:

There is no knowledge [of God] which does not, before long, throw the one who seeks the knowledge back upon the question of his self-knowledge and his self-understanding . . . The thesis that all human knowledge comes back to the question about commitment to God is a statement of penetrating perspicacity. It has, of course, been so worn by centuries of Christian teaching that it has to be seen anew in all its provocative pungency . . . It contains in a nutshell the whole Israelite history of knowledge. (von Rad: 67; Moberly: 256)

Anabaptists frequently gave their lives in obedience to sharing resources, *willing to know and do God’s will* in their everyday lifestyles (see 1998 articles by Umble, Roth, and Sprunger).

## John 8

### Truth on Trial: Jesus, the Pharisees, and the Jews

#### Including John 7:53–8:11 in John’s Gospel and Commentary

Bultmann and Barrett do not include this passage in their commentaries. O’Day, Schnackenburg, and Brown include it because it is in our canon. In different Greek manuscripts the passage is placed in numerous different locations. Keith contends for Johannine originality versus Rius-Camp who argues it is a Markan composition, placed originally after Mark 12:12. The story “settled,” however, where it is now, in John 8 [*Textual Variants*]. See also Metzger’s extended discussion of the textual issues (1994: 187–89).

Why did it enter into the canon at all? As the Western church relaxed its disciplinary rules in the fourth century, it found this story circulating in oral tradition and congruent with the church’s polity, expressing the need to forgive sinners, even of major sins. Or the story could have been a compromise. Yes, the church forgives sin, but also expects “sin no more.” Rarely did Anabaptists refer to this text. Hubmaier uses it to show the difference between church and state in the right to prosecute: Christ uses his authority to save (cf. John 3:17), not judge—the state’s prerogative (Pipkin and Yoder 1989: 506).

The rationale for placing this oral tradition between chapters 7 and 8 is that it continues a theme in John 7: the right use and understanding of Moses’ law (v. 19). It illustrates right judgment in use of the law, in contrast to erroneous judgment of *the Jews* (7:24) or their ignoring the law to prosecute Jesus (7:49-51) when it suited their political interests. Nicodemus calls for a proper legal hearing. The story in 7:53–8:11 lacks due legal process. The witnesses are not credible; none include accusation of the man also involved in the alleged crime! Since the story hinges on the judgment of stoning, and chapter 8 ends with *the Jews* ready to stone Jesus, it may be that *stoning* was the hook-word between the story and the narrative. What *the Jews* wanted to do to the woman they also wanted to do to Jesus without due legal process.

Similar themes between 8:1-11 and 8:12-59 may also contribute to the early church’s placement here of this story from the oral tradition of what Jesus did and said. First, in verses 10-11 the verb *condemn* (*katakrino*), similar to *judge* (*krino*) in 8:15-16 and 26, provides thought continuity. Second, *freedom from sin* is implied in 8:11. In verses 31-36 Jesus develops this point in relation to sin and *truth* that sets free. It may be a hook between the story and the narrative that led the early church to this location for the story. Third, while the word for *accuse* (*katagorein*) in verses 6 and 11 does not appear in 8:12-59, the narrative consists of accusation followed by counter-accusation. The word that occurs in verses 37 and 40 is *kill* (*apokteinai*), and the

narrative ends with *the Jews picking up stones to throw at him*. These three points together provide thematic links between the story and John’s narrative, likely leading the later church to place the story where it is. Also, *scribes and Pharisees* bring the woman to Jesus (v. 3); in 8:13 *Pharisees* initiate the dispute with Jesus, though later this shifts to *the Jews* (vv. 31, 48).

Belousek (380) considers this narrative, together with Paul’s understanding of the cross, as foundational to biblical teaching against capital punishment. Jesus might have appealed to OT law (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22-24) where “the death penalty is appropriate for this sin.” He could have demanded the woman to repent and then forgive her (*ibid.*). But he did none of these, though he does warn her to repent (8:11). He “releases her from judgment *before* she has done [or said] anything to show repentance. Jesus’ ruling is not based on the mitigating factor of the sinner’s repentance” (380). Jesus takes the OT teaching regarding two or three witnesses seriously, and invites such accusation, but only from those without sin! Jesus’ response exposes the truth that none is without sin, and thereby puts the legal judgment for the death penalty, which he in principle did not repeal, “beyond human reach” (383). Belousek counters objections to this interpretation and then correlatively exposites the cross of Christ as “the death penalty crucified” (390–402; also in his 2012 book: 474-88).

### **Adam Tice: Text Study of John 8 Analysis of John 8:12-59**

Three mini trial narratives, each with an opening statement, two organizing questions, and a verdict, progressing from acquittal, to affirmation, to death sentence. Or three charges, with separate consequences.

#### **Again Jesus spoke to them . . .**

*Opening statement (echoes John 1:12): I am the light of the world . . .*

**Accusation:** Invalid testimony (v. 13) (see 5:31)  
**Response:** Valid because I said so.  
**Counter accusation:** *You judge by human standards.* (v. 15)

**Accusation:** *Where is your Father?* (v. 19)  
**Counter accusation:** *You know neither me nor my father.* (v. 19b)

**Verdict: Acquittal—hour had not yet come.** (v. 20)

#### **Again he said to them . . .**

*Opening statement: I am going away . . . you cannot come.* (v. 21)

**Accusation:** Is he going to kill himself? What does he mean? (v. 22)

Response: *You are from below, I am from above.* (v. 23)  
 Counter accusation: *You will die in your sins.* (v. 24)

**Accusation:** *Who are you?* (v. 25)  
 Counter accusation: *Why do I speak with you at all?* (vv. 25b-26)

Closing statement: *They did not understand.* (v. 27)

Closing statement: *Son of man . . .* (vv. 26-29)

**Verdict: Many believed.** (v. 30)

### **Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him . . .**

*Opening statement: The truth will make you free.* (vv. 31-32)

**Accusation:** What do you mean free? (v. 33)  
 Response: *Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.* (v. 34)  
 Counter accusation: You're looking to kill me. (v. 37)

Protest: *Abraham is our father.* (v. 39)  
 Counter accusation: *If you were Abraham's children, you would . . .* (vv. 39b-41)

Protest: God is our father. (v. 41b)  
 Response: *If God were your Father, you would love me . . .* (v. 42)  
 Counter accusation: You can't accept my word; your father is the devil. (vv. 43-47)

**Accusation:** You are a Samaritan and you have a demon. (v. 48)  
 Response: Nope . . . but *whoever keeps my word will never see death.* (vv. 49-51)

Protest: *Now we know you have a demon . . . Who do you claim to be?"* (vv. 52-53)  
 Response: glory, testimony, Abraham (vv. 54-56)

Protest: You have seen Abraham? (v. 57)  
 Response: *Before Abraham was, I AM.* (v. 58)

**Verdict: Stoning.**

### **Wider NT View on Jews' Relation to Christians and Vice Versa**

I quote here a portion of "The Bible and Israel" (Swartley 2007: 179–81, modified), which in turn quotes from Neuhaus's article in *Jews and Christians*:

In the quest to understand, respect for each other is assumed; dialogue may be helpful, but relationship is essential . . . , a point stressed especially by Neuhaus: "When we Christians do not walk together with Jews, we are in danger of regressing to the paganism from which we emerged" (71; and I add, the paganism of our environment in today's increasingly pluralist . . . world). In valuing relationship Christians and Jews complement each other, keep the other honest in their distinctive vocations, and remind the other of

the one God they worship. Jews keep Christians from idolatry; and Christians keep Jews from election-*hybris*. Both are messianic: one says Jesus Christ; the other, coming.

#### The Olive Tree, for the Healing of the Nations

Paul's choice of the *olive tree* as the metaphor to describe the relationship between Jews and Christian believers is most fitting. Olive oil was valued for its healing properties and was used for healing, as it is also today. It is striking that Paul employs this imagery just before speaking about the incoming of the *full number* of Gentiles, and thus *all Israel will be saved* (Rom 11:25-26). This does not mean every single Gentile or Israelite; these terms are corporate. Paul speaks about a "fullness" of both, determined by belief of both. First is the Gentile inclusion, and this in turn provokes Jewish belief. *All Israel* seems to be used here not ethnically, of Jews, but of the fullness of both groups, incorporated into God's covenant made first with Abraham. In this conception of the relationship and unity of the two peoples—actually *Gentiles* are not a people until thus incorporated, and then they cease to be Gentiles in the proper sense of the word—Paul declares, lest it be forgotten, that "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (11:29). At the same time, Paul makes it absolutely clear that entry into or continued standing in God's election is by grace and mercy, for both Jew and Gentile. Only by remembering this point will people of both origins relate to each other and live together in unity and peace. Paul's letters as a whole function specifically to keep this calling before the nascent churches composed of Jewish and Gentile Christians.

What then of Christian mission in relation to Jewish people? Herberg says, "No proselytizing," and I agree. But that does not fence Christian believers from *mission*. The moving account of Christian presence in Israel, as narrated by Roy Kreider, demonstrates this point. Any notion of mission must begin with God, with *missio Dei*. If indeed mutuality between Jews and Christians is to flourish as part of God's mission for both, then Christians and Jews need to be in life-relationship, which too often does not happen, at least not in mutually strengthening ways. By this I do not mean simply "dialogue," but life relationships. If in that relationship one sibling embraces the faith-eyes of the other, a Christian embracing Judaism as sometimes happens, or a Jew embracing Jesus as Messiah, as happened dramatically at times in the Kreider story, then again we can speak only of God's grace and God's mission.

With Paul we bow humbly before the inscrutable ways of God:

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

"For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"

"Or who has given a gift to him, to receive a gift in return?"

For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be the glory forever. Amen. (Rom 11:33-36)

#### Teaching/preaching starters, as suggested by Adam Tice, 2006 AMBS student:

If I were to preach this text [John 8:13-59] (God help me) I would focus on Jesus' self-revelation, especially his I AM statements. These are what are at stake in the passage. Either he is God, or he is a blasphemer. Regarding the potential animosity sensed by a Jewish person, I would stress that Jesus was not an evangelist in this situation. His teaching here would have offended anyone who heard and could not accept his words. His audience happened to be Jewish. He spoke in language they would understand, and he provoked them within their own tradition.

The interesting thing about darkness is how well we seem to adapt to it. If we are in darkness for a long time, our eyes adjust and we act based upon the things we are able to see. When I was in Cote d'Ivoire for Goshen College's Study Service Term, I once missed a cab and was stuck walking five miles with a stranger on a dirt road through the forest. It had rained the night before, and there were potholes big enough to get a car stuck in (as in fact had happened on my way to the village I got stranded in.) Soon after we started walking, it became dark. There was no moon, only stars in the sky. We had to walk carefully to avoid falling into one of the great puddles. We had a very limited view of the world around us. We could see the edge of the road where the forest began. We could hear monkeys and frogs chattering in the woods around us. I learned to concentrate my sight on the ground immediately in front of me—I could catch the reflection of the stars in the puddles just before I would step into them. We were people walking in darkness. How much difference a flashlight would have made! We could have moved more quickly and more safely. We could have gotten a bit more of a sense of our surroundings. We could have cast our gaze a few more yards in front of our feet. And yet, how much more difference would the sun have made! The world would have been opened to us—beautiful and green, rather than deep blue and darker black. Fear would have been lifted, and vision restored. The sun would have given us a new worldview.

I am also reminded of an eye exam. The doctor put some text in front of my eyes. I read it easily—or so I thought. He then added light to demonstrate the difference between a 60 and a 100 watt bulb. Reading under the greater light was markedly easier—I hadn't even noticed a strain until it was gone. Such is living without light.

## John 9

### Structural Analyses

The chapter readily lends itself to dramatic presentation (Brant) in which “the principle of duality” puts only two characters (or groups) on stage in each successive scene (Culpepper 1998: 174). Most commentators view the narrative in seven scenes. But to respect having only two characters (or groups) on stage in each successive scene, eight scenes would be required instead of seven scenes (Culpepper; Howard-Brook, 1994). The characters in verses 6-7 differ from those in verses 1-5 (which Howard-Brook recognizes but which Culpepper lumps together) and verses 8-17 consists of two character groups (which Culpepper recognizes but Howard-Brook lumps together; see the BCBC Commentary also). The seven-stage chiasm puts the interrogation of the parents at the center, which highlights their refusal (*crypto*-believers?) to publicly confess the truth.

Another outline that respects only two character (groups) in each scene, omitted from the commentary because of its complexity, has two chiasms, with the last a doublet. Lines 1, 3, and 5 are oriented to the Pharisees; lines 2 and 4 highlight the contrast between the parents’ and the blind man’s responses (one *crypto*-believer and the other, a bold confessing believer). This enables 9:24-34 to function as the center of the second chiasm exposing the Pharisees’ unbelief, while also highlighting the center of the second doublet as the important christological heart of the narrative: Jesus’ identity with God and the blind-now-seeing man’s worship of Jesus. This structurally matches the second line of the entire narrative. This arrangement has only two persons (groups) on the stage at one time. It also aids reflection on the interplay of the various parts of this rich narrative.

- a Jesus and his disciples discuss why the man is blind—*who sinned?* (9:1-5)
  - b Jesus heals the blind man. (9:6-7)
- a’ The neighbors quiz the blind man. (9:8-12)
  
- a The Pharisees interrogate the blind man. (9:13-17)
  - b *The Jews* interrogate the blind man’s parents. (9:18-23)
- a’ (in doublet) *They* interrogate the blind man a second time—*this man is a sinner.* (9:24-34)
  - b’ Jesus leads the blind man to christological sight. (9:35-39)
- a” Jesus and the Pharisees on blindness—*your sin remains.* (9:40-41)

### The Siloam Pool

At the 2009 meeting of the SBL Gary Burge presented an excellent paper, “Revisiting the Johannine Water Motif: Jesus, Ritual Purification and the Pool of Siloam in John 9.” He draws on the contributions of von Wahlde 2009 and Herschel Shanks 2005.

### **The Blind Man on the Offensive!**

As O'Day (1995: 659) aptly puts it:

The mock earnestness of the man's response in v. 27 is a consummate example of Johannine ironic understatement, as he cleverly turns the authorities' inquiries against them. For the first time in this series of interrogations, the Jewish authorities become the interrogatees, rather than the interrogators (v. 27*b-c*). The staged guilelessness of the man's final question in v. 27*c* is calculated to taunt the authorities. One can imagine the pleasure with which the audacity of the man's question would be read by a community who saw its own story being played out in these verses.

Or, as Bernard says, "He could not refrain from this ironical gibe, which he must have known would irritate the Pharisees" (335).

### **Drama in the Gospels**

In light of Brant's insights on John, we note the Gospel of Mark also has dramatic features, as Whitney Shiner's 2003 book on Mark (subtitled *First-Century Performance of Mark*) has persuasively argued. *Mark: The Way for All Nations* (Swartley 1979/81; 1999) grew out of vignettes of oral performance integrated with exposition. The drama accompanying the exposition was composed by Urie Bender (see *To Walk in the Way*). With dramatic performance, the Gospel came alive in an unexpected and highly communicative manner. Also, Revelation appears liturgically structured so that its message readily comes to life through its many choirs of praise to God and to the Lamb (Swartley 2006: n51, which cites also Otto Piper, Howard-Brook and Gwyther, Vanni, Ruiz, and L. Thompson—see my 2006 bibliography; for a worship liturgy see Swartley 2006: 345–55 and 2007: 239–62, a longer NRSV version).

### **The Sin/Sinner Motif in John 9 and Luke 15**

Chapter 9 has striking affinity to Luke 15. Sin/sinned/sinners is a major motif of each chapter, with Luke 15:1, 7, 10, 18, 21 the key verses. The prodigal son comes to acknowledge himself a sinner (vv. 18, 21), which contrasts to the "elder brother" who says, "I have never disobeyed" (v. 29c). The matching roles are:

#### John 9

The man born blind

The Pharisees/ "Jews"

#### Luke 15

The lost sheep, coin, son

The elder brother, who mirrors the accusers in 15:2

Luke 15 ends with an emphasis of rejoicing and celebrating because the lost son is now found (cf. vv. 7, 10). The inference, though, in the last paragraph is that the elder brother who sees himself always in the right is *blind*, in John 9:41 idiom, because he cannot rejoice over the restoration of

his younger brother, just as the Pharisees /“Jews” could not rejoice over the blind man’s receiving the gift of sight from Jesus.

Numerous parables of Jesus are also *reversal* stories with surprise twists, such as the banquet parable in Luke 14:15-24 and the workers in the vineyard (Matt 20:16). Both John 9 and Luke 15 end with similar “reversals.” The religious leaders turn out to be those blind in John 9 while in Luke 15 the “good” elder son is the one “lost.” The element of *shock* is common to these stories. The gospel brings healing, salvation, and hope not to the righteous, but to the sick, blind, and sinners. A different treatment of *sin* appears in Matthew 18, where sin is related to what causes offense to others in the community of faith (the text, vv. 18:15-18, prescribes a method to address such sin).

## **John 10**

### **Shepherds: True and False**

#### **Alternative Outline**

Du Rand's diagram (105) depicts well the interrelationship of the various parts of verses 1-21:

1-5	Imagery
6	Commentary: "Jews" do not understand
7-10	Explanation of the door
11-18	Explanation of the shepherd
19-21	Commentary: "Jews" divided

The first two units are linked together as discourse-thesis and response. The next two are linked as explanation of the first two, and the last is linked to the whole as summary statement regarding *the Jews*, harking back to Jesus' words in 9:39 and 41.

#### **Jesus' Retreat to Bethany**

Howard Brook joins 10:40-42 to chapter 11 and regards *at Bethany* a chiasm marker and inclusion for this unit that extends to 12:11 (see 11:1; 12:1; and the beginning of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem in 12:12). The *Bethany* of chapters 11 and 12 is near Jerusalem, not the one across Jordan (a distinction Howard-Brook recognizes). The narrator may intend the reader to see this entire unit as a Bethany unit, despite the different locations (see exposition on 11:1).

#### **OT Background to John 10**

Beutler (24–28) notes other OT texts that form the background to images and phrases in John 10, such as "I have called you by name" in Isaiah 43:1 for John 10:3b: *He calls his own sheep by name . . .* Numerous texts speak of God or the Lord as Shepherd and the people of God as sheep, often stressing God's care for and watching over the flock: Gen 48:15; 49:24; Pss 28:9; 74:1; 77:20; 78:52; 79:13; 80:1; 95:7; 100:3; Hos 5:4; Ezek 37:27 (28). The image of "sheep without a shepherd" occurs often also (Num 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17; Jth 11:19; Mark 6:34; Matt 9:36; Beutler: 27). Since the Tabernacles Festival remembers Israel's wilderness experience, the time Moses spent in the wilderness tending his father-in-law's sheep prepared him to shepherd the sheep the LORD redeemed from bondage.

*I Enoch* 89–90 is an engaging narrative of OT history in shepherd-sheep imagery. The vision begins with the flood of Noah's time, moves through Israel's sea-escape from Egypt, and recites the whole of Israel's history, including the destruction of the temple, Israel's exile, and the Maccabean revolt, to the time of the establishment of the messianic kingdom. The dream views

Israel's entire history in semi-allegorical form with the LORD as Lord of the sheep, the shepherd(s) as the leader(s) of the people—often errant—and the people as sheep, sometimes more than one flock—some *staying* near the shepherd leaders and others *straying*, rebelling against the Lord of the sheep. Throughout the dream wolves are ever seeking to devour the sheep. Israel's sojourn in the wilderness readily lends itself to vivid dream-imagery to depict sheep that wander into other loyalties and do not listen to their good shepherds and the Lord of the sheep, as 89:33 illustrates: "So the Lord of the sheep became angry at them with great wrath; and that sheep [Moses] became aware of it, and having descended from the summit of the rock, came to the sheep, and found that the majority of them had been blinded in their eyes and gone astray" (Charlesworth: 1.66).

**Overview of John 11–12**

The usual discourse, then sign pattern is broken. Chapter 11 integrates sign and discourse in Jesus' interchange with his disciples and Martha (11:7-27), followed by Lazarus's resurrection, and then more discourse. Burge says chapter 11 is also different from chapters 2–10 in that it is no longer interconnected with a Jewish festival or institution. But is this true, since 11:55 through chapter 12 is temporally located with Passover (designated in 11:55 and 12:1; cf. 13:1)? Miyazaki proposes that John 11–20 (21) forms the last major division of the Gospel, with chapters 11 and 20(–21) on resurrection, book-ending the division.

## John 11:1–12:11

### Jesus' Climactic Sign: Lazarus' Death, Raising, and Aftermath

#### Martha's Confession

Most commentators (Schnackenburg: 2.328; Lindars 1972: 396; Bultmann: 404) regard Martha's faith confession most significant, analogous to Peter's in the Synoptics. Authors addressing the role of women in John make the same point (Brown: 693–94; Schneiders 2003:106). Schneiders and Barrett (397) regard it also as a baptismal creed for the Johannine community. But Lee (1994: 205–6) is on target in saying that its significance must be sought in its narrative context, rather than imposing the notion of a baptismal creed.

#### Jesus' Agitated Spirit

Additional reasons for Jesus' agitation in this scene have been proposed, including Sproston North's recent explanation that his anger is connected to his irritation at the religious leaders' reaction to the extravagant anointing of Jesus (Mark 14:1-8), which however comes only in the next chapter in John (Esler and Piper: 115). Dorothy Lee (1994: 208–10) in her thorough study rejects most explanations as failed efforts to explain Jesus' response, since in verse 15 Jesus says to his disciples that he is *glad* when they inform him *Lazarus is dead*. Thus, she argues, Jesus' emotional response is not because of sympathy with others' weeping, since he did not express sympathy earlier when he met the sisters. The two emotional verbs have modifiers that refer action to himself, *in spirit* (*tō pneumati*) and *himself* (*heauton*). Lee argues that the feelings are internal, not externally directed (210). She then contends that “it is likely that Jesus' [own] approaching death provides the key to his anger and distress. . . . Jesus' distress relates symbolically [in Lazarus's situation] to his impending death and resurrection” (211–12). Jesus' response becomes comprehensible when we connect his emotional responses here with later uses of the word *troubled* (*tarrasō*, v. 34). In 12:27 Jesus uses the same word to describe his disposition as he faces the passion: *Now my soul is troubled*. In 13:21 Jesus expresses again this emotion as he announces his betrayal by one of the disciples.

Two more uses are pertinent, though secondary to those she identifies, since they relate to the disciples' emotion as they face Jesus' death and departure. After telling Peter *you cannot follow me now* (13:36), Jesus comforts the disciples' distress, *Do not let your hearts be troubled* (14:1). Similarly, in instructing his disciples about his imminent departure, Jesus promises them peace, and says, *Let not your hearts be troubled* (14:27c). After citing the 12:27 and 13:21 texts Lee says, “May it not be that Jesus' distress [at 11:34] arises out of the sudden recognition of the approaching ‘hour’ of [his] death, precisely at the point of raising Lazarus from the dead?” (1994:

211). She explains the combination of joy (v. 11) and intense distress by the image of childbirth, which occurs in 16:21. The labor pains of his death yield to the joy of the resurrection (211). Lee interprets Lazarus's death and raising symbolically prefiguring Jesus' own.

Further, by joining Ridderbos' and Brown's explanation of Jesus' anguish—even anger—in facing Satan's grip on humanity through death with 12:27 and 13:21, this portion of John's Gospel reflects Jesus' Gethsemane struggle (cf. the synoptic Gospels' description). Jesus agonizes over his forthcoming passion, which the Lazarus event prefigures. Contra Ruprecht's demeaning of John saying that Jesus in 12:27-28 *mocks* Jesus' Gethsemane agony, John in chapters 11–12 also reflects agonizing, deep feeling, and *weeping* in facing the struggle that lies ahead for him. It puts 12:31 into cosmic perspective: Jesus is casting out (exorcist language) the ruler of this world (see commentary on 12:31). Through Lazarus's raising and Martha's confession the narrative also anticipates Jesus' victory in carrying forward his Father's gift of eternal life to all who believe now and in the future [*Eternal Life*].

### **Jewish Mourning Customs**

As Burge (2000: 315) describes, the formal mourning period was seven days. The scene of loud crying, even wailing, was normal (cf. Mark 5:38; Acts 8:2). The usual procedure of burial was putting the body into a rock-cut tomb, a cave room of about ten to fifteen feet square, in which burial preparations were made. The body was “laid in horizontally cut burial tunnels,” removed from the cave after one year of decomposition, then placed in a “burial box” (often limestone). The same cave-tomb could then be reused.

### **Structure of 11:47-57**

Vellanickal (217–18) and Dennis (55–57, who devotes his 350-page doctoral dissertation to vv. 47-53) differ with Stibbs. Stopping at verses 53 or 54 has its advantages but fails to see how verse 57 implements the plotting of the Council.

Vellanickal's analysis, which Dennis affirms, has three A, B, C units. Continuing to verse 57, however, the A unit has matched bookends, *the chief priests and the Pharisees*:

A The **chief priests and the Pharisees** . . . gathered . . . and said . . . (v. 47)

A<sup>1</sup> One of them, Caiaphas, who was **high priest** that year, said . . . (v. 49)

A<sup>2</sup> He said . . . being **high priest** that year . . . (v. 51)

A<sup>3</sup> From that day **they** took counsel how . . . to kill him. (v. 53)

A<sup>4</sup> The **chief priests and the Pharisees** had given orders . . . so that they might arrest him. (v. 57)

B What . . . for **this man** is performing many signs. (v. 47)

B<sup>1</sup> It is expedient . . . **one man should die** for the people. (v. 50)

B<sup>2</sup> That **Jesus should die** (v. 51b)

B<sup>3</sup> **Jesus . . . no longer walked among the Jews.** (v. 54)

C If we let . . . all will believe in him and the Romans will . . . **destroy . . . the nation** (v. 48)

C<sup>1</sup> For the people and that **the nation** should not perish (v. 50b)

C<sup>2</sup> for **the nation** . . . not for the **nation** only but that the children of God may be gathered into one (vv. 51b-52)

C<sup>3</sup> [**the nation**] goes to Passover to purify themselves . . . **looking for Jesus** (vv. 55-56a)

To get the flow of the text, read the first strophe in each unit in order, then the second, then the third, and finally the fourth (only unit A with fifth level). Strophe A is rounded off by A<sup>4</sup> with the chief priests and the Pharisees in operative mode, to complete the plot that they had the Council devise.

### **Destruction and Restoration**

Much NT literature emphasizes that Jesus understood his mission as the restoration of Israel, calling the nation to repentance before it suffers doom. N. T. Wright (2006) and E. P. Sanders largely agree on this point. Matthew 10:5 is cited to clinch this point. The text in 11:48-52 uses two key terms related to restoration, gathering together “the dispersed (*synagō*) of God,” and fear that the nation will be destroyed (*apollymi*). The term *destroy* is used several times in John, in the key texts of 2:19; 11:50; and 10:10:

- 11:50: *You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed.*
- 2:19: *Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*
- 10:10: *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.*

The word may also be translated “perish,” in:

- 3:16: *so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life* (also in 6:28).
- 6:27: *Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life.*

It may also be translated “lost,” as in 6:12b; 6:39; 12:39 with Judas the exception to nothing being lost, again in 17:12b and 18:9.

While each set of uses is significant in John’s theological world, we focus on the first set: the destruction of the nation, the temple, or the people. Numerous scholars see 11:52 pointing to the ingathering of Israel. Both themes lace the OT prophetic writings, especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Swartley 2007: “The Bible and Israel,” 155–68). The OT prophets view Israel’s

restoration as a *second exodus* (Isa 11:11-16; 27:12-13; 40:1-5; 51:9-11; Jer 16:14-15; 23:7-8; 31:31-32; 32:20-21; 36–39; Zech 10:10-11; Bar 5:1-9; 1QS 8:13-15; 188, n.330, in Dennis).

In 11:50 and 52, *destroy* and *gather together* are linked. The two terms converge also in 6:12 where loaves of broken bread are *gathered* so none *perish*. In 4:36 the harvest is to be *gathered*. The wider use of *synagō* is associated with gathering together people, loaves or food, or straying sheep. Dennis's lengthy study *Jesus' Death as the Gathering of the True Israel* argues for the restoration of Israel as one of John's key thematic emphases, significant in light of Israel's dispersion in AD 70. He appeals to John 6, with the *gathering up* of *twelve* baskets of bread fragments, and the chapter's conclusion identifying Jesus' disciples as "the twelve." He appeals also to John 10: Jesus *laying down his life* for the sheep as well as the *gathering of other sheep*. The third is John 12:24-32 where the seed that dies bears much fruit (v. 24) and *the hour* of "casting out" the ruler of the world occurs, with drawing all to Jesus (vv. 31-32) (188–209).

Indeed John 11:48-52 may connect with the pain of the Jewish people over the *destruction* of the temple in AD 70 and the loss of the nation (*ethnos*, used in vv. 48, 50, 51, 52), as prophecy fulfilled. Those *gathered together* are the *dispersed children of God* (v. 52b). This, Dennis holds, refers to the Jewish people in *diaspora*. He recognizes, however, that most scholars assume "that the eschatological Israel in [John] is the soteriological unification of Jew and Gentile in Christ" (194). Most scholars regard Dennis's appeal as fanciful (Keener: 669, n9; Schnackenburg: 2.18; and Lindars 1972: 243). They don't accept a symbolic meaning in the *twelve baskets* of John 6.

While Dennis *may* be correct, texts like 12:20-23, along with the citations from Isaiah in 12:38-40, raise unsettling questions for Dennis's thesis. Just as Jesus' declaration in 2:21 that the temple to be raised in three days is not the physical building but *his body*, so the *children of God* in 11:52b—as well as in 1:12—signifies a broader connotation. The qualifying criterion in John for identity as *children of God* is *believing in his name* and *confessing that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God*. Both Jew and Gentile are invited. Those to be *gathered together* are those who *abide in Jesus* (15:1-6).

### **Jesus, Mary, and Judas**

Tom Thatcher comments perceptively on Jesus' word about Mary and Judas.

[Jesus'] curt imperative . . . is singular, directed to Judas: "You leave her alone" (*aphes autēn*). Mary's excess is justified, Jesus says, because she has saved this ointment for the special occasion of Christ's burial anointing. Since Mary is apparently unaware of Jesus' impending death, Jesus' remark functions not only as a prediction of what will happen to him but also as an indication of his authority to define her act of devotion—he knows even better than she does what she is doing and why. Mary's faith, if imperceptive, is

genuine; Judas is imperceptive and hypocritical; Jesus is fully aware of Judas's intentions and the impending results of this treachery. Both Mary and Judas will "prepare" for Jesus' burial, and he understands their respective roles in that drama even better than they do. (2009: xv)

### **Menno on the Resurrection**

Jesus' classic statement on resurrection in 11:25 is cited by Menno Simons as a greeting in his "Pastoral Letter to the Amsterdam Church, 1558" (Wenger, ed., 1057). It figures significantly in the *Martyrs Mirror*. The reference is cited (407) along with many others in a "Confession of Faith, Article xxxi" (406–7). The confession concludes the sixteenth-century martyr witnesses to God's faithfulness in and through martyrdom (373–410; 11:27 is noted in Article xiv of the "Confession," 388). This reference is cited with many other texts by Thomas van Imbroeck in his letter written from prison to his wife and Christian brothers and sisters (579), and in another letter written by Hans Bret and sent to his brother David, living abroad and not yet come to faith (1041–42). Similarly, Martha's confession in 11:27 is cited by a group of twelve named Anabaptist martyrs in their defense statement. One of these later died in prison, seven "were burned alive before Easter, their mouths having been screwed together with screws," and another four died in like manner on May 20, 1569 (766–69, citation on 769). The reference is cited also in a defense drawn up (Oct. 8, 1626) by Anabaptists against the Edict of Deventer against Mennonists or Anabaptists (1106–8, reference on 1108).

**John 12:12-50**  
**The Final Scene in Jesus' Public Ministry**

**John's Quotations (Ps 118:25-27 and Zech 9:9-10) for Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem**

I italicize the phrases that appear in John:

*Save us [Hosanna], we beseech you, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech you, give us success! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD. We bless you from the house of the LORD. The LORD is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.*

Rejoice greatly, *O daughter Zion!*  
 Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!  
*Lo, your king comes to you;*  
 triumphant and victorious is he,  
 humble and riding *on a donkey,*  
*on a colt,* the foal of a donkey.  
 He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim  
 and the war horse from Jerusalem;  
 and the battle bow shall be cut off,  
 and he shall command peace to the nations;  
 his dominion shall be from sea to sea,  
 and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Slight shifts and additions in John are significant: (1) *King of Israel* is added to the Psalm 118 text; (2) *Do not fear* replaces "Rejoice greatly"; (3) *sitting* on a donkey replaces "riding." The omissions are startling as well: (4) "triumphant and victorious is he"—imagery possibly of military conquest but followed by—"humble and riding . . ."; and (5) "he shall command peace to the nations . . ." (plus related imagery).

Points 1, 2, and 5 would seem to confirm Dennis's thesis that John envisions Jesus' restoration of only Israel. Salvation for the nations, he says, is not an essential part of Johannine theology. If this were the only unit to consider, his thesis might stand, and then the import of 11:52, *not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God*, would be limited to the Israelite dispersion, as Dennis contends. But the event reported right after this Palm Sunday royal entry, Greeks coming to see Jesus, controverts Dennis's thesis.

But there is another way to read the narrative, which we can learn from Dorothy Jean Weaver's analysis of Matthew on a similar topic. In Matthew 10 Jesus sends out his disciples on a missionary trip to Israel only, but there is no report of their return. Weaver proposes that this open ending to the disciples' mission literarily anticipates Jesus' great commission in Matthew 28:16-20. The commission resumes and leaves ever open the ongoing *sending* of the disciples into mission (Weaver: 124-53). Similarly, here in John, the Greeks coming to see Jesus anticipates

Jesus' commissioning of his disciples in 20:19-23, a text that has much affinity with John 4, where the gospel goes to Samaritans and Gentiles (Swartley 2006: 304–20).

### **Cultural Perspective of Wheat Falling into the Ground**

Drawing from Anthony Gittins's work, Howard-Brook offers a description of the task of growing domesticated wheat in the first century. There were two kinds of wheat in Jesus' time. First, wild wheat (also known as "emmer" wheat) was a thin crop spread by the wind and gathered by nomadic peoples. This wheat had little economic or nutritional value. Second, domesticated wheat offered the potential of bountiful crops. However, this wheat had a heavy and tight head/kernel that required breaking up before seeding. This was a task for women, to break up the wheat and plant it. In this way, wheat was able to fall to the ground and "die." "Cereal cultivation has, in a unique way, been the legacy of women. . . . [It] demands knowledge of cycles and seasons, moons and meteorology, . . . knowledge and activities originating with and residing in women par excellence" (Gittins, in Howard-Brook 1994: 280). Howard-Brook claims that this description of women's work becomes a feminine metaphor for mission and discipleship, for often through history it has been "feminine" qualities that are active in spreading the gospel through both word and deed (1994: 279–80).

### **Debate Regarding Jesus' Real Suffering**

Käsemann denies any emphasis in John on Jesus' real suffering and death. Others follow suit, finding Jesus' death in John as little more than his departure. Tuckett's description of John's view of Jesus' humanity, for example, is all too typical. Stressing that John emphasizes Jesus' divinity, he treats the matter of Jesus' suffering as minimal:

John describes what appears to be a vestige of the agony scene in Gethsemane (12:27); but in John there seems to be no real agony on Jesus' part and Jesus displays unbounded and unquestioning confidence in God. So too, in the account of Jesus' actual death, little if anything is made of Jesus' suffering. (152)

Another tack in minimizing Jesus' agony is illustrated by G. C. Nicholson, who emphasizes Jesus' resoluteness as he goes to the cross and believes that his being "troubled" holds no fear and hesitation on Jesus' part, but rather a concern for the faithfulness of his disciples (in Carson: 439). Reflecting in part Käsemann's view, Ashton regards the passion in John as a misnomer: "Jesus controls and orchestrates the whole performance" (2007: 464). Thus the reader "is to *see past* the physical reality of Jesus' death to its true significance: the reascent of the Son of Man to his true home in heaven" (471). All these sentiments downplay Jesus' teaching in 12:24 and the three

times in chapters 11–13, including 12:27, when Jesus in his spirit agonizes over the imminent crisis leading to his suffering and death.

### **John's Christology**

A key emphasis in Schnackenburg is John's image of being "lifted up [as a] symbol full of meaning for the believing beholder." Its theological significance embraces four crucial points (399–400):

1. A Christological statement of Jesus' dignity and a soteriological promise.
2. The cross is the means by which Jesus' kingship is proclaimed before the world.
3. The purpose of "being lifted up" is the salvation of all people (12:32).
4. The *now* (*nun*) of 12:23 (my hour has *now* come) is not chronological, but theological, the *kairos* time for the battle between light and darkness. The hour of Jesus' suffering is also the hour of his glorification (7:30; 8:20; also 17:1; cf. 13:1 with the *nun* of 13:31).

A second level of analysis focuses on "glorify" and "glorification."

- a. In John, "Jesus' saving work . . . continues and is completed in the action of Christ with God through the Spirit, in the disciples" (402). "The hour in which the Son 'glorifies' God and is glorified by him (13:31) is the fullest revelation of the glory of God . . . 'glorification' . . . takes place symbolically in his works and with full effect in his lifting up, under the concept of the revelation of God's glory" (402).
- b. Most striking, in "glorification" something happens not just to Jesus, but to God also. Jesus glorifies his Father on earth, and in return the Father is glorified in him (17:4–5). Jesus acquires the power to give people life at the hour of his glorification (403).
- c. Jesus "wins back the glory in the presence of the Father, which he possessed before the foundation of the world" (17:5, 24) (404).
- d. John "has turned the process of cross followed by resurrection, humiliation followed by exaltation, into a single process in which apparent humiliation is already exaltation and the outward degradation of Jesus [is] in reality his glorification" (408).

"The glorified Christ speaks in the earthly Jesus. The presentation of the 'story of Jesus' thus in itself eliminates the gulf between the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ of the preaching of faith" (409).

### **"Lifted Up" Imagery: from *snake* to *salvation* (George Brunk III's sermon, condensed and modified)**

Just as in the old story the agent of evil, the serpent, when lifted up, becomes the means of healing, so in the new story an agent of shame, the cross, becomes the instrument of salvation and exaltation. Equally important is how a person connects with the one lifted up to receive eternal life. John doesn't speak of *looking* at the object raised on a pole, but

he speaks, in Jesus' words, of believing in the Son of Man. In 12:31 Jesus explains the meaning of his imminent death: *Now the ruler of this world will be driven out.* The mother of all serpents is given the chase. This is the external victory of the cross. The internal benefit is Jesus' promise in imagery closer to the older story: *When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself.* The cross is transformative. With the word *draw* Jesus gives new meaning to the interaction between those "bitten" and the saving agent—not just eye contact but a powerful draw. *Draw* implies attraction. In John's Gospel to *see* Jesus is to be drawn into fellowship with and imitate the host [e.g., footwashing in ch. 13]. Jesus' attracting bears the fruit of life abundant, indeed eternal life.

"Drawing" yields more than attraction: in *seeing* Jesus they are drawn into *identification*, a profound dynamic that unites the Moses story and the Jesus story. A two-way identification occurs. The bronze serpent represents the saving agent's identification with the problem: *serpents*. The solution participates in the problem. The same is true with Christ. "Born in human likeness" and "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Paul), Christ identifies with our plight under every form of serpentine threat to God's purpose for our lives. Paul, in saying Christ has become a curse for us to free us from curse, boldly and analogically echoes the old serpent story: "For our sake God made Christ to be sin who knew no sin" (2 Cor 5:21). The cross is the best illustration of homeopathy, for Christ suffers the sickness of the world in order to heal its sickness (John 3:14-16).

Identification entails its complement. If the saving one identifies with the plight of humanity, those in distress ("bitten") also identify with the saving agent. We are drawn into a relationship, where sin is exchanged for the healing power of the Savior, where the sins of the unrighteous are exchanged for the virtues of the Righteous One. Identifying with our Savior, sin's venom is drawn out of our lives.

### Welcoming Outsiders

John 12:20-23 exhorts the church to open its doors to welcome outsiders.

It has become commonplace to say that in America, 11:00 a.m. on Sunday is the most segregated hour of the week. If we do not understand the radical mandate of Jesus or his willingness to take the social risk of being with Greeks *in the Jerusalem temple*, we do not comprehend Jesus' extreme love for the world. At the same time, we have to understand the risk. After hearing about the Greeks, Jesus immediately speaks of sacrifice and the cross. The same risks pertain to us who likewise see Jesus' vision and take a parallel social risk of being with "Greeks" *in the local evangelical church*. (Burge 2000: 359)

## **John 13** **Jesus Begins His Farewell**

### **New Testament Scholars on Footwashing as Cleansing from Postbaptismal Sin:**

If footwashing was a regular rite in the Johannine communities, it could easily have been understood as harking back to baptism and might even have played a role in the forgiveness of postbaptismal sin. Since the disciples have been baptized, they do not need another complete bath. (Thomas: 154; Countryman: 88)

G. Richter (200) presents footwashing's significance for Peter:

For the evangelist this scene is a Christological sign (*sēmeion*) which can be recognized only after Easter when the Spirit is present. The dishonor of the cross is foreshadowed by Jesus when he performs the task of a slave at the washing of feet . . . Peter sees this task as inconsistent with the dignity of Jesus; his protest is not disobedience, pride, or unwillingness to see salvation in lowliness. He simply speaks as one who does not know. When he learns his salvation depends on this washing, he readily accepts.

### **Meaning of Jesus' Footwashing as Example**

#### **John 15:12-15**

*"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father."*

#### **John 15:20-21a; 16:2**

*"Remember the word that I said to you, 'Servants are not greater than their master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, . . . Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God."*

#### **John 21:18-19** (addressed to Peter)

*"Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."*

Linking humble service to giving one's life, with Jesus as exemplar, occurs also in Mark 10:45, "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (cf. Weiss: 299–300). Luke combines these themes in 22:24-27, embedded in Luke's distinctive teaching (vv. 28-38) that anticipates Jesus' agony facing the cross. In Luke Jesus also engages Peter with special concern (22:31-34), similar to the Jesus-Peter conversations that book-end John 13. Jesus' death and what that means for his disciples permeates all the canonical

Gospels. The footwashing anticipates Jesus' death: "Jesus conveys to his disciples the meaning of his death by washing their feet" (Reid: 46).

### **Jesus' Use of *I AM* in 13:19**

This self-revelation harks back to 6:20, where Jesus earlier disclosed himself as *I AM* to the disciples. His first such disclosure was to the Samaritan woman (4:26), then to the disciples at sea (6:20), and next to the accusing "Jews" (8:59). This disclosure to his disciples again evokes the divine being (Exod 3:13-15), this time in the context of his imminent death, signaled by his forecast that one among them would hand him over to the authorities seeking his life.

### **Portrait of Judas**

In Mark's narrative design Judas frames Jesus' preparation for his death (14:1-10). But in the larger Markan narrative, Jesus frames Judas. Jesus fulfills his God-given commission at his baptism (1:11), as Son of God confessed by Gentile lips before Jesus hanging on the cross (15:39), which, with the resurrection, becomes Jesus' ultimate means of deliverance from the powers of evil.

In Matthew, direct conversation between the two follows. Judas, now designated by the narrator as he "who betrayed him," says, "Is it I, Master?" Jesus replies, "You have said so." This is the same statement of multi-layered connotation Jesus speaks to Pilate regarding his kingship (Matt 27:11c; Mark 15:2c; Luke 23:3c). If the accent is put on *you*, then Jesus clearly attributes to both Judas and Pilate responsibility for their deeds. The brief conversation between Jesus and Judas in Matthew connotes kinship between them. Jesus addresses Judas as "Friend" as they meet in the garden (26:50). If the choice is between Judas as *Betrayer or Friend*, as Klassen puts it in his provocative book's subtitle, Matthew's account may lean toward *friend*. But should "friend" be taken at face value as Klassen takes it? Gardner (381, who cites 2 Sam 20:8-10 as parallel) regards "friend" as clearly ironic in tone, since "do what you are here to do" immediately follows. But Gardner's parallel would apply more to Judas's initiative in kissing Jesus and then turning him in, than it does to what Jesus says to Judas. I don't think Jesus' greeting Judas as "friend" is ironic. Thus, I'd say Matthew accentuates both of Klassen's title identifications: friend and betrayer. This comports with Jesus in John loving his disciples, even Judas, to the end—likely also washing his feet, and certainly having Judas at the supper, and dipping with him.

Only Matthew reports Judas's repentance for his action: "When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. He said, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' But they said, 'What

is that to us? See to it yourself” (27:3-4). Matthew alone narrates that Judas then threw “down the pieces of silver in the temple, and then went and hanged himself” (27:5). Then the chief priests use the “thirty pieces” to purchase “the potter’s field, called the Field of Blood to this day” (v. 7), understood as fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy (32:6-12; 18:2-3; cf. Zech 11:12-13). Luke, in Acts, says Judas’s end came by “falling headlong” in a field he bought, and that “he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out” (1:18). Details differ in these accounts. What is uniformly prominent, however, is Judas’s role in the passion narratives: he *hands Jesus over to the chief priests*. When the political dimension of the gospel narrative is taken into account, the term *traitor*, used in Luke 6:16, is appropriate. Luke accentuates the political import of Jesus’ ministry, so that in this case Judas’s *handing Jesus over* is an act where Judas changes sides, colluding with those seeking to kill Jesus.

While some writers see an increasing vilification of Judas with the passage of time, the matter is more complex. John, likely written last among the Gospels—though that is not certain—more explicitly intertwines Judas with the devil, already in 6:70-71. But Luke also says “Satan entered into Judas Iscariot” (22:3a). John emphasizes Jesus’ love for Judas three times in chapter 13, albeit in each case inferred: 13:1, *he loved them to the end*, which precedes immediately the statement that the devil had already cast it into Judas’s heart to hand Jesus over; Jesus’ apparent washing of Judas’s feet; and Jesus’ giving to Judas the dipped sop of bread at the meal. As Klassen recounts, the saga of Judas’s vilification in Christian history is long, deep, and sad, sometimes even fueling anti-Semitism (4–8, 17–24), a history that Klassen introduces under the title “The Human Need for Scapegoats” (17). Klassen also notes exceptions, Dorothy Sayers’s redeeming comment and the medievalist Dominican influential preacher, Vinzenz Ferrer (6–7), who emphasizes Judas’s repentance and then speaks of Jesus’ forgiveness of Judas. Many explanations of Judas’s motives have been advanced, some deepening the vilification and others stressing positive intention within the context of expecting Jesus to establish a kingdom that would crush Roman occupation. Judas intended to help Jesus do this, sooner rather than later. But whatever the explanations, all are speculative.

Klassen’s contribution, showing how each Gospel treats Judas, describing also recent scholarly efforts to respect the historical limits of knowledge in the face of this tragedy, are indeed helpful (28–176). But Klassen pursues a presumed “historical cipher” that lay behind the varied Gospel witnesses, thus negating or at least adjudicating the full canonical witness about Judas. Perhaps Judas did do what Jesus wanted in turning him over to the Sanhedrin, but the Gospels’ witness presents this as colluding with Jesus’ opponents, changing sides in Jesus’ mission to liberate from evil.

Judas's treasonous action raises several tough irresolvable theological questions. First, could not Jesus have prevented Judas's defection? In the synoptic Gospels Jesus frequently exorcizes demons from a variety of people. Why did he not do this for Judas? In Luke's parallel account, right after the Passover meal, we learn that Satan desired to have Peter, but Jesus prevented it through fervent prayer for Peter (Luke 22:31-32). Why did he not do the same for Judas?

Second, did God and Jesus allow this to happen to Judas to accomplish the redemptive plan? The answer must be yes, because John explains the "betrayal" as fulfillment of scriptural prophecy. This perplexing question is related to why God and Jesus allowed the cross as the means to redemption. Could not God have accomplished the redemptive plan some other way?

The current atonement debate centers on this issue (Weaver versus Shelton, e.g.). Was (Is) the cross, together with Judas's role of defection, essential to the divine redemptive purpose? Is this the inevitably necessary way for human sin to be fully exposed (Girard's view of human violence) so that by God's grace people can see it and thus come to Jesus Christ for cleansing (the footwashing), to be healed of the violence, and live peacefully with one another, in love for one another? In this case Judas is a "once for all" occurrence, as is the cross itself. Thus we need not use Judas as negative model of our own potential peril. But people are at times overcome by demonic powers. By God's power and grace they can be delivered (Swartley 2006a-b; 2009a).

Third, in light of Judas and people oppressed, if not possessed, by demons, how can we be assured that God (Jesus Christ) will protect us from the evil one, from Satan's hold on our own lives? Scripture is clear about Satan's cunning and his constant efforts to deceive even the elect (2 Cor 2:11; 11:14). John's community, out of which the Gospel arose, struggled with this issue also, and thus 1 John says, "We know that those who are born of God do not sin, but the one who was born of God protects them, and the evil one does not touch them" (5:18). Our assurance lies in Jesus' finished work of redemption, living within the community of love, loving one another as friends, and in praise and worship of God. The footwashing example (*hypodeigma*) is the "peace[making] of God . . . [which] keeps our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:7; my translation). (See Boyd 2003 and N. T. Wright 2006 on God and evil.)

### **The Meaning of Footwashing Today**

Robert Brenneman studies the practice of footwashing among Mennonites in 2006–07, to discover what meanings the practice holds for those who observe the ritual, historically known as one of the "ordinances" in the Mennonite church. The meanings of service and humility predominate, although in practice it has on occasion also extended forgiveness of one to another,

enacting reconciliation. He notes the parallel between John 13:14-15 and John's commissioning of his disciples to "binding and loosing" in John 20:19-23. Both are couched in language of "imitating" Jesus' own life and actions, and the "command to do so" occurs with both actions (20). Brenneman analyzes John H. Yoder's contribution to these practices and notes that while he regards "binding and loosing" as a most important (ritual) practice, he treats footwashing symbolically, linking it to "care of the seriously ill, of the mentally retarded, of the unproductive aged . . ." (23). Following the trend in recent decades among many Mennonites, Yoder fails to see its "performative ritual" significance: that the literal doing of it has any bonding effect in the body of faith. Brenneman (28) concludes his study, saying,

Hardly an ossified or mechanical ritual, footwashing is a powerful rite—an embodied confession that incorporates embodied, vulnerable interaction and facilitates reconciliation even while it provides a script and rehearsal for politics [allusion to Yoder's *Body Politics*] within the Christian body. Footwashing provides a regular setting in which members can "perform their faith," to borrow the language of Hauerwas. It is an embodied politics that runs entirely against the grain of power and earned status in the wider society. The practice of footwashing offers Anabaptists a practical step for making good on their commitment to serve and be served, to forgive and be forgiven.

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As the centuries passed, footwashing as a regularly practiced custom, let alone a "sacrament," tended to recede; to be relegated to the background except in monastic circles (it is mandated in *The Rule of Benedict*). In its stead, perhaps, the Eucharist achieved or retained sacramental prominence. As the Anabaptists emerged from the "high church," they began to reclaim the practice of footwashing. While it never took on the significance of a "sacrament," footwashing occupied a unique place in the life of the Anabaptists. Often, footwashing was (and still is) incorporated into the Maundy Thursday traditional "Lord's Supper," or communion observances by the Anabaptists. (from Anne Mitchell's 2004 paper on footwashing)

## Chapters 14–17

### Jesus' Farewell Discourse and Prayer

#### Nature of Farewell Discourse

When Jesus is viewed in the wisdom tradition, as Witherington seeks to do, this discourse consolidates the wisdom of the sage who is leaving, in order to pass on that wisdom to the next generations (1995: 245). While many Jewish sages were great teachers, Jesus' farewell discourse points to one who has divine wisdom (1995: 246).

The scope of this discourse is vast, from Jesus' time to the end of time, from the twelve (now eleven) to all those who will believe in ages to come, from its original location in an upper room in Jerusalem to wherever in the vast world that Jesus' followers will read this discourse and live by it. Within its vast compass, however, particular themes fitting to a farewell speech are emphasized. Jesus is careful to amply address the needs of his disciples, present and future.

Several extensive studies of Jesus' farewell discourse (John 13–17) have developed macro-chiasms and micro-chiasms of these five chapters. Brouwer's full-length book presents Jesus' farewell discourse in a chiasm of eleven textual chronological sections (117–18), as follows (with minor modification, e.g., transliteration of Greek words) [*Chiasm*]:

- A Gathering scene (focus on unity with Jesus expressed in mutual love) (13:1-35)
- B Predictions of the disciple's denial (13:36-38)
- C Jesus' departure tempered by assurance of the Father's power (14:1-14)
- D The promise of the *Paraklētos* ("Advocate") (14:15-26)
- E Troubling encounter with the world (14:27-31)
- F The vine and branches teaching (*Abide in me!*); producing a community of mutual love (15:1-17)
- E' Troubling encounter with the world (15:18–16:4a)
- D' The promise of the *Paraklētos* (16:4b-15)
- C' Jesus' departure tempered by assurance of the Father's power (16:16-28)
- B' Prediction of the disciple's denial (16:29-33)
- A' Departing prayer (focus on unity with Jesus expressed in mutual love) (17:1-26)

Verbal parallels in these matching sections are:

- The coming of the *hour* (13:1; 17:1)
- All things/eternal life given into his (Jesus') hands (13:3; 17:2, 7)
- Scripture fulfilled (13:18; 17:12)
- Son glorified (13:31; 17:1, 24)
- Divine love (13:34-35; 17:26)

Brouwer also identifies numerous conceptual parallels, as well as other verbal parallels in certain sections, such as D and D': Advocate (14:16, 25; 16:7); Spirit of truth (14:17; 16:13); Advocate sent (14:25; 16:7) (119). Stimulated by Brouwer's chiastic structure of the farewell discourse, Kim offers a refinement (nine sections instead of eleven, 61–74) and extends his book length treatment to include the entire Gospel. His work is similar in nature but differs in details to

Miyazaki's work described earlier [*Chiasm*]. Miyazaki's chiastic analysis of Jesus' discourse, incorporating mine and extending the section to 18:27 for matching parts, is:

- A Peter's denial of footwashing (will not, never wash) (13:1-17)
- B *I am* (13:19)
- C The betrayal of Judas foretold (13:21-30)

<Swartley's chiasm for last discourse> (13-31–17:26)

- 1 Glory (13:31)
- 2 Departure (ch 14)
- 3 Abiding (ch 15)
- 2' Departure (ch 16)
- 1' Glory (ch 17)

- C' The betrayal of Judas (18:1-3)
- B' *I am* (18:4-9)
- A' Peter's denial of Jesus, three times (18:15-27)

The significance of these efforts, along with those of Ellis and Howard-Brook on chiasms in John, is that they compete against the numerous scholarly claims that John's Gospel either contains no discernible structure and/or has displaced sections (chs. 5 and 6 are reversed or chs. 15–16 are a later second source edition) or that the Gospel draws on sources discernible behind the present “disjointed” order of John's Gospel (Bultmann; Fortna; etc.). Chiastic analyses argue for and show unity, as well as literary art.

Further, these analyses point in the direction of a single author, who may represent a “school” of thought. Such artful structure may also have bearing upon Bauckham's thesis (1998a) that the Gospels were written not just for local communities (e.g., John for the Johannine community) but for the worldwide church. Its artful form would be at home to the Greco-Roman world, and be readily recognized in the contemporary literary canons as possessing enduring value.

### **Theological Themes in Farewell Discourse**

This is how Chennattu understands the theological heart of these chapters:

In sum, the covenant themes—election, intimate abiding relationship, indwelling presence, keeping God's commandments, and mutual knowledge—run through the discipleship discourses in 13–17 and provide the theological definition of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. The evangelist presents the paradigm of discipleship in terms of a covenant relationship that mirrors the mutuality, reciprocity, and intimacy of the Father-Son relationship revealed to the disciples in Jesus' life, mission, and death. The disciples are called to participate in the intimacy of the Father and the Son. The revelation of God's name to the disciples molds and fashions the unique identity and distinctiveness of the new covenant community. The unity among the disciples results from the mutual

indwelling presence of God in them. They now know and understand God's name, i.e., God's identity, nature, and visible presence embodied in Jesus and his works. Just as in an OT covenant relationship, Johannine discipleship demands a deep knowledge of God and is embedded in the promises and the indwelling presence of God. (139)

## Chapter 14 Jesus' Love; the Way, the Truth, and the Life

### *Place Jesus Prepares and Temple*

Kerr and Coloe (2001) argue that the *place* Jesus speaks about is the new temple, which is Jesus' new community. But this does not satisfy. It is true that many intertestamental texts speak about a new temple. In texts written between the Testaments, *God*, not the messiah, builds the new temple. The expected messiah, however, is the temple-builder agent in some of the texts (cf. McCaffrey: 93–97; Swartley 1994: 155–56, 167n40).

Bryan's interpretation that *house* refers to the eschatological temple was argued well earlier by McCaffrey in his expansive and meticulous monograph on these two verses, but strangely McCaffrey is not listed in Bryan's bibliography. Bryan (192–93) analyzes Jewish literature, citing numerous texts where God's people are gathered into a holy place (sanctuary), most notably Exodus 15:17, "You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession, the place, O LORD, that you made your abode, the sanctuary, O LORD, that your hands have established" (cf. 2 Sam 7:10). The imagery recurs in 2 Maccabees 1:17; 2:17-18; and in the *Animal Apocalypse* 89:36, 50; 90:33-36 where "Moses places the sheep in the [eschatological] house." Similarly, in *1 Enoch* 71:16, "the dwelling places of the righteous will forever be with the heavenly Son of Man."

### *Various Uses of Paraclete*

J. G. Davies examines in detail the LXX's 138 uses, and notes numerous texts where *parakalein* is used with other words, many of which are key terms in John: *glory, glorify, peace, weep, grieve, spirit, rejoice, joy, river, water, and resurrection*. Isaiah 66:10-19 uses *parakalein* with Greek words for *glory, peace, water, joy, and rejoice*, and is quoted in part in John 16:22: *So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you*. Davies concludes that if John used the LXX, the Gospel's primary meaning is "comforter." Some scholars, believing the word originated from the perfect passive form (*paraklēmenos*, "having been encouraged") hold its basic meaning to be "one called to another's side" (Hamilton: 64). In Qumran the *Paraclete* leads out in the battle (see TBC). It may also mean "sponsor" or "patron."

Grayston's (1981) careful study of the occurrences in Greek and Jewish literature (especially Philo) preceding the time of John's Gospel indicates that its meaning is not technically legal or forensic, but that "sponsor" or "patron"—someone with influence—is the more likely

meaning. Given the OT/LXX background of *comfort/comforter* (Davies) and the use in secular Greek sources as *supporter/patron* (Grayston), John's usage may play on the wider range of meaning, and not be limited to either of these connotations.

### **Jesus' Return and the *Parousia***

As Ruth Edwards sums it up,

There is an ambiguity in Jesus' promise to 'come again': is he speaking of his *parousia*, [second coming], or the resurrection appearances? . . . Many scholars therefore see Jesus' promised 'coming' as his resurrection, with his gift of the Spirit as a continuation of his presence, fulfilling his promises to send the Paraclete (16.7) to guide the disciples and remind them of his teaching (14.26; 15.26; 16.13). However, John's eschatology is not entirely 'realized': he refers repeatedly to 'the last day' (6.39, 40, 44, 54; 12.48) and to the future resurrection of the believers (5.25, 28f.) . . . In other words, present and future eschatology are held together in creative tension. (76)

### **How to Solve the 14:31c Problem**

Scholars have proposed numerous theories: Bultmann's displacement theory (459–61; with his *reordered* content discussed in 457–636); Dodd's view that it refers to "an interior act of the will" and thus a movement within Jesus' spirit (1953: 408–9); utilizing a symbolical, spiritual perspective in interpreting John, Dumm says Jesus means that "mystically, the words can be read as an announcement that Jesus is about to move to a new level of speech" (55); Jesus and his disciples arose and began walking, likely toward Mt. Olivet (Haenchen: 2.128; Carson 1991: 477–79) [not possible for ch. 17, and 18:1 mutes this view]; chapters 13–14 were composed earlier with 15–16 added later, post-Jammia (Lindars 1981:66); or the discourse represents *three* stages of composition over time (twenty to thirty years): the earliest one being 13:31–14:31; the second, 15:1–16:4; and the third, 16:5–33, each reflecting different community situations (Painter 1981: 523–43). Von Wahlde (2010) assigns verse 31c to the second edition that went directly from 14:31c to 18:1 (2.656).

Michaels (2010: 798) comments on the meaning of the similar phrase in the Synoptics (Mark 14:41–42//Matt 26:45–46) and observes that there the scholarly consensus is that the saying in the Synoptics connotes either *flight*—let's get out of here—or *confrontation*—the ruler of this world is coming. For this enigma in John, he says, "At the end of the day it is doubtful that either the aspect of escape or the aspect of imminent confrontation can be excluded." However, he says that for John there is still time for further discourse—and that's the point of the enigma.

None of these proposals satisfies; each speculates. Brodie (437) perceptively contends that the verse is a sore thumb to all theories about sources and editorial integration of earlier

editions, for “any editor who felt free to insert three chapters is unlikely to have had qualms about moving half a verse” to where it better fits.

George Parsenius’s book-length contribution, clarifying John’s narrative unity, proposes that 14:31 be understood as *not* marking the termination of a given speech-scene. Comparing the farewell discourse—and this 14:31 feature—to similar speeches in Greco-Roman literature, Parsenius contends that the solution of this enigma is what is known as the “delayed exit” drama technique in Greek tragedy. The hero knows his imminent end, hears an announced *exit*, but continues his farewell words, sometimes to great length. Parsenius identifies numerous parallels where the hero, knowing his death is imminent, continues his farewell speech after the exit is announced. This means the exit motif in 14:31 is to be seen as an exit that leads to death, which in light of preparatory indicators in chapters 2 to 13 (*the hour*, antagonists out to kill Jesus, Mary’s anointing, and Jesus’ own teaching about his death and, more recently, of his departure) is evident. The dissimilarity with Greek tragedy is that Jesus announces his exit, whereas in all Parsenius’s cited parallels, another person announces the hero’s exit to death (50–75).

### ***My Father’s House and the New Temple***

McCaffrey further says, “Moreover, it is continually effective in the continual eschatological intervention of the risen Jesus as he takes believers by a continual unifying action into union with the Father in the New Temple of his risen body” (252).

This “new temple” emphasis correlates with John’s mutual indwelling themes (15:1-7; 17:20-26), as McCaffrey, Bryan, Coloe, and Kerr have proposed. This also may explain the early church’s use of John’s Gospel for liturgy and lection readings (Gilding) and why worship (4:24) and forgiveness of sin (20:22; Hamilton: 158–60) are integral to John’s presentation of Jesus.

## Chapter 15:1–16:4

### Mutual Indwelling of Jesus and Disciples: Abiding and Loving, Facing Hatred

#### The Synagogue as False Vine?

One element in this chiasm (a') is problematic, representing either the world's hatred or the synagogue as the false vine (Ellis and Howard Brook mention only the synagogue here, though their commentary includes *world*, with extensive discussion). The identification of the synagogue with the false vine is an interpretive judgment. We wisely view this cautiously, for it impugns the synagogue in principle. As we will see in the explanatory notes, the persecution from the synagogue is not a statement of principle, whereas Jesus as the true vine is. Thus a and a' are not truly balanced. The term *vine* is best reserved for Jesus, without identifying the *world* or the *synagogue* as such as *false*. One may be attached as a “vine” to either *world* or *synagogue* that does not give *joy* (v. 11).

I have also unbalanced the chiasm by adding *friendship* in b' since this is distinctive and important, and by inserting *world* with *synagogue*—after all, that's the main emphasis.

#### Abiding and Union

Jesus' choice of imagery, vine and branches, indicates both union and distinction. The image “convey(s) a relationship of identity at the level of living, while firmly maintaining a radical distinction. The believer is united to Jesus, and Jesus to the believer, so that the latter is given a new identity, that proper to the reality of Jesus as Son. The mutual indwelling formula says that the *two* become *one* without ceasing to be *two*” (Rossé: 51).

#### Verses 7-17, One Complete Unit, in Chiasm Form

Brown's chiasm of this unit (1966: 667), in modified form by Talbert (213), is helpful:

- A If my words abide in you (v. 7a),
- B ask whatever you will and it will be done for you (v. 7b).
- C Bear fruit and so prove to be my disciples (v. 8).
- D As the Father loved me, so I have loved you (v. 9).
- E If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love (v. 10).
- F The purpose of these words is joy (v. 11).
- E' You are my beloved if you do what I command you (vv. 12-14).
- D' What I heard from the Father, I made known to you (v. 15).
- C' I chose you to bear fruit (v. 16a).
- B' Whatever you ask the Father, he may give it to you (v. 16b).
- A' This I command you . . . (v. 17)

While showing many emphases of this unit, the chiasm misses an important point in verses 13-15: Jesus calls his disciples, no longer servants, but friends.

### Friendship in Hellenistic Writings

Other less noble emphases infuse the discussions of friendship also, especially during the later Hellenistic Age of the Roman Empire. For here patronage-client relationship and relationships of political expedience to the emperor dominate. The vocabulary of love and friendship in John “highlights the two [Greco-Roman] friendship motifs of laying down one’s life and speaking boldly and openly. Key to Jesus’ use of these motifs is that attributes that have characterized Jesus as friend are now transferred to his disciples” (O’Day 2008a: 62).

### Status and Responsibility in Friendship

Yak-hwee Tan, in her socio-cultural analysis of the Johannine community presented in this narrative, says,

in naming the disciples “friends” as opposed to “slaves,” Jesus endows the disciples with a privileged status but also, ironically, with a responsibility. The status of the disciples as “friends” is double-edged. On the one hand, being designated as “friends” put them in a privileged position, though they have to do all the things that have been disclosed to them by Jesus. However, on the other hand, they might have to sacrifice their lives for him (175–76).

David Burrell captures the vital connection between the disciples, Jesus, and God in categories of imitation (*mimesis*; cf. Girard) and Anabaptist discipleship:

What proves remarkable . . . is the way in which Jesus’ call to erstwhile disciples to follow him is carefully crafted to circumvent the conflict potential to all *mimesis*. As the gospel of John articulates so clearly, the call to follow him is in fact an invitation to enter into the very same relationship which obtains between Jesus and the Father. And since the object is not to gain the Father’s approval, but rather to receive Jesus’ own gift of friendship, and thereby enjoy intimacy with God, desire is transformed from striving to an “active receptivity.” Discipleship, then, is a far cry from [and more than] “imitating Jesus,” but rather an invitation to enter into something entirely gratuitous and hence quite unanticipatable: friendship with God. (Burrell: 445)

### Vine Imagery

The symbol of the vine was common to Mediterranean religions. “When one turns to Judaism, one finds vineyard symbolism that is consonant with the use of the symbol in John 15” (O’Day: 756). Further, O’Day (757) notes that “Wisdom compares herself to a vine: ‘Like the vine I bud forth delights, and my blossoms become glorious and abundant fruit’ (NRSV).” Bultmann proposed gnostic origins, deriving from the Mandaean (gnostic) “tree of life.” O’Day, however, rightly says this argument is weak because the Mandaean texts are much later: “the ideas of these later texts have been read back into John 15 by scholars” (O’Day 1995: 756). Further, O’Day

refers to Schnackenburg's observation that *life* does not appear in John 15:1-17. Moreover, the gnostic influence disregards "the development of the vine imagery as a symbol for the community in John 15:1-17" (756).

### **Keeping the Commandments and Joy**

The noun texts for *joy* are: John 3:29; 15:11, 20, 21, 22, 24; 17:13; 2 John 12; 3 John 3. The verb texts are: John 3:29; 4:26; 8:56; 11:15; 14:28; 16:20, 22; 19:3 (*Hail*); 20:20; 2 John 4, 10, 11; 3 John 1; Revelation 11:10; 19:7. John 15:11, in the context of abiding in Jesus the vine, is the joy-gem that sparkles in most all its other uses (cf. 1 John 1:4).

### **John 16b-33**

#### **The Paraclete's Work, Jesus' Departure and Consolation: Joy and Peace**

##### **Regarding the Rarity of *Paroimias* (Figures of Speech)**

The word *paroimias* seldom appears in the entire LXX, but occurs in the wisdom tradition (Howard-Brook 1994: 353–54): “He seeks out the wisdom of all the ancients, and is concerned with prophecies; he preserves the sayings of the famous and penetrates the subtleties of parables; he seeks out the hidden meanings of proverbs [*paroimion*] and is at home with the obscurities of parables” (Sir 39:1-3).

This is as close as John gets to the synoptic Jesus who speaks often in parables. If the “figure of speech” refers to more than these two metaphoric images, as Howard-Brook (354) suggests, namely the twenty-five *I AM* declarations in John, then we have what might be called the Johannine version of Jesus the *paraboler* in the synoptic Gospels. The *I AM* metaphors have already ceased in John (ch. 15: the vine and the branches). The absolute use of *I AM* occurs again, however, in 18:5, 6, and 8, when Jesus speaks to the *detachment of soldiers* come to arrest him. And clearly, in this setting it is enigmatic. While this wisdom analogy between John and the Synoptics may not be persuasive, it is suggestive. If granted, it highlights the vast difference in genre between the two Gospel traditions: the parables stories conceal as well as reveal (Mark 4:11-12); the *I AM* images reveal as well as conceal. The christological mystery/secret only gradually disclosed in Mark is revealed openly in the prologue and the confessions of the first disciples, all in John's first chapter.

##### **Regarding the Disciples' Sudden Corporate Understanding**

Is this *only* collective speech of the disciples in the entire farewell discourse to be taken ironically? Howard-Brook thinks so, seeing it as “hilariously ironic.” In verses 17-18 they are utterly confused and Jesus has said nothing since then (except that he *will speak plainly*, no longer in *figures* when the hour comes—but it has not yet come) that would change their perception. Quoting Duke, “the ‘disciples build faulty confession [by this we believe] upon faulty claim [we know you know] upon faulty assumption [now you are speaking plainly].’ In shifting the time of Jesus' reference from the cross to the comfort of the supper table, ‘the necessary death and resurrection are neatly swept away’” (Howard-Brook 1994: 356). Whether the disciples' words should be viewed as irony (Duke and Howard-Brook) or incompleteness (O'Day) is not clear.

### Regarding *Scattered (Skorpizō)*

The same word, with the intensive prefix *dia*, appears also in 11:52 to describe *the dispersed children of God*. But the emphasis there falls on *sunagō*, to gather together the dispersed children. In that text Jesus' death *gathers* the children of God, but in chapter 16, the passion events *scatter* Jesus' disciples. But through his death he will again *gather* them, anticipating Jesus' post-resurrection appearances.

### Paraclete as Comforter and Advocate

Howard-Brook (1994: 320) quotes two texts to show the point of comforter:

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil; for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff—they *comfort (hacham)* me. (Ps 23:4)

Show me a sign of your favor,  
so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame,  
because you, LORD, have helped me and comforted (*hacham*) me. (Ps 86:17)

Johnston examines the functions of the Paraclete also; he does not privilege one particular function. He emphasizes, as does Brown, that the Paraclete is *another* Jesus, in that he *testifies* to Jesus and to the Father. He also stresses continuity with OT prophecy, that the Paraclete's *announcing what is to come* (16:13e) stands in the tradition of OT prophecy, revealing the divine purposes for the future (e.g., Isa 41:22-23; 42:9; 44:7; 48:5; et al.) In declaring the purposes of the Lord (OT, Yahweh), the Paraclete will do nothing "alien to Jesus Christ . . . The spirit will testify to Jesus as he was and is" (15:26). Further, the Son testifies to the Father (39). Johnston also summarizes numerous previous studies on the Paraclete, including Otto Betz's, who contends that John took up apocalyptic traditions where *paraklētos* described archangel Michael's role of defending the elect from Satan and evil: "Michael, God's true angel, works on earth through 'the spirit of truth'" (Johnston: 108–10). *Advocate* best expresses this tradition. But Johnston questions Betz's easy identification of *angel* with *spirit (ruach)* and Betz's linking of Paraclete to the Michael function in Revelation 12:7, for the roles of comforter and warrior are irreconcilable (115–18). I dissent, however, for throughout Scripture God's *fight against evil is the comfort* of the covenant people (Swartley 2006 passim).

### Role of the Spirit in Anabaptist Writers

Most of the discussion (articles by C. J. Dyck, William Klassen, and Henry Poettcker) focuses on tensions within Anabaptism on the relative authority of the Spirit (spiritualism) and the Word. In

Blough's article, in describing and quoting Marpeck, the Johannine farewell discourse emphasis appears:

That is why Pentecost is so important for Marpeck's theology. Ever since the Incarnation, God continues to work outwardly and materially, but this is done only through the Spirit. In the Trinitarian language of the text, the Father works inwardly through the Spirit and the Son works outwardly, at the same time, together. That which is accomplished outwardly, in the power of the Spirit, corresponds to the work of the Son, and therefore the Incarnation "continues."

Thus the children born of the Spirit and nature of Christ also do that which the Father, through the Spirit, performs in the inner man; they also perform externally as members of the body of Christ in baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Father loves the Son, and has committed all things into His hands; as the Father works as Spirit inwardly, the Son of Man works externally. (Blough, in Pipkin, *Essays*, 141)

Marpeck then connects this to baptism and the Lord's Supper, and sets forth conditions for its valid practice. Anabaptists held that the Lord's Supper imparts grace and power, when practiced sincerely, in an obedient life. But they refused a sacramental view (Roman Catholic) and a *sign* view (Calvin) (Klassen, in Swartley: 83–84). Snyder and Peters list two entries for "Spirit" in their Anabaptist *Reflections for Every Day of the Year*: one from *Martyrs Mirror* on John 16:13 (469) and one from Marpeck on John 20:22-23 (334).

Dalton's study of Marpeck links the Holy Spirit to canonical authority, quoting Christopher Seitz to clinch the point:

Finally, Marpeck understood that the Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture at the time of its writing would make possible and true the reading of Scripture by later believers. "Yesterday" and "today" fall under the guidance and direction of the same Spirit. As Christopher Seitz, a prominent scholar of the Old Testament and biblical interpretation, has written recently:

Providentially [the canon] covers the seasons of interpretation as well as the seasons of original, historical inspiration. The season we are in has raised acute questions of historicity and is sensitive to the sheer temporal distance of the events the Holy Spirit occasioned in prophets and apostles both. . . . We are not prophets or apostles, but the canon appreciates this reality with all its witnessing majesty, as we are brought fully into the range of the Holy Spirit's work by virtue of the canon's shape and character as witness. (Dalton: 616–17; Seitz: 99)

This link to canon extends the scope of applicability to Jesus' words on the Paraclete in John 14:26: *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.* The canon is source for Jesus' words and teachings; the Holy Spirit teaches us their meaning to empower our lives.

None of the eighteen articles in the Dortrecht Confession of Faith (1632), however, is on the Holy Spirit. Stuart Murray presents a good overview of "Spirit and Word" (125–56), but little on the role of the Paraclete. When the Paraclete texts are referenced in Menno or *Martyrs Mirror*

they mention the comfort theme, but say little more. C. J. Dyck's *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism* also shows scant Anabaptist reference to the Paraclete, though the Spirit is often mentioned, for example, in Schiemer's commentary on the Apostles' Creed (38); Menno's autobiographical reflection on his conversion (48) and in his "Confession . . ." (74); in the Word and Spirit discussions (68); in Joris's theological statements (number 7, 71); and in Denck's writings (71–73). These references likely assume the functions of the Paraclete, but its *distinctive* role in Jesus' discourse (Advocate, Comforter, Counselor) is largely overlooked.

In contrast to this, Casurella shows that the Paraclete texts functioned pivotally in early Christianity: to authorize the defeat of Satan (e.g., Cyril, the "reproof" emphasis and defeat of Satan; 51–54); to support the doctrine of the Spirit's procession from both the Father and the Son by Augustine (88; 15:26 could be used to support the other side of the debate that later ensued between the East and West—that procession is from the Father through the Son); and for inclusion of the Spirit into the Trinity (120–26). In his assessment of the early fathers' uses of the Paraclete passage, Casurella points out that they generally assumed the promised Paraclete comes at Pentecost, with the ascension playing an important role also (20:22-23, blended with Acts 1–2). Casurella recognizes the fathers were precritical readers, and thus did not distinguish Paraclete texts and functions with other texts on the Holy Spirit. Anabaptists were precritical readers also. The Paraclete's role was likely assumed by Anabaptists in the work of the Holy Spirit. But the richness of Jesus' teaching on the Paraclete appears slighted in Anabaptist sources. At least the secondary literature seldom shows it.

In relation to John 20:22, the Coptic Church practices "insufflation"—a breathing of the Spirit into the person—at baptism and ordination. See the website [http://www.archive.org/stream/ancientcopticchu02butliala/ancientcopticchu02butliala\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/ancientcopticchu02butliala/ancientcopticchu02butliala_djvu.txt).

## John 17

### Jesus Prays to His Father

#### Preview: Introducing Jesus' High Priestly Prayer

Milligan and Moulton, over a century ago (1898), memorably say of this prayer: “No attempt to describe the prayer can give a just idea of its sublimity, its pathos, its touching yet exalted character, its tone at once of tenderness and triumphant expectation” (cited in Morris: 635).

Morris stresses the importance of the last phrase. The prayer is not gloomy, but follows immediately Jesus' assertion that he has *overcome the world* (16:33) and therefore proceeds with confidence, even hope and joy, that through the cross the glorification of the Father and the Son will be accomplished. Jesus' victory over the world and its powers gives Jesus confidence in God's protecting power over evil for his disciples, a petition at the heart of Jesus' prayer (O'Day 1991: 163–64). Jesus' true humanity is evident also in the pathos of this prayer. Ending his earthly life-relationship with his followers, Jesus entrusts his and their future to his Father.

At the time of the writing of John's Gospel the secession mentioned in 1 John 2:28 (see McDermon, *passim*) falls under Jesus' judgment. *That they may all be one* has been violated.

#### Structural Outlines of Jesus' Prayer

Howard-Brook's chiastic structure (1994: 358), similar to Ellis's (239–40), shows matching motifs:

- A glory before world was made; completing (*teleiōsas*) Jesus' work (vv. 1-5)
- B given your word (vv. 6-10)
- C prayer for disciples (vv. 11-13)
- B' given your word (vv. 14-19)
- A' glory before foundation of world; completing (*teteleiōmenoi*) disciples' unity (vv. 20-26)

A student in a course on John, Lois Siemens, noticed that in the Greek each new section begins with an imperative verb. These are followed by either present or past tense verbs, *except* in the last section, where the future tense appears in verse 26b. This outline (adapted) shows how Jesus' prayer is embedded in his ministry and how his ministry culminates in *present* communion with his Father.

#### Section 1 Verse(s)

Imperative: (v. 1) Glorify!

Historical: (v. 2) Recap what Jesus has been given and the completed task of 'glory'

Present: (vv. 3-4) Description of eternal life (present tense), the work Jesus came to do

#### Section 2

Imperative: (v. 5) Glorify!

Historical: (vv. 6-8) Jesus reminds the Father of the work he has done in making the

Father's name known, of passing on the words he has received

Present: (vv. 9-11a) Present tense verbs tell what Jesus is asking at *this* time; Jesus is not in the world but is already in the presence of the Father

### Section 3

Imperative: (v. 11b) Protect/keep!

Historical: (v. 12) Jesus talks about his time with "them" as protecting them for the fulfillment of Scripture

Present: (vv. 13-16) Jesus is coming to the Father so that joy will be present in "them." Jesus is asking for protection in the present tense.

### Section 4

Imperative: (v. 17) Sanctify!

Historical: (v. 18) Jesus was sent into the world and now has sent "them" into the world

Present: (vv. 19-24) Jesus sanctifies himself, asking that all who will believe be one, in unity with one another and with Jesus and the Father

(vv. 25-26) The only *future* verb in chapter 17: *I will make it known*

## Jesus' Disinterest in the World?

Burge (465) also refutes the claim of Jesus' disinterest in the world by citing God's gifts of saving grace, life, and light to the world throughout the Gospel (John 3:16; 6:33, 51; 12:35; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9; 12:46). For this debate on three different views and emphases (Gundry, Volf, and Rensberger) see Swartley 2006: 289–95. One's stance directly affects how the church relates to and engages the world. It is difficult to classify the seventeen uses of *world* in this chapter. The seven uses in verses 14-17, 25 slant toward the negative. The remaining uses may tilt toward the negative, but for the most part are neutral as the object of God's saving love in verses 5, 18, 21, 23, 24. In verses 5 and 24 *world* designates the cosmos God created, a positive connotation [*World*].

## Jesus' Praying for *Protection and Unity*

This concern for holiness combined with *protection* and *unity* is striking, for it suggests that the world's strategy to destroy Jesus' community of love is to instigate disunity and schism, regrettably manifest already in the Johannine epistles (McDermond: *passim*) and in the church through the ages. For that reason, church splits keep recurring, now as often as any time in church history. If this interpretation is valid, we must confess that the *world* is winning, and the church's identity as a united community of love and truth is shattered. In light of this sad history, Gundry's contribution is to be valued, while Volf's and Rensberger's views are also necessary. Gundry emphasizes the need for us to pray for protection from the world; Volf makes clear God's undying love for the world, which we too must embody; and Rensberger reminds us that the community's solidarity in love is the best hope for the world's conversion.

### **Judas's Defection**

O'Day (1995: 793), however, does not take the view advanced by Howard-Brook and Klassen but explains Judas's action as fulfilling Scripture. This act, however, she says, "does not void the security of Jesus' care (see also 6:70-71), but belongs to God's plan."

### **Jesus' Prayer**

O'Day (1995: 798) emphasizes the eschatological quality of the prayer, correct to a point. But such is not to excuse God's people in their time, in the past and now, the task of seeking unity and owning our identity as one body of Jesus-believers. She also describes Jesus' stance toward his Father, and the Gospel's themes of Jesus' unity and intimacy with his Father, which the reader *overhears* in this prayer.

Jesus' prayer, offered in the confidence that God is present and hears, is the appropriate vehicle to bring to conclusion the interaction of Father and Son that has so dominated the Fourth Gospel. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus has insisted that he and God are engaged in ongoing conversation (3:34-35; 11:42; 12:49; 14:24), and this prayer embodies that truth.

As is the nature of prayer, Jesus is bold enough to hold God to God's promises: You have given, you have sent, you have loved; now keep, sanctify, let them be one. In this prayer, Jesus opens up his relationship with the Father to include the community by calling on the character and identity of God, which is known to him and in which he desires the community to share. In this prayer, then, the community is able to hear what it means that Jesus is the Son of God, the incarnate Logos, that Jesus shares in God's glory. Jesus' prayers and desires for those whom he loves are at one with God's desires. This prayer enables the faith community to hear how Jesus and God love each other and work together for the future of the community in the world. (1995: 798)

### **Praying Not for the World**

"Praying not for the world" must also be put in tension with what Scripture repeatedly says and means by the phrase, *before* [or from] *the foundation of the world*, which occurs at the end of verse 24: *Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world*. This phrase makes impossible any notion that the Father abuses the Son in his "being lifted" on the cross, to glorification. God's love for Jesus is sealed *before the foundation of the world*.

This agrees with Scripture's wider testimony describing God's vision, purpose, and passion for the world. We are better able to understand the puzzling phrase of 9b when we ask just what Jesus came to do (17:4). Why the incarnation? Why Jesus' descent from glory (1:14)? Burge raises this question, and answers it:

Did he come just to die? Was his work on the cross his only vocation? Jesus understands as he prays that he has already accomplished much of what God had called him to do. The key lies here: Jesus' saving work began in Bethlehem, not on Golgotha. The Incarnation, God's union with our humanity, in itself was a saving deed. That is, by uniting with our humanity God not only made known who he was (revealing his glory) but also brought about the conditions to make Christ's death efficacious and powerful for us all. (475)

In John, God's saving purpose for humankind begins with the Father's love for the Son and for humanity *before the foundation of the world* (17:24e). Little is said in Scripture about Jesus' preexistence (except in John 1:1-5, implied in Jesus' *I AMs*, and inferred in Phil 2:6); it enters the biblical drama of revelation when emphasizing what Jesus gave up in order to accomplish God's salvation for humanity. The descent/ascent imagery in John conveys this point as well. Jesus' entry into the human scene is God's way of fulfilling the covenant made with Israel, to accomplish the divine purpose of election, both of Israel (Gen 12–Exod 20; Deut 7:6-11) and of all who believe in Jesus Christ (Eph 1:4-5, where “before (pro) the foundation of the world” also occurs). God's purpose in election is to call and sustain a particular people to be *holy/sanctified* and to fulfill God's desire for the world to be saved (cf. Rom 5:1-11; 8:1-16).

The arresting phrase *before (pro) or from (apo) the foundation of the world* appears nine times in the NT with varied emphases on God's salvation purpose (John 17:24; Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:20; Matt 13:35; 25:34; Heb 4:3; 9:26; Rev 13:8; 17:8). Some element of God's saving action or purpose is present in all these texts. Twice more, *from (apo) the foundation of the world* occurs when Jesus describes human perversity (in two parallel Gospel texts: Luke 11:50 and Matt 23:34-35). Strikingly, human violence is *from* when the world begins, but God's love and saving purpose in many of these texts is *before* creation begins. The similar expression, “foundations of the earth,” occurs approximately fourteen times in the OT, but none is analogous (most speak of God laying the foundations of the earth or world [Ps 89:11b TNIV] or laying them bare by his rebuke). The closest is Isaiah 40:21: “Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?”

### **Features of Church Unity**

Burge identifies four pillars that foster the church's unity:

1. Transcendence—this is what people are hungry for in today's world, whether they know it or not. People are not looking for warm fuzzies on Sunday morning, but rather, a real and mysterious encounter with a transcendent God.
2. Teaching—in 17:17, Jesus asks that his followers would be sanctified by the truth. The church must always come back to Jesus. Any teaching that denies the whole person of Jesus is mistaken.

3. Fellowship—the church must nurture fellowship among its people and between its people and God. 17:20-22 gives us a glimpse of the beauty of spiritual indwelling.
4. Mission—a church’s spirituality and separation from the world are an immense testimony to the world of God’s presence and power. (477–80)

Staton, in his reflection on the abiding message of John 17, identifies four characteristics of believers as they seek to fulfill Jesus’ petitions to his Father:

1. Joy (this is one true mark of disciples in communion with their Lord).
2. Obey and follow Jesus out of genuine personal faith; believe in(to) Jesus (personally, individually and corporately).
3. Unity of love and fellowship (corporate oneness); emphasis should be on building up each believer in local fellowships, all over the world.
4. Most of all, mission to the world. This includes both right confession about Jesus and ethical living (obeying his commands). Without this, the mission is aborted and John’s vision of unity is naught. (298–300)

### **Ecumenical Relations**

In recent years many bilateral efforts to seek unity (Mennonites with Baptists, Reformed, and Lutherans) have occurred (Enns: 195–229, and part 1 for earlier Peace Church ecumenical efforts). For a moving report on Lutheran-Mennonite repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation regarding sixteenth century Lutheran persecution of Anabaptists, see Mennonite World Conference *Courier* (2010: 1.15; 3 and 4.2-7; 2011: 2.10).

While we celebrate spiritual unity as God’s gift and not something we create, we are also obligated by Jesus’ command to continue to seek for common core beliefs among similar denominations and even among those more diverse from each other. Three books reviewed in the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (July 2009) contribute to this effort (495–501; Alfred Neufeld’s *What We Believe Together* is noteworthy for churches in the Anabaptist tradition; Yarnell and Bergen et al., eds., contribute to the broader quest).

Janyce Jorgensen’s description of the modern ecumenical movement begins with the itinerant international youth (hostels) Bible studies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which led to the formation of the World Christian Student Federation (WCSF) in 1895. The vision and energy of this movement fed into the landmark 1910 Missionary Conference at Edinburgh with John Mott as catalyst, leading to the formation of the IMC (International Missionary Council). The World Council of Churches (WCC) then formed in 1948 with commitment to make Scripture the basis of churches uniting. In 1961 in New Delhi the IMC and WCC merged, with mission and biblical study as the twin foundation pillars for church unity across denominations. Significant ecumenical gatherings, focused on biblical studies and Jesus’

prayer for unity, occurred in Montreal (1963); Bristol, U.K. (1967); and Louvain (1971). After Vatican II, Roman Catholics participated in these gatherings, emphasizing the interplay between tradition and Scripture, agreeing that Scripture is primary. A significant development in this trajectory was the formation of the United Bible Societies in 1946. The UBS and WCC produced a joint statement on the “Bible and the Ecumenical Movement” at Uppsala, WCC 1968.

For the broader story of ecumenicity, detailing developments and important literature, see Jorgensen. As she says, “Ecumenical study of the Bible has been fruitful, particularly over the last century, and we can safely say that Jesus’ followers from various traditions have made great strides toward the unity for which he prayed. There are, however, continued challenges, projects, and directions for the future of the Bible and ecumenism.” Jorgensen identifies these challenges and new directions (260–62). Another study, Hellen Mardaga’s, cites extensively from documents arising out of these ecumenical encounters, all expressive of John 17:21, 23.

Norman Thomas has published an important recent (2010) book, *Missions and Unity*, which treats over two centuries of history. In his review, missiologist Wilbert Shenk says it is the best description of the intersection between Christian Mission and Christian Unity available. It is striking that Jesus’ prayer for the unity of the believers has as one of its *raison d’etres* *that the world may believe*. . . (v. 21) and *that the world may know* . . . (v. 23).

### Memorable Quotes

From the year-end issue of *Mennonite Weekly Review* (Dec. 29, 2009):

Unity in the church is a journey . . . It demands a profound sense of humility, and not any prideful insistence. (WCC Commission on Faith and Order, meeting in Kolymepari, Crete, Oct. 7–13, Eastern Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew I)

The prayer is *that they may be in us*. If we are in the Father and the Son, we certainly shall be one, and our unity will increase our effective influence in the world. But it is not our unity as such that has converting power; it is our incorporation into the *true Vine* as branches in which the divine life is flowing. When all believers are truly ‘in Christ,’ then their witness will have its destined effect—*that the world may believe that thou didst send me*. (Wm. Temple: II.327)

**John 18:28–19:16a**  
**Jesus' Trial before Pilate**

**Outline**

Miyazaki (103) has a similar but more detailed chiastic analysis, locating this trial narrative within the “Great Passover Narrative Chiasm: Kingship Motif” (chs. 12–19):

- A Anointing of Jesus: for the death and burial of Jesus (12:1-11)
- B Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (12:12-19) “**King**”
- C Greeks' visitation (12:20-50): "My hour has come!"

Last discourse unit (chs.13:1–18:27) (101)
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Chamber of Pilate: utilizing Burge's chiasm (488), with Swartley's revision:

**Stanza A, 18:28-32 (outside Pilate's chamber)**

It was early, Passover, Jewish leaders cannot put a man to death (lawfully)  
 The type of Jesus' death; a Jewish plea for Jesus' death

**Stanza B, 18:33-38a (inside)**

Pilate asks, *Are you the **King** of the Jews?* Jesus asks if he asks this on his own accord. Jesus says, My kingdom is not of this world; if it were, my servants would fight to prevent my being handed over to you. My kingdom is not from here." Leads to question, "What is truth?"

**Stanza C, 18:38b-40 (outside)**

Pilate finds no crime in him  
 Pilate brings Jesus out: he *may* be set free

**Stanza D, 19:1-3 (inside)**

- 1 Jesus flogged
- 2 Jesus crowned
- 3 Jesus arrayed in a royal robe: “king”
- 2' Jesus hailed as “king”
- 1' Jesus struck

**Stanza C', 19:4-8 (outside)**

Pilate finds no crime in Jesus.  
 Pilate brings Jesus out: will he be set free?

**Stanza B', 19:9-11 (inside)**

Pilate asks, *Where are you from?*  
 Jesus is silent: Pilate asks more: "Do you not know I have authority to release or crucify you?"  
 Jesus answers: *You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above.*

**Stanza A', 19:12-16 (outside)**

It was late (the sixth hour) on the day of Passover Preparation. The Jewish crowd cries, *Crucify*, rejecting Pilate's presentation of Jesus as *your King*. The chief priests say, "We have no king but Caesar!"  
 Jesus carries his cross to Golgotha, where he is crucified.

- C' *King of the Jews* written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek (19:19-22)
- B' Jesus was taken out of Jerusalem *near the city* (19:20, also 19:17) **King**

A' Crucifixion and burial of Jesus (19:23-42) (The A, B, C / C', B', A' was in an earlier version)

### **Barrabbas and What He Represents**

The release of Barabbas and the narrator's note that he is a bandit (*lēstēs*) (18:40), echo John 10:1, 8-10 where the good shepherd is contrasted to bandits. The good shepherd both enters by the gate and is the gate for the sheep, while the thief and robber enter another way. The good shepherd comes to save and feed, and to give abundant life, while thieves and robbers come *only to steal and kill and destroy*. The Jews are clearly making a life-and-death choice, not just for Jesus and Barabbas. They are, in essence, handing over the sheep to thieves. Furthermore, the sheep listen to the voice of the good shepherd (10:3), and *Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my [Jesus'] voice* (18:37). Both Pilate and the Jews refuse to listen to Jesus' voice.

### **What Pilate Knows about Jesus**

The fear that strikes Pilate (v. 8) may suggest Pilate began to wonder if Jesus, after his puzzling dialogue with him, might be indeed the very one he claimed to be, the King of the Jews, and for this reason *the Jews* were so determined that he revise it.

## **John 19:16b-42** **Jesus' Crucifixion and Burial**

### **The Robe into Four Parts**

Whether *four* has symbolic significance, such as the four corners of the earth—thus they represent universal humanity—may or may not be an intended point of the Gospel writer(s). Irenaeus, a century later, said the four canonical Gospels have to be in that number in order to symbolize that their message was for all the peoples of the earth: north, south, east, and west. Whether the royal purple robe may be part of the seamless clothes (*himatia*, pl., which Carson suggests included his belt and sandals, 1991: 612) or the *tunic* itself is not clear. Since John gives much attention to the seamless tunic, he likely evokes the theme of his high priestly prayer: *that they may all be one*.

### **Jesus Gives Up His Spirit**

Jesus' giving up his spirit may be regarded as a time-release fulfillment of John 7:38-39: "*Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.*" Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified. The incarnate Word's glorification begun in 1:14 is now consummated in Jesus being lifted up on the cross.

### **Water and Spirit**

Examining John's profuse use of images from Ezekiel (flock, purifying water, etc.) and noting that water, spirit, and life images appear often in Ezekiel, Manning (210) concludes that "Jesus' promise of the Spirit is likely fulfilled in the water from his side." This is dubious, though water and Spirit are linked together in 3:6, as means of birth from above. In John 20:22 Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to his disciples, which competes with Manning's suggestion.

### **Jesus' Glorification**

In the Synoptics those crucified with Jesus are bandits/evildoers. "This is not said in . . . [John]. In his very 'lifting up' there is a gathering, and he is at its center. The focus is on Jesus, occupying a central place among the crucified" (Moloney 502).

Jesus' glorification in his death is highlighted by the absence of mockery during the crucifixion. John avoids mockery scenes at Jesus' crucifixion because humiliation would compete against Jesus being *lifted up*, the means of Jesus' glorification in crucifixion. This contrasts to the

Synoptics, each of which describes mockery of Jesus during the crucifixion. John has Jesus' humiliation through mockery only during the trial, where Jesus is ironically proclaimed king and judge.

### The Meaning of Jesus' Death

I have taken up Talbert's attempt to summarize John on the meaning of Jesus' death in John, and have added to it, citing also more textual references.

Swartley's Revision of Talbert: 247  
(lists of text not exhaustive)

Meaning for Father-Son in union	Bringing light, life, love into the world: - light that overcomes darkness - life that joins believers with Father-Son - love that marks out the new community
	Love for the world that leads to self-donation; to give eternal life to all who believe <i>into his name</i> (3:15-17, 36; 5:21, 26; 6:40, 47, 51; 11:25-26; 12:32, 50; 17:21, 23; 20:30-31)
	Mutual glorification: the Son of the Father; and the Father of the Son (1:14; 2:11; 7:39; 11:4; 12:16, 23, 27-28; 17:1, 4-5, 24)
	Defeat of the "ruler of this world"; conquering the "world" (12:31; 16:11, 33b; see third category for its efficacy for humans)
	Carrying out/completing divine plan (3:14; 19:24, 28, 36, 37—OT quotes)
For Jesus specifically	To show in life and work oneness with his Father (5:18-19, 30; 10:30; 17:11, 21-23)
	Through his obedience completing the work of his Father; finish Father's work (12:27-28; 17:4; 19:30; teleioō)
	Real suffering and death on cross of Human Being (19:26-27, 28, 34-37, 40)
	<i>Revealing</i> God: the only Son in the Father's bosom <i>reveals</i> God (1:18 and whole Gospel)
For Humans	Gift of eternal life now and in future (3:15-17, 36; 5:24-29; 6:53-57; 10:10b; 12:50; 17:3; 20:31) through belief that gives life that shapes values (1:49; 3:16-17, 36; 4:26; 11:26; 20:18, 28-31). Authority to become children of God (1:12; 11:52; 20:17 <i>my brothers(!)</i> ; cf. "children" in 1 John)
	Victory over the ruler of this world (12:31; 16:11, 33b) with Jesus' power to protect believers from evil one (12:31; 16:33; 17:11-12, 15; cf. 1 John 4:4; 5:19)
	Take away the sins of the world as Lamb of God (1:29, 36) and mandate mission of "forgiveness of sins" for believers (20:23)
	Peace amid persecution (14:27; 16:33)
	Peace of Jesus Christ (20:19, 21, 26)
	Draw all people to the <i>lifted up</i> Jesus as a magnet (12:32); gather scattered people of God (10:16b; 11:52)
	<u>For</u> ( <i>hypér</i> /on behalf of) us:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- bread for life of the world (6:51)</li> <li>- good shepherd who lays down life for the sheep (10:11)</li> <li>- one dies for the people (11:50-52)</li> <li>- means to reach more people (12:24; 20:31)</li> <li>- cleansing of post-baptismal sin (13:8-10)</li> <li>- example of how to relate to one another (12:1-11; 13:4-17; 34-35; 19:14, 31, 36)</li> <li>- as Paschal Lamb, Jesus suffers death so we might have life (11:25-6; 12:24-5)</li> <li>- crucified on Day of Preparation (1:29, 36)</li> <li>- “blood and water” (19:34)</li> </ul>
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Despite what appears from “below” to be the final victory of darkness, Jesus’ death is filled with light and glory in the fourth gospel. We *must* learn to see such a fate not as leading us to despair but as teaching us how different are the ways of God from the ways of the world. (Howard-Brook 1994: 415)

In summary John’s dominant emphases are:

- Glorification through Jesus doing the works of the Father and being lifted up on the cross
- Returning to his Father, and breathing the Holy Spirit upon his disciples
- Salvation for the world, through Jesus as Lamb of God liberating believers from sin
- Paschal Lamb slain on day of Passover Preparation (cf. 1 John 2:2; 4:10: “mercy seat,” where God through the high priest accepts the blood of the people’s atoning sacrifice).

### **The Politics of Jesus**

Pilate up against Jesus: *So you are a king?* (18:37)

The interaction between Pilate and Jesus is most fascinating, and theologically revealing. It smacks of genius, in its narrative brilliance, filled with truth in ironic cast. Leonard Beechy’s commentary on this lectionary text in *The Christian Century* (Nov. 17, 2009) catches much of John’s artful interchange, in his article from which I quote selected portions:

The question is Pontius Pilate’s. It’s early morning, and there the air in the room is laced with lamp oil and irony. Jesus stands before him bound, his cheek puffy from a slap by the high priest’s guard.

We listen in on the conversation courtesy of John’s Gospel, and there is no doubt about who is carrying our sympathy, our faith. Yet there is something in Pilate’s question that has us leaning in for Jesus’ answer. Our reasons are different from Pilate’s, but we too want to know: “So are you a king?” . . .

Pilate has his own reasons for asking, and they are 99 percent pragmatic. He is investigating the only charge that interests the Roman prefect. Pretension to kingship in the restive province on a festal weekend is an annoyance that requires his attention. But the man before him would never have caught the notice of imperial profilers, and Pilate is a little incredulous: “are you the king of the Jews?” . . .

Jesus . . . answers Pilate, “If my kingdom were of this world, my followers would be fighting.” As it is, the only military order Jesus issues is to Peter: “Put your sword back into its sheath” (John 18:11). Pilate, with his feet planted firmly in this world, hears only two words: “my kingdom.” Jesus’ answers so far have been couched in questions and poetry, and Pilate wants to get it straight.

“So you are a king?”

“You say that I am a king.” All the Gospels agree that this, in so many words, is Jesus’ answer to Pilate, and its obliqueness may exasperate us as much as it did Pilate. The safe reply would have been a simple no, but that is not Jesus’ answer. But neither does he answer yes, and this interests those of us standing by and listening as we prepare to celebrate Christ the King Sunday: when Jesus is asked, with his life on the line, whether he is a king, he says, “Yes and No.” He says, “It depends upon what you mean by king.” He says, “That’s your word.” If we are uneasy about the idea of Christ as King, apparently Jesus is too.

But it’s not his last word. In the Synoptics, Jesus gives his cryptic reply and falls silent. John’s Gospel records an elaboration: “for this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.” Here Pilate tosses out his most famous question: “Truth? What is that?” He exits the room with an answer, but by this point in the story readers of John’s Gospel know the answer that has been staring Pilate in the face the whole time. The truth is that Jesus is the incarnate revelation of God. This Jesus, the one with the puffy cheek and the bound hands, is God present in the world. This is the one about to be “lifted up” in order to draw “all to himself,” the one about to be enthroned as the greatest power in the universe. . . .

In his conversation with Pilate, perhaps Jesus could have tried speaking Latin: *mutatis mutandis*, “with the necessary changes having been made.” Yes, I am king, he might say, with the necessary changes having been made in the meaning of the word *king*, in the way the world looks at power, and in you.

### **John 18:10-11; 18:36; and 19:34 in Anabaptism**

How did the sixteenth-century Anabaptists interpret these three key texts of political import in John’s Gospel? Menno Simons quotes part of 18:10-11 in a longer catena of Scripture (Gal 5:22-23; Rom 12:17-21) and then says, “Christ did not want to be defended with Peter’s sword. How can a Christian then defend himself with it? Christ wanted to drink the cup which the Father had given Him; how then can a Christian avoid it?” (Wenger: 45). The *Martyrs Mirror* references 18:10 when speaking of Peter’s zeal to follow Jesus, who forbade physical fighting (80). Marpeck utilizes the text in several places, first in his “Useful Instruction” essay when he says, “So, now the whole world is filled with Petrine and Iscariotic Christians who, in the presence of the unrighteous, wish to judge, defend, preserve, and intercede with the sword on behalf of the physical Christ. If they cut off Malchus’ ear (Jn. 18:10), Christ will restore it to him (Lk. 22:5), and their faith, fleshly confidence, pride, and opinion will either result in a denial of Christ, or they will become betrayers like Judas” (Klassen and Klaassen: 90). His next use occurs in writing on the “lowliness of Christ”: Peter “received no help from the Lord in his carnal fighting” (449). His last citation of this incident occurs in writing on “the Love of God in Christ” where he speaks

against the “coercers of faith” who “persecute with the sword . . . and insist on maintaining violence against violence with the carnal sword in the semblance of Christ.” Then Marpeck extols Christ’s patience and submission to “every authority,” saying, “For whoever takes the sword to make decisions about Christ and himself . . . takes and uses it like Peter, who cut off Malchus’ ear, . . . the same person must and will . . . perish by the sword. The guilt rests on their heads as long as they boast of Christ and do not believe His words” (540).

Peter Riedemann also draws 18:10-11 into his rationale for opposing warfare. His reasons are that “Christ, the Prince of Peace, has prepared a kingdom for himself, namely, the church, and has won this kingdom by shedding his own blood.” He cites Isaiah 2:1-4, then Romans 12:17-19, and these verses in John: “This shows how our King, with a powerful army, sets out against his enemies, how he defeats them, and how he exercises vengeance! He restores Malchus’s ear that had been struck off. Jesus also says, ‘Whoever wants to be my disciples, let him take up his cross and follow me.’” Riedemann next appeals to Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 5:38-48 (Friesen, trans./ed.: 134–35). Later, he combines 18:10-11 with 18:36 to describe the Christian’s call and ethic in contrast to that of government authorities (218–19).

John 18:36 occurs relatively rarely in Anabaptist views on nonparticipation in war and refusal of government offices. The Yoder/Hochstetler index lists no 18:36 reference to Menno Simons’s writings. In *Martyrs Mirror*, it is referenced twice in a “Confession of Faith” (ca. 1600, in Articles XXVII, 403 and XXXIII, 409).

Philips, Hubmaier, Riedemann, and Sattler utilize 18:36 with differing emphases. Dirk Philips quotes the verse in part to emphasize Christ came to establish a “spiritual kingdom,” not a worldly kingdom: “For the kingdom of God is after all not of this world, but inwardly among all Christians, John 18:36, Luke 17:21” (Dyck, Keeney, Beachy, eds.: 317). Balthasar Hubmaier utilizes the verse to lament that Christian believers are not like Jesus who was truly not of this world. But we are still of the world, with regret: “our kingdom should not be of this world. But, unfortunately, be it lamented unto God, it is of this world, as we ourselves confess in the Lord’s Prayer where we pray, ‘Father, thy kingdom come, Matt 6:10; Luke 11:2, for we are in the kingdom of the world, which is a kingdom of sin, death, and hell.” His argument is against the dominant Anabaptist stance that “the sword” has no place among believers (Pipkin and Yoder: 496–97). Citing the Matthew 26:52-54 text, he contends that Jesus did not tell Peter to throw the sword away, but simply to put it back into its sheath: “Christ here confirms the sword, that one should punish those with it who practice by it their own violence and sacrilege” (498). Nonetheless, Hubmaier argues for nonparticipation in war (certainly not in holy war, but allows perhaps for a just, defensive war).

Peter Riedemann quotes the verse to show the qualitative difference between Christ's kingdom and worldly kingdoms. After quoting 18:36 he says, "Christ calls into being a completely different kingdom and regime. He wishes his servants to submit themselves to it and become like him. That is why he says to them . . ."—and here he quotes Mark 10:42-45. Further, "the glory of Christ and his servants consist in relinquishing all worldly glory" (Friesen, trans./ed.: 133). Sattler cites the verse to stress the opposition between Christ's kingdom and the kingdom of the world: "He has no kingdom in the world, but that which is of this world is against His kingdom" (Yoder trans./ed., 1973: 22).

The range of interpretation is striking. A two-kingdom theology is presupposed in these interpretations. The offices of government are part of the worldly kingdom which God established in his wrath. But Christ calls us to a different kingdom and ethic.

The third text, John 19:34, is utilized even less frequently, though I expected it to surface in Anabaptist debates with the Reformers on the Lord's Supper. It is not cited or referenced by Menno Simons, the *Martyrs Mirror*, Peter Riedeman, or Marpeck. Dirk Philips, however, cites it three times; in two of these he interprets the verse with ecclesiological import. The blood and water flowing from Jesus' side "is a testimony of his true humanity and that he has with his blood sprinkled, washed, and cleansed his congregation (which is taken out of his side, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone)" (Dyck 1992: 80). In a later citation, he expands on this latter point and develops an analogy between Eve taken from Adam's side and the bride, the church, taken from Christ's side in the flowing blood and water, "washed in his blood, cleansed through the water bath in his Word, and sanctified through his Spirit, Eph 5:30; Col 1:14; Eph 5:26. For therefore he also allowed his side to be opened and pierced through on the cross and allowed blood and water to flow or run from it so that he might gain, purify, and save his congregation, John 19:34" (Dyck 1992: 220). This citation is linked to Jesus giving "us his flesh to eat and his blood to drink, John 6:32[-33]." In the next paragraph, Philips speaks of what "the sacraments signify." His other citation views "his body and blood . . . sacrificed for us on the cross, John 19:34" as the assurance of eternal life for believers (Dyck 1992: 103).

Another Anabaptist use, by Conrad Grebel, is of quite another strand. It occurs in the "Second Disputation" between Zwingli and Grebel. Grebel condemns the priests' practice of mixing water and blood for the communion cup. Grebel says, "It is . . . an abomination that water is poured into the blood of Christ without any basis or reference to holy Scripture" (Harder: 247). The footnote points out that both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches did this, with appeal to Irenaeus and Cyprian who "interpreted this as a union of Christians with God, related to the mystical union of the human and divine in Jesus. To Ambrose this was a symbol of the blood and water that flowed from Christ's side on the cross (John 19:34)" (Harder: 663, n69). In contesting the practice Grebel insisted on not adding to or taking away from the Scripture.

## John 20

### The Risen Jesus Ignites Mission and New Community

#### Jesus' Puzzling Statements

Jesus' two statements in 20:17 are indeed puzzling. Why does Jesus say, *Don't touch me* and what does it mean? His reason, *I have not yet ascended to my Father*, perplexes further. Explanations are legion, as Attridge's excellent article documents. The explanations, beginning with the church fathers, vary greatly. Thematic emphases, with the first three representing feminist interpretations, focus the article:

- sexuality—physical intimacy no longer, with varied views of intimacy-type
- gender perspectives—Jesus' command marginalizes women; he distances himself from Mary Magdalene and then unites with his male followers
- ecclesial—Mary Magdalene is a new Eve, a lover looking into the tomb for her beloved (echo Songs 2:9 LXX), “a symbol of the Johannine Church, the new People of God” (Schneiders), thus culminating John's betrothal theme.
- theological—flawed understanding of resurrection, no longer a physical body (Bultmann); instills respect for the resurrected Jesus-form (Chysostom and Theodoret)
- timing issue—Don't delay me, for I must go to the Father. You'll have time to express your devotion later—in the next forty days (or popularly put: Father first; you, Mary Magdalene, second; and the disciple-brothers, third!).

Even with this luminous essay, *what* is meant and *why* remains unclear. Thus Hooker's more recent proposal in the commentary merits consideration; it contains elements of several of the above explanations and it culminates a recurring Johannine motif: *from above* versus *from below*. Perhaps we should translate it, “don't continue to touch” since I must go to my Father. “Touching” in principle is not forbidden, which would harmonize with Jesus' word to Thomas in 20:27, when he invites Thomas to touch.

#### John's “Pentecost”

Moloney also lists a range of alternative understandings but does not seek to reconcile the Johannine and Lukan traditions. Rather, he holds, with Leon-Dufour, that “John sets forth an essential dimension of the Easter ministry which Luke has extended in time” (1998: 535). The symbolic view (advanced by Theodore of Mopsuestia) has little support and was condemned in the Second Council of Constantinople in AD 553. Concurring with other critical scholars, Brown holds “there is nothing in John's Gospel . . . to characterize the gift of the Spirit in xx[20]:22 as provisional or partial” (1970: 1038). Brown also rejects a “purely personal or individual” interpretation, for the Spirit gift in John “is closely related to the sending of the disciples into the

world” (1038). Though the event is described differently in John and Acts, both accounts empower the disciples to proclaim the gospel, the essential mission for both John and Luke in Acts.

### **Jesus’ Authorization to Disciples to “Forgive Sins”**

John’s mutuality and communality helps make sense of this amazing authority to give absolution to people, the forgiveness of their sin. This verse has generated a “tumultuous history of . . . interpretations” (Burge 2000: 561; cf. Brown’s extensive treatment, including Roman Catholic struggles with this text, 1970: 1039–45). Conceiving this as rationale for hierarchical power to dominate others is totally misplaced. Rather, the focus is on a community of disciples who love and forgive one another (Talbert: 264).

### **Resurrection Ethics**

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. . . . Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Col 3:1-4, 14-15, 17)

## **John 21** **New Horizons and Destinies**

### **Solutions to the 153 Fish Enigma**

Numerous fanciful interpretations use either allegory or gematria, in which Greek, Hebrew, or Latin alphabet letters have numerical values that signify meaning (e.g., the letters in Neron Caesar add up to 666, Rev 13:18). See Yeatts (250–51), for these tables of Greek and Hebrew alphabetical letters with their numerical values. Varied proposals spice the history of interpretation: Eisler’s solution is to add the gematria number of *Simon* in Greek (76, because Jesus addresses Peter as *Simon* in 21:15-17) and the number for *fish* (*Ikhthus*, 77). These together equal 153. Cyril of Alexander employs allegory: 100 for Gentiles; 50 for Israel; 3 for the Trinity. Rupert Deutz’s notion is similar: 100 for the married; 50 for widows; 3 for virgins (M. Edwards: 205). This latter proposal most likely reflects the relative respective groups in the church of his time—note the proportion of widows to the married!

Richard Bauckham offers the most convincing solution in current scholarship. Utilizing mathematical analysis and gematria, Bauckham contends the number is significant, for 153 corresponds to the gematria values of key words in the Gospel’s purpose statement in 20:30-31. The Greek word for *signs* (*semeia*) is 17, the triangular number of 153, which is hardly coincidental, for any number that has a triangular number (a number divisible by 9: 3 x 3) is rare! The other three words connect to John’s purpose statement: *believe/pistuein*=98; *Christ/Christos*=19; and *life/zōē*=36; the sum of these three words is 153 (2007: 281) [*Numbers in John*]. This explanation connects chapter 21 with 20, showing literary unity between the chapters.

### **Implications of the Jesus-Peter Interchange (Howard-Brook)**

This threefold exchange is also, of course, the symmetrical atonement for Peter’s threefold denial, as the charcoal-fire setting suggests. Despite Peter’s brash offer at the supper to lay down his life for his master, the pressure of real-life circumstances led him instead to deny being a disciple at all. Now, when Jesus asks if he is ready to make the commitment given all that the fisherman has experienced since that first fireside, Peter unconsciously reveals that he still does not really understand the implications of “loving” Jesus. But despite these limitations, Jesus does command him to perform the crucial community leadership functions of feeding and shepherding. (1994: 478)

Howard-Brook critiques those who fail to differentiate meaning in these word choices:

From our narrative perspective, we find the differences to be part of the lesson that this passage is told to teach. Each speaker has a different perception of what is transpiring and thus finds himself disappointed at the end, but for different reasons. Peter hears the same question repeated three times—which is what the narrator tells us at the end—and is hurt

because Jesus has embarrassed him in front of the others by not accepting the answer he got. For Peter—and for many commentators who end up sharing his viewpoint—there is indeed no difference between *agapē* and *phileō*. Friendship, self-sacrificing love, it's all about the same thing, isn't it? Just two different ways of saying the same thing, right, Jesus? The powerful invitation to lay down their lives for one another that is intended as the heart of the Johannine commitment is reduced by Peter to the commitment of an ordinary fraternity! . . .

From Jesus' perspective, on the other hand, the initial question has not been answered clearly and thus requires repetition. Peter answers both "yes" and then changes Jesus' word, indicating that Peter thinks he is answering the question but that Jesus can hear that he is not. Jesus asks a second time to make sure that Peter heard correctly: "Do you *agapas* me?" Having gotten the same response, Jesus then reduces the question to a demand that Peter can hear. In other words, finding Peter incapable at this moment of *agapē*, Jesus settles for *phileō*.

At the same time, Jesus makes explicit the demands on this strong leader of the community. He is to feed and to shepherd, to provide nourishment as Jesus has done through word and eucharist, and to exercise the self-sacrificing guidance that marks the good shepherd (10:15). If Peter cannot understand the question in terms of his relationship with Jesus, perhaps he can get it through his relationship with Jesus' sheep. The phrase "feed my sheep" (*boske ta probatia*) recalls the Ezekiel passage underlying the good shepherd discourse in chapter 10 (Ezek 34:15, LXX: *boskēsō ta probate*), indicating that Jesus is challenging Peter to accept the same divinely empowered leadership that Jesus has been exercising during his ministry. (1994: 477–78)

Peter is indeed a rich figure in the Gospels (for an in-depth analysis of Peter in John, see Blaine 2007 and Quast 1989; for a wider NT study of Peter's role in early Christianity, see Hengel 2010; Brown, Donfried, and Reumann 1973).

### **Jesus' Love Command in Romans 13**

Paul cites Jesus' second love commandment in relation to those who collect taxes, perhaps to admonish Christian believers not to join a brewing tax revolt (Rom 13:9). For documentation of this view regarding "a tax revolt" see Swartley 1996: 2362–63, with notes, and 2009b, for a more accessible version.

### **Bauckham on the Complementary Roles of Peter and the Beloved Disciple**

The beloved disciple is better qualified to be the author of a Gospel, but he is not better qualified to be the chief under-shepherd of Jesus' sheep, which is Peter's mode of discipleship. It is worth noticing that, whereas in Peter's case the Gospel emphasizes his love for Jesus, in the beloved disciple's case it emphasizes Jesus' love for him . . . The different, complementary roles of the two disciples shows that it is not rivalry between different branches of early Christianity (the so-called great church and the Johannine churches [an accent in both Brown 1979, 1984, and Kragerud]) that is at stake in their relationship. . . .

The point of the double story of the two disciples is to show how each, through his own different way of following Jesus, relates to the church after the resurrection. Just as Peter's role in the story enabled him to become the chief under-shepherd of Jesus' sheep not within the narrative but later, so the beloved disciples' role in the story enables him to witness to others not within the narrative but later. (2006: 86–87)

## Web Essays

### Authorship

<sup>w1</sup> The only John noted in the NT with high priestly affiliation is the John mentioned among the high priests “Annas, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander” in Acts 4:6. This John is surely not John the apostle in Acts 3:1. A few scholars propose that this high priestly John is the Gospel’s author. One comment in John’s Gospel may be illumined if this John in Acts 4:6 at a younger age served in some high priestly-affiliate role: in 18:15-18 the *other disciple* goes into the high priest court since *that disciple was known to the high priest*—Peter stays outside!

<sup>w2</sup> From quite a different context, the study of John’s temple Christology, Kinzer (463) suggests John has “a priestly, non-Sadducean background, and . . . that his Temple Christology reflects an attempt to understand the person, words, and deeds of Jesus within the framework of an existing priestly mysticism.” This insight opens a Pandora’s box of a host of considerations: the prominence of the festival structure; the placement of Jesus’ teaching in the temple; the prominence of the temple theme; shifting the temple confrontation to be Jesus’ first ministry act in Jerusalem; the proper place to worship; the promised *dwelling place* (14:1-3); *all taught by God* (6:45), and John’s “commission,” with emphasis on “forgiveness of sins” (20:23).

<sup>w3</sup> The additional strengths of Bauckham’s proposal are:

- (1) It accepts the only plausible meaning of John 21:24: it designates the beloved disciple as the author of the Gospel . . .
- (2) This proposal accepts that the Gospel itself does not support the identification of the beloved disciple with John the son of Zebedee [see *John* commentary on John 21:7].
- (3) It avoids the supposition that the name of one of the greatest teachers of the early church, author of one of its finest literary products, has inexplicably disappeared without any trace of historical evidence. [In other words, it does not leave unexplained what happens to the beloved disciple historically, the eyewitness to what the Gospel presents.]
- (4) It takes account of the fact that there is no evidence that the Gospel was ever regarded as anonymous (unlike the case of Hebrews), and that all the evidence for its attribution ascribes it to “John” (though not always unambiguously to John the son of Zebedee).
- (5) It can explain the attribution to John the son of Zebedee, which eventually prevailed in the early church [third century on], as the result of the assimilation of John the elder, a disciple of Jesus who was not one of the Twelve, to the better known and prestigious Apostle John the son of Zebedee [that is, better known from the Synoptic Gospels, but not from the Fourth Gospel, since in it we never learn anything about or from John the son of Zebedee, except in the generic “sons of Zebedee” in 21:2]. (2007: 34–35)

<sup>w4</sup> An earlier similar solution on authorship was proposed by D. E. H. Whiteley in his article “Was John Written by a Sadducee?” He values Polycrates’s statement, especially the priestly status of the disciple. Like Bauckham, he believes this disciple lived in Jerusalem, was an eyewitness, and also was the beloved disciple. The *we* in 21:14 represents the Johannine community’s attestation to the beloved disciple’s witness who died while he was completing the Gospel (here Bauckham differs on the *we*; Culpepper though agrees with Whiteley in principle). He thinks John 21 was written by the attesters, though based on the community’s tradition and the beloved disciple’s witness. Unlike Bauckham, Whiteley proposes that this disciple, possibly named John (but not the Galilean apostle who is never named in the Gospel), was a Sadducee with priestly credentials and cordial relations with Gamaliel (he likely heard Gamaliel’s statement in 11:49 and has ready access into the *courtyard of the high priest* [18:15]). When he *saw and believed* however in 20:8 he was converted from Sadducean identity to believer identity, since Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. He then treasured all he witnessed and emerged as leader of the Johannine believers who later at the time of Jerusalem’s impending fall fled to Ephesus.

Further, he suggests the disciple priest bore the name John and served as priest on one day of atonement at Gamaliel’s request, though he did not serve in the regular priestly rotation! This creative proposal pushes the boundaries of credibility unnecessarily (better to leave out association with Gamaliel). Jesus did have disciples from various first-century political parties, but that the one who sat closest to Jesus at the Supper (John 13) was a Sadducee stretches Jesus’ transcending of the politics of his time.

### **Beloved Disciple**

<sup>w1</sup> Only “the disciple whom Jesus loved” holds out steadfastly under the Cross (19:26f.), and he too is the first to understand the signs of the Resurrection, when he “saw and believed” (20:8). Thus he appears as the ideal embodiment of the believer who knows his Lord, who perseveres by his side, who recognizes him in his hidden manifestation (as again in the epilogue 21:7) and hence also is given the promise that he will “remain” till the Lord comes (cf. 21:22f.)—all of which, no doubt, constitutes on a deeper level a lesson to the believing community. (Schnackenburg 1.572)

<sup>w2</sup> Schneiders’s view merits consideration, not in her conclusion regarding authorship, but with her method of pointing toward what the narrative expects. The beloved disciple “is neither a pure literary symbol nor a single historical individual.” Rather, the beloved disciple “is a kind of textual paradigm who concretely embodies in the text the corporate authority of the Johannine school” (2003: 246). The “ideal disciple” is refracted into a number of characters such as the Samaritan woman, the blind man, and Mary Magdalene who first as apostle witnesses to the risen



agent of God's mission" (553). He considers Mlakuzhyil's (239–41) and Kinzer's (447–65) similar treatments (Kierspel: 549). Schnelle also affirms the Cana-to-Cana frame, with Jesus' miracles eliciting "the *doxa* that evokes faith" (2005: 83).

### **Christology and Christological Titles**

<sup>w1</sup> One might allocate these titles, with some ambiguity, under various headings that designate Jesus' being and the stages of his coming into, and mission in, this world. Mealand (449–55) discusses John's Christology under three headings: preexistence, incarnation, and exaltation. Noting the scope of christological identity reflected in the titles, Mealand concludes that not only does John emphasize Jesus' preexistence but he also binds together closely the "cross, Resurrection and Ascension, and also . . . Easter, Pentecost, and Parousia." Thus John "offers nothing less than a complete theological reappraisal" (455).

### **Chronology of John and the Synoptics**

<sup>w1</sup> Burge's fuller explanation is that John's Thursday evening meal was also the Passover meal and the Friday evening meal was a ritual meal (*chagiga*) that marked the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (2000: 364–67, 499, 507–8). When John speaks about the *Preparation for the Passover*, it means preparation for the Sabbath of the Passover festival week. This would mean that the meal that follows Jesus' death in John is not Passover, and Jesus' death does not coincide with the slaying of the lambs. Burge's attempt to make "Preparation" refer to the Sabbath and the many feast meals of Passover Week, but not Preparation for Passover as such, does not convince. John's chronology has Jesus dying on the cross at the same time the Passover lambs are slaughtered. But it is true that John's portrayal of the meal in John 13, and the events that surround it, match the Last Supper meal in the Synoptics.

<sup>w2</sup> Scholars do not agree which is historically correct. To say John was errant because of theological interest or to say the same of the synoptic Gospels is too simple a resolution. If there is a *historical* solution, I lean toward the explanation of "divergent calendars." History and theology are intertwined. Through the centuries the enigma has not been resolved, either by the slash of the historical axe, or the probing of theological purpose. The task of the interpreter is to understand the theological contribution of each Gospel and respect the historical claims of each. The same point applies to the many other significant differences between John and the synoptic Gospels, as well as to differences among the synoptic Gospels.

### Disciples and Discipleship

<sup>w1</sup> Chennattu's final chapter, "The Covenant-Discipleship Motif and the Johannine Community," sets John's covenant-discipleship emphases in a broader historical context (Judaism[s], Qumran, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch); the sociohistorical and socioscience perspectives; and the synagogue practices of the first century (180–204). She sets forth "covenant-discipleship" as a paradigm that "redefines identity" (205–12).

### Drama in John

<sup>w1</sup> Brant suggests that viewing John as a performance drama helps readers to understand Jesus' excoriation of "the Jews" in John. In "performance" a person, often representing a group, plays the antagonist role in order to create the plot-dynamic of the theatric production. Characters' roles on stage are separate from their roles in real life. Thus, Jesus' harsh words to "the Jews" and their sharp criticism of Jesus do not necessarily reflect life relations. She notes that Jesus, his disciples, and the loved Bethany family were all Jews. John as theater does not warrant Christian animosity toward Jews as a race or people, or vice versa. The oft-lamented Johannine vilification of "the Jews" is resolved partly at least by respecting the genre of the literature; to read John otherwise does violence to both the genre and the people. Her treatment of John 6 in which *the Jews*—or his disciples for that matter—cannot understand Jesus' invitation to *eat* (lit. "munch on"/*trōgein*) his flesh (cannibalism?) should be understood as irony, not sacramental theology. Debates over the doctrinal nature of the Lord's Supper could have been avoided, she contends.

Brant also zeroes in on Jesus' self-consciousness and omniscience—his *persona*. Brant notes that Jesus' speech is often ambiguous; double meanings confound his hearers (e.g., "born again"/*anōthen*; "above" and "below"; "lifted up"). The result of this misunderstanding alienates Jesus from everyone, except perhaps the Samaritan woman and the man born blind. Even the disciples in the upper room discourse do not understand what Jesus means, as Philip's questions indicate. After the resurrection this changes. Jesus speaks clearly, unites with his disciples, and forms community. Now, being "lifted up" becomes clear: the cross *is* resurrection-glorification. Brant compares Jesus' death to the hero in Greek tragedy, describing it as a "beautiful" death, fulfilling his Father's will, caring for his mother, giving his life for others, and reuniting with his followers. These features are wonderful theatrical staging.

In her last chapter Brant fuses John's distinctive theology with theatric conventions. Wedding and death images are intertwined, clarified in the culmination of the plot, for Jesus is the bridegroom who dies and lives again. Greek tragedies show parallel features. But the punch comes when Brant says John *subverts* the tragedy genre. For Jesus' resurrection means union of

humans with God. Pain yields to joy—*that your joy may be complete!* John uses “tragedy” genre, but subverts it in that Jesus’ death is vindicated by resurrection.

Like Philip, I ask, “How can these things be?” Who in early Christianity would have known and utilized Greco-Roman theater conventions so well? Brant does not propose that John was staged in the tradition of Greek tragedy in the Roman theater, though its genre would lend itself to such use. Perhaps it was used in church assemblies on the occasion of Passover festivals (since such form the structure of the book). While Brant does not answer the “use” question clearly, she does suggest that the “audience takes a role in the performance . . . as a congregation to engage in a corporate act of remembrance” (260–61). How did it happen that the early church canonized such a Gospel? Did Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Athanasius recognize John’s theatrical genre? Or was this oral dimension of the Gospel lost as it became authoritative Scripture? These historical and canonical questions beg for answers.

Brant’s approach could contribute, however, to my proposal in two essays. The Jewish “beloved disciple” plays a stage role opposite to that of “the Jews,” thus resolving two enigmas of the Gospel [*Beloved Disciple*] [*“The Jews”*].

Other considerations emerge as well. The Gospel of Mark also has dramatic features witnessed by the numerous stage productions of Mark over the last twenty years. Whitney Shiner’s *First-Century Performance of Mark* identifies the dramatic features that aid performance in Mark. But do these Gospel features necessarily argue for performance? Or do they simply underscore the point that the Gospels functioned first and primarily for *oral* communication? What is the relation between the Gospels’ earlier oral form and their later written form?

Second, while Brant’s analysis regards Jesus’ *I AM* declarations as mystifying and *alienating*, how is it that precisely these images have functioned to empower a spirituality of intimacy and union between Jesus and his followers [*“I AM”*]?

Third, would a theatric rendering of the Gospel have lessened or exacerbated the early church’s separation from and hostility toward the synagogue? Might the Holocaust have been avoided if the church had realized that “the Jews” were simply a theatrical text role, as Brant suggests? This could be argued both ways. Dramatic presentation may intensify anti-Judaism. Brant understands that being *put out of the synagogue* (three times in John) does not mean separation of two peoples for reasons of differing beliefs, but rather loss of community friendship. This may “soften” anti-Judaism in John, but does not resolve the problem [*“The Jews”*].

### **Duality, Not Dualism**

<sup>w1</sup> Both Barton and Volf appeal to Ugo Bianchi’s widely accepted definition of dualism:

As a category within the history and phenomenology of religion, dualism may be defined as a doctrine that posits the existence of two fundamental causal principles underlying the existence . . . of the world. In addition, dualistic doctrines, worldviews, or myths represent the basic components of the world or of man as participating in the ontological opposition and disparity of value that characterize their dual principles. (1987: 506)

As Barton says, dualism has been used in the study of religions, especially Zoroastrianism, which posits two ultimate forces, good and evil (item 8 below), whereas John's theology, like the early Judaism in which it is embedded, is *monotheistic* and *monistic*. In John's prologue God/*Logos* is from eternity. The *Logos* is the life and light of the world; the darkness is not an eternal, ultimate causal rival. Even though the *world* hates believers and Jesus (15:18-25), yet God loves the world and sends his Son to redeem it (3:16; 12:32; 17:21, 23). God's creation power brooks no rivals, for the *world*, the sphere of evil's power, is that which God acts to redeem through Jesus Christ. Hence the "dualism" is not ultimate, but subject to God's sovereignty.

Further, it is important to distinguish among numerous types of dualism. Barton, drawing on Jörg Frey's distinctions in his study of Qumran, identifies ten types, similar to N. T. Wright's distinctions in his study of the NT in the context of first century Judaism. These categories are:

<u>Barton's (2008: 8–10)</u>	<u>Wright's (1992: 252–55)</u>
1. Metaphysical (equal causal powers)	1. Theological/ontological, and
2. Cosmic (world's opposing forces: good/evil)	2. Cosmological (creator God/creation)
3. Spatial (heaven vs. earth)	3. Moral duality (similar to 5 in Barton)
4. Eschatological (present vs. future)	4. Eschatological (same as Barton's)
5. Ethical (humanity into two groups, good and evil)	5. Theological/moral (similar to Barton's 5, 7)
6. Soteriological (humanity into saved and lost)	6. Cosmological: material world is shadow of real (similar)
7. Theological or prophetic (creator vs. creation)	7. Anthropological (same as Barton's 9)
8. Physical (spirit vs. matter)	8. Epistemological (reason vs. revelation)
9. Anthropological (body vs. soul)	9. Sectarian (one group saved)
10. Psychological (ethical internalized, war within)	10. Psychological (same)

The two lists vary, but number 8 in each is distinctive, though elements of Wright's 6 and 7 match Barton's 8. Wright's 8 is not in Barton. Wright uses the term *duality* for all these contrasts. Barton uses *dualism*, but concurs with Volf that it is more appropriate to use *duality* to describe the oppositions in Judaism and John's writings, since both affirm monism and monotheism. Thus John contains *dualities* that are transcended and resolved by John's all-encompassing and inclusive emphases, such as the *Logos* generating life that is the light of all people (1:4c) and the *Logos* as *the true light which enlightens everyone* (1:9).

The oppositional dualities are within creation, ordered by God's sovereignty:

John's Gospel starts with the affirmation that God through the Word *created* everything that is not divine (1:3). As a consequence, the creation as a whole can be properly

described as “what is his [the Word’s] own” (1:10). All the oppositional dualities within creation and between creation and God exist on account of God’s creative activity. (Volf 2008: 23)

Further, “The very opposite of dualism is at work here. God, who is love, loves the estranged world to the point of assuming flesh in order to suffer death at the hands of the world. In this way God . . . attracts it [the world] back to himself” (Volf 2008: 24).

Volf disagrees with Robert Gundry’s (2002) portrait of John’s sectarianism on three interrelated points: (1) the community’s relation to outsiders; (2) the nature of the community’s boundaries; and (3) the character of its identity (2005: 204–10; 2008: 39–48). With John’s strong emphasis on the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son, it is not possible to contrast the Father’s love for the world to that of the Son’s. For the Son gives his life for the world (1:29; 6:51). The world is not always negatively viewed in John.

While the Johannine community needed boundaries for its identity, the boundaries are permeable. The identity of the believers in John does not exclude others (10:16; 11:52); the community also welcomes outsiders into it (i.e., the Samaritans and the Roman official in ch. 4). Further, the boundaries are not clear cut, for some persons and groups are portrayed in a gray zone: John the Witness’s followers, Nicodemus, Caiaphas, even disciples at various belief stages.

Because the *goal* of Jesus’ prayer in John 17 is the “‘eventual salvation of the world’ with a strong emphasis on love . . . together with the oneness of Father, Son, and those who come to believe,” Volf contends that John “operates with a non-oppositional and inclusive account of personal identity” and that “this kind of identity lies at the heart of being itself, since it characterizes not only humans but the creator of everything” (2005: 208; 2008: 46). John’s portrayal of the community, therefore, is not inimical to living within and witnessing effectively to a politically pluralistic world, even while affirming *I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me* (14:6). In John’s context, this statement has primarily a positive thrust, not an exclusionary one. Volf sees the power of Christian witness in John overcoming dualities:

But God is not only the creator of all reality. God is also its redeemer. The aim of God’s redemptive activity is to overcome oppositional dualities so as to leave room in the whole of reality only for reconciled differences. By becoming flesh, the Word united itself intimately precisely to that which has alienated itself from God (1:14). Moreover, God loved the world which was opposed to him (3:16) so by becoming flesh the Word may also be “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29). The result is at least the partial transformation of oppositional dualities into non-oppositional ones: *duality between God and world is transformed into communion between God and Jesus’ disciples*. As a consequence, oppositional dualities with the creation are overcome too: enmity between men and women is overcome in a community of equality among them,

ethnic divisions between Jews and Samaritans, between Jews and Greeks, are bridged in a single community that worships God “in spirit and truth” (4:23). John’s account of creation and redemption together undercut dualistic modes of thought. (Volf 2005:192–93; 2008: 23–24; emphasis mine)

### Ecumenical Relations

<sup>w1</sup> Yoder (1958) argues that Anabaptists did not separate, but were forced out (28–35). I. B. Horst writes similarly,

When the Swiss Brethren started unwittingly on the course that was to perpetuate their memory for 450 years [now nearing five hundred years], they had no notion of becoming a sect or developing into a denomination. They desired nothing more than to restore the church of the New Testament within their own immediate community. Their obedience led them into an understanding of the Church as the community of faithful believers, covenanted to live as brothers [and sisters] and to witness to all. (1975: 10)

<sup>w2</sup> Kaspar, in his thoughtful reflection the importance of ecumenical efforts, says,

So ecumenism is not an addendum or a supplement to the mandate of the church, it is not the leisure activity of a few people who are mad enough to get involved in this adventure of the Holy Spirit. Ecumenism is grounded in the centre of the task of the church. It corresponds to the express will of Jesus, and it responds to the “signs of the times.” Our world is becoming increasingly unified as regards technology and the economy, above all as a result of modern means of communication. But at the same time the peaceful co-existence of individuals and peoples is profoundly threatened by religious conflicts—or rather ethnic, political or other conflicts under the guise of religion. At such a time the dialogue between churches and between religions is a prerequisite for the survival of humanity in peace and freedom. [see oral source in BCBC *John* bibliography]

Several decisive dates mark the development of the ecumenical movement:

- 1948, following the World War II catastrophe, the World Council of Churches was called into being. It now has three hundred member churches, including most of the Protestant and Orthodox churches.
- 1964, the Second Vatican Council officially declared the Roman Catholic accession to the ecumenical movement with the promulgation of its Ecumenism Decree, “*Unitatis redintegratio*.”
- 2004, a fortieth-year celebration of this unity. The gathering expressed gratitude for the churches moving “from separatism to amicable cooperation . . . The ancient and revered churches of the East are now considered sister churches of the Catholic local churches since the historic encounter of Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras in 1964 in Jerusalem. A new climate and a new atmosphere have arisen. Christians of the various churches and ecclesial communities no longer regard one another as enemies or rivals but as brothers and sisters who are already united in a fundamental but not yet full communion with one another on the basis of their shared faith in Christ Jesus and the one baptism” (adapted from Kaspar).

Kaspar addresses also the tragedy that new separations are occurring:

In some Western Protestant mainline churches the new movements, groupings and sects have confronted liberal tendencies in ethical questions . . . Over the past centuries there has been an extensive de facto consensus with the Reformation churches on ethical questions, with only negligible differences. Today, on the other hand, clear differences and deep fissures are appearing between the churches on questions like abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, etc. These tendencies have surfaced most clearly in recent years within the Anglican Communion. In some Reformation ecclesial communities we find similar problems. Because of this, new rifts have opened up which did not exist before, and justifiable hopes of progress in ecumenical rapprochement have disintegrated.

...  
The new liberal ethical orientation in a series of Reformation churches has in addition contributed to their internal fragmentation. In all these churches there are groups which are not in agreement with the liberal developments. They want to maintain their own denominational heritage, they therefore do not in the main wish to become Catholic.

Some people are now frustrated and give up on unity, but Kaspar uses the illustration of mountain climbing: at first it's easy, but then we get to the difficult nub that has to be scaled. That's where we are now. Amid the fragmentation, with more inevitably coming, we need to brace ourselves for the difficult climb ahead, keep our goal in mind, and be anchored in the words and vision of Jesus. It's his prayer that becomes our prayer, and it's his prayer that is empowerment for our climb and the work ahead.

We need to trust God's Spirit to lead us and be open to true dialogue with those of different persuasions. This is possible because:

Dialogical thinking does not consist primarily in an I-it relationship but in an I-you or a we-relationship. Truth reveals and proves itself in the "between" of the intersubjective speech process. Therefore it involves the subjective-existential truthfulness and interpersonal appropriateness of a statement just as much as the objective-factual correctness and logical coherence of the statement. It is not just a matter of what I say but of to whom and how I say it.

This understanding of truth approaches the Biblical understanding of truth in the sense of *emeth*, that is the truth which proves itself in truthfulness and faithfulness, and the biblical *communio* concept, that is the joint sharing of the truth... The confessions of faith of the early church therefore do not use the formula "I believe" (*pisteuo, credo*) but "we believe" (*pisteuomen, credimus*). [website source listed in commentary]

## **Eternal Life**

<sup>w1</sup> Beasley-Murray's short monograph on John is aptly titled *Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel*. From the prologue's opening verses to the purpose statement in 20:31, Jesus' gift is *life*. Virtually at the center of John's narrative is Jesus' word, *I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly* (10:10b). Beasley-Murray quotes F. Mussner on life (*zōē*) in the fourth Gospel: "life is the comprehensive concept of salvation which contains everything that the Savior

of the world, sent by God, brings to” humans, women and men, the rich and the poor (1991: 13; cf. also Beasley-Murray’s seven statements on pp. 11–13).

<sup>w2</sup> Most African languages do not have a word for *life*, but the concept “constitutes the center of religion and culture” (Apel: 41). Even so Apel, in comparing (eternal) life in Lutheran and African theology, contends that African society is closer to the biblical view. In African society, while God is the ultimate source of life, it is mediated through other beings, by one standing above the recipient. It is also connected to interrelations among humans. Broken relationships block life-flow in the community (Apel: 58–59).

### **Feasts**

<sup>w1</sup> Yee expounds the meaning of these feasts from the OT texts of institution, and thus develops her contribution topically. Daise, however, uses a different method, a sequential one, that proposes a development of the feast structure in the Johannine tradition. He assigns the feasts’ emphasis to a final redactor, which in turn competes with the prior structural significance of *the hour* in the Gospel. He also considers the work of Guilding and Goulder that John’s feast structure developed to provide a triennial reading (*seder*) schedule, whereas the Synoptics have only a one-year schedule.

Miyazaki’s contribution is the only one I know that seeks to combine the feast structure with a chiasmic analysis of the Gospel [*Chiasm*]. In his macro diagram of the primacy of the feast structure, only John 1, the two Cana portions, Lazarus’s raising, and the resurrection of Jesus narratives (20–21) are not correlated with feasts (18).

### **Glory and Glorify**

<sup>w1</sup> Both Frey and Nielsen recognize that *glory* and *glorification* play an essential role in John’s Gospel. Frey emphasizes its connection with Jesus’ death—foreshadowing it—and also a post-Easter projection onto the Gospel. Nielsen stresses the integration of *doxa* with recognition of Jesus’ divinity, so it is correlated with belief and salvation, as stated in the Gospel’s purpose (345, 357–66). Both regard *doxa* in the OT as God’s divine presence—hence also in John.

<sup>w2</sup> Talbert, viewing the use of *glory* more broadly, says,

To give glory to God is not to add something not present in God to God but to acknowledge something already present in God (Acts 12:23; Rev. 4:9; 16:9). To glorify someone other than God is to acknowledge that person’s honor or power. If God glorifies someone, he grants that person to participate in his honor or power or radiance (TDNT 2: 232–54). (Talbert 1994: 224–25)

## Gnosticism

<sup>w1</sup> A widespread suspicion of John's orthodoxy developed among twentieth-century Johannine scholars, which Hill labels as "The Orthodox Johannophobia Theory" (Hill: 11–55). The basis for this response is that the earliest appeals to John's Gospel were by gnostic Valentinians, from AD 130 to 190, with Heracleon writing the earliest commentary on John in 190 (Pagels 1989).

Gnostics were apparently the first to ascribe this Gospel to the apostle John. Justin Martyr's silence about John (more recently disputed) reinforced the notion of the Gospel's appeal to the gnostics. J. N. Sanders, C. K. Barrett, with traces of the same in R. Brown (1966: lxxxii) acknowledge this view as plausible.

F.-M. Braun, however, writing in French in 1959, countered this view, arguing for early orthodox use of John. But his work was mostly overlooked by other scholars, though Schnackenburg cautiously concedes Braun's theses (Hill: 21–23). Not until D. Moody Smith in 1984 began to question John's affinity with Gnosticism did a shift occur, even though René Kieffer (1992) earlier extended F.-M. Braun's critique (Hill: 422–23). Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* (ca. 180–88) exposed gnostic errors and mentions Heracleon's use of John but seems unaware of his commentary. Irenaeus's *Against Heresies* was written *before* Heracleon's commentary on John, which Hill says shows an accommodating stance toward Orthodoxy (209). Hill suggests that Irenaeus's critique of gnostic thought responds to Ptolemy (ca. 130) and Valentinus (ca. 160). Hill contends that "Orthodox Johannophobia" is without basis, especially after AD 170.

<sup>w2</sup> It took Hengel's trail blazer (1989), followed by Röhl (1991) and Nagel (2000) to jettison the "Orthodox Johannophobia" theory of the earlier twentieth century. Both major studies in German, Röhl demonstrates that gnostics generally (those outside the Valentinian circle) did not show preference for John (Hill: 45–46). Further, Nagel shows that not only is there little preference for John in the broader gnostic Nag Hammadi Library, but that some gnostic texts contain polemic against John (Hill: 55). Elaine Pagels popularized this complex issue with *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis* (1989). Related is her recent *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (2003), which, however, is dubiously gnostic. Bauckham's work (2006, 2007) eclipses and inters the "Orthodox Johannophobia Theory" for John.

## “The Jews”

<sup>w1</sup> Culpepper’s analysis of the increasing intensity of the Jews’ opposition to Jesus through ten episodes (1:19–12:50) and later at the Passion is on target (1983: 89–96, 125–32; summarized in Culpepper’s 1987 article: 276–81).

<sup>w2</sup> 1. Text Analysis. Moyter sums up the situation well:

[T]he theory I propose enables a more convincing explanation of the strange phenomenon which has bedeviled all attempts to pin down the reference of the Johannine “Jews,” namely their apparently shifting identity within the Gospel. They are both clearly identified with the religious authorities (9:22; 18:14), and clearly distinguished from them (7:32-35; 12:9-11). They are particularly associated with Judea (7:1; 11:7-8), but are also found in Galilee (6:41, 52). They are both linked with the Pharisees (1:19, 24; 3:1; 9:13-18) and distinguished from them (11:45-46). Likewise “the Jews” are identified with “the crowd” (which in John usually means “the festival crowd”) in 12:9, while in 7:1, 20 they are clearly distinguished from “the crowd.” (Moyter 2008: 150)

Moyter’s analysis introduces well the next topic: the “referent.” The options are:

<sup>w3</sup> 2. The “referent”:

a. Judeans. Based upon the etymological connection with *Ioudaia*, some scholars contend that “Judeans” are the proper referent and translation for *hoi Ioudaioi* (Lowe, Mason, Howard-Brook 1994: 23–27; Truex: 260; Boyarin 2007a: 67–71; and more). Cohen’s *Beginnings of Jewishness* supports this view, but he also suggests that in the first centuries BC and AD cultural and religious aspects developed for the *hoi Ioudaioi* identity. All known sources prior to 100 BC use *hoi Ioudaioi* as an “ethnic-geographic” designation—those who live in or came from Judea. Only one use—2 Maccabees 6:6, 9—is an exception. There, Cohen rightly says it must be translated *Jew* in the sense of religious identity, since the text says, they “confess themselves to be Jews” (1999: 90–91). Second Maccabees was the latest written text Cohen examined in his work.

In the first centuries BC and AD however, the ethnic-geographic meaning no longer holds sway after the middle or end of the second century B.C.E. However, he says, “My thesis is that the original meaning of the word is “Judaean,” a meaning that never completely disappears but that in the latter part of the second century B.C.E. is supplemented by a “religious” or “cultural” meaning: “Jew.” (1999: 3, from “Preface”)

Cohen’s contribution supports either the ethnic-geographical meaning or a religious, cultural meaning for “Jews” in John’s Gospel. Lowe’s article was one of the first (1976) to make the case that *hoi Ioudaioi* denotes *Judeans*, though he cites Cumming’s earlier article. Lowe, unlike Mason below, exempts Galileans, however, and says “Judaism” as such emerged when “the Hasmoneans [165–63 BC] expanded from ancient Judea to conquer almost all of Israel”

(108). After the Bar-Kochba revolt in AD 135, *Ioudaioi* more and more connoted “Jews” in a religious sense since the inhabitants of Judea had changed (Judeans in the geographical, ancestral denotation made less sense) (Lowe: 109). In John (AD 90) *Ioudaioi* denotes people from Judea.

Ashton, in his 1985 response to Lowe both clarifies and strengthens some points Lowe finds puzzling and faults others. He also asks what kind of Judeans they are, since not all Judeans are hostile to Jesus—and these are not called *Ioudaioi* (e.g., the disciples, the Bethany family). The *Ioudaioi* appear in relation to “authorities,” as von Wahlde argues, but even this “is not of any great moment” (57). What *symbolic* role do the *Ioudaioi* play in the Gospel? Thus Ashton contends that the issue of historical “referent” is one thing, but “sense” in the narrative is quite another (see point 3, following). Here Ashton believes Bultmann goes to the heart of the matter, regarding unbelief and obstinacy as leading characteristics. He observes also that in John 13–17, where Jesus speaks to his disciples, and in the prologue, *world* replaces *Ioudaioi* in denoting opposition to Jesus. Even beyond “referent” and “sense,” the question *why* is crucial. *Why* are some “Judeans” or “Jews” presented in such a negative light? To answer this question, he considers Meek’s and Freyne’s theses of a Galilee—Judea polarity: “the discomfiture of the sophisticated south by the unlettered north” (72; see 7:47-52), a point in my conclusion regarding the Synoptic structure (1994: 273–75). But Ashton does not believe this resolves the problem, since the Gospel presents Jesus (a Judean) and his disciples (Jews) “as if they were of a different race and nation from the *Ioudaioi*” (72). He appeals rather to Josephus for a similar case, where on occasion *Ioudaioi* appears to designate something different from “Judean” and/or “Jew.” He designates “those from Babylon” as the *Ioudaioi*, whereas those left behind at the time of the exile are not designated as *Ioudaioi* (*Ant.* XI. 173). See also Boyarin’s view below.

To return to the translation issue, Esler and Piper, from a social-scientific perspective, advocate for *Judeans* (2006: 163–64). Mason’s 2007 article contends that *hoi Ioudaioi* designates *only* ethnic identity, and compares to similar designations of other peoples (Egyptians, Babylonians, et al.). Samaria and Galilee are included in this *hoi Ioudaioi* ethnic identity. The terms *Jews*, *Judaism(s)*, and *Jewishness* did not exist in the first century AD (here he faults Cohen and contradicts Cook). Not until the time of Tertullian and Origen did *hoi Ioudaioi* have a cultural, religious meaning. His argumentation is persuasive but not convincing. Mason contends that *religious* “conversion” did not exist in ancient culture:

“conversion” [i]s in fact a movement from one *ethnos* to another, a kind of change in citizenship . . . There was no “religion” to which one might convert, even if one had wished to do so: taking on the Judaeans’ laws and customs was different from, and more than, being initiated in the cult of Cybele or joining a philosophical school, notwithstanding parallels to both. It was a change of ethnic-ancestral culture, the joining

of another people, as it had been already of the biblical paradigm, Ruth (1:16): “your people shall be my people.” (35)

What Mason lacks is explanation of biblical texts where the translation “Judeans” confounds (both Lowe and Ashton address those). In John 4:9, for example, why is there a distinction between Samaritan and Jew when both are Judeans? Why the woman’s surprise? What is the meaning of Jesus’ declaration in 4:22, *Salvation is from the Judeans* if the Samaritans are already Judeans?! It is nonsensical that *religious* dimensions are here denied. Further, Mason discounts two first-century inscriptions which don’t support his thesis as too minor to counter his argument (23–24). Nor does he consider the adjectival use (*Ioudaikos*) in Titus 1:14. How would that be translated? Most of his argument rests upon “outsider” sources (Roman writers, thus the “etic” method), whose references to *hoi Ioudaioi* refer to geographical ethnic ancestral identity. To argue that the many uses of *hoi Ioudaioi* in Acts, as well as in John, denote only geographical ethnic ancestral identity is a stretch. Religious issues are at stake. Rissi holds that *hoi Ioudaioi* in John is broader than geographical denotation; place-names are correlated with different religious-theological responses (2102–03). Even if one accepts the translation *Judeans*, the contention between Jesus, a Judean, and other Judeans in the Gospel hinges on religious issues. Hence, little is gained, except that combining this with my observation that there are no “Christians” in John shields John’s Gospel from the animus between Jews and Christians as such in the first century, putting the blame for hostile relations on the early church fathers (Tertullian and Origen especially, as Mason does). In this view the hostility in John 8 is intra-Judeans. This is a gain for Scripture in relation to Jewish-Christian dialogue and relationships.

Most commentators have not accepted the translation *Judeans*. Cohen’s treatment of the data, showing shifting meaning from ethnic only, to cultural religious identity during the first centuries BC and AD, better explains John 4:9, 22. Jewish scholar Cook speaks to this issue: “particularly in the Diaspora the specific term ‘the Jews’ or ‘Jews’ was a standard manner of alluding to the Jewish people,” evident in 2 and 3 Maccabees, Philo, and Josephus (263). In 1 Maccabees, however, “Israel” is used in referring to fellow covenant people, but outsiders designate them as “Jews.” “John’s usage emerges as seemingly unremarkable.” Cook says it is not the use of the term that is offensive (alternate explanations of “referent” are not convincing, 264; also Culpepper 1987: 126–31), but the statements made by Jesus (Cook cites twenty-two texts, 260–61) mark it anti-Jewish, though that is not “foremost on John’s agenda . . . John is primarily a *theologian* rather than a historian or even a polemicist” (269). The irony, however, is that John’s use of “the Jews” tacitly sets Jesus, his disciples, and Jesus-believers as other than Jews when they are obviously also Jews (Cook: 265).

b. Religious authorities. This is a widely held view. Carter identifies the conflict between Jesus and “the Jews” as religious, in that “the Jewish authorities” accused Jesus on five points they held dear: monotheism, revelation, covenant community boundaries, Jesus’ identity, and societal power with its status and Roman alliances (2006: 71–73). “The Jews” believed Jesus wrong in his views and actions as they infringed upon these sacred beliefs. In these beliefs the religious (theological) is enmeshed with the political (Carter 2008). These “flash points” are not peculiar to *hoi Ioudaioi* as Judeans (a geographic group) but to the *hoi Ioudaioi* as Jews with a unique religious identity and intense concern about the law and temple. In analyzing John 8, both Rensberger and O’Day regard the Pharisees and “the Jews” as interchangeable. “Religious authorities” catches them both.

Von Wahlde also identifies the referent of “the Jews” as the religious authorities, since thirty-six of the thirty-eight hostile uses refer to religious leaders (1982, 1993). Truex questions von Wahlde’s view, however, contending that fourteen of the thirty-six uses do not designate “authorities.” Further, von Wahlde does not consider the *positive and neutral* uses of *Ioudaioi* (Truex: 259). Rather, in his analysis von Wahlde eliminates thirty-three occurrences of *Ioudaioi*, saying that these refer to Judeans, individual Jews—those not hostile to Jesus—or are stereotypical uses like Pilate’s *King of the Jews* (1982: 46). If no distinction is made between Jews and *the Jews* in John’s Gospel, with significance given to the positive and neutral uses, John’s Gospel readily becomes anti-Jewish. If distinction is made, the conflict is intra-Jewish. Though not explicitly so identified, Jesus, his disciples, and the endeared Bethany family are also Jews (or Judeans, Mason). Further, the model “beloved disciple” is a Jew/Judean! The Gospel therefore is not anti-Jewish/Judean.

c. Elite group: returnees from Babylon who controlled the temple. Boyarin’s thesis represents a distinctive view that meshes with Ashton’s insight above and Carter’s claim that the issues of difference are both religious and political. Boyarin regards the conflict as intra-Jewish and holds that “the Jews” represent the elite returnees from Babylon who controlled the temple. The conflict is an intra-Jewish group rivalry (Boyarin 2007b). Those remaining in Judea during exile developed their identity apart from the temple. Jesus identifies with the Jews/Judeans who did not build their identity around the temple. But they were Torah observant, as was Jesus. Jesus, however, interpreted faithfulness to the Torah differently than did “the Jews” [*Law in John*]. In distinction from Boyarin’s contribution, the effort to identify “the Jews” as one sect within numerous first-century Judaisms, however, is speculative (Lieu 2008: 171, even with Boccaccini’s 2002 party analyses).

d. Persecutors. “The Jews” are those who persecute and put out of the synagogue those who confess Jesus as Messiah (9:22; 12:42; 16:2). J. Louis Martyn proposed in his groundbreaking 1968 book (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2003) that the harsh negative portrayal of “the Jews” in John stems from the twelfth Benediction in “The Eighteen Benedictions,” recited twice daily in Jewish prayer, as the clue to a viable explanation. Known as the *Birkat ha-Minim*, Martyn proposed it was added at the AD 70 Jewish Council of Jamnia:

For the apostates let there be no hope and let the arrogant government be speedily uprooted in our days. Let the Nazarenes [Christians] and the Minim [heretics] be destroyed in a moment and let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be inscribed together with the righteous. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humblest the proud! (Martyn’s wording, 1968: 58; quoted from S. Schlechter’s older 1898 translation in “Genizah Specimens,” *JQR*, old series 10: 197, 654–59)

Those who confess Jesus as the Messiah are regarded as heretics (the *Minim*). “The Jews” are those who enforce persecution against the Jesus believers, putting them out of the synagogue. Though this explanation won acceptance for over twenty years, Johannine scholars, however, no longer accept linking John’s negative cast of “the Jews” to the Twelfth Benediction. The Johannine socioreligious situation and the *Birkhat ha-Minim*, the Twelfth Benediction, cannot be traced to Jamnia (Jabneh) or to the development of rabbinic Judaism (Hakola: 40–55). Hakola (55–65), contends that ben Zakkai’s leadership and the significance of the Jamnia council are historically doubtful. Further, the Pharisees’ influence on the synagogue cannot be documented, nor can the addition of the *Birkhat ha-Minim* authorizing excommunication from the synagogue. Hakola (ch. 2) labels these notions that dominated Johannine scholarship for twenty years “fallacies.”

Numerous studies, dating from the 1980s (Katz and Kimmelman) contend that the Twelfth Benediction was not adopted until the second century (Hakola, ch. 2; Van der Horst 1994: 363–68, for the history of research). With this shift, Martyn’s thesis weakened, though his argument does not stand or fall completely on its connection to the *Birkhat ha-Minim* (Smith 2008: 40–42). The so-called Council of Jamnia, however, is also no longer considered to be a formal council that decreed against Christians. Burge says that the notion that the expulsion motif in John stems from the Jewish Council of Jamnia should be “relegated to the limbo of unestablished hypotheses” (2000: 275, n. 8, quoting J. Lewis in *A Beloved Disciple* 3.634–37).

Martyn’s theory seeks to explain *why* historically, but it only compounds the problem:

The dominant reconstruction, that the Gospel plays out a two-level drama reflecting the Johannine group’s experience of expulsion from the synagogue, is regularly seen as “explaining” the hostility and so as solution to it; Stephen Moyter rightly recognizes it, instead, as part of the problem because it retains the givenness of hostility (Lieu 2008: 172).

Scholarship on John since 1995 has played a key role in rethinking the Johannine community's relation to first-century Judaism (Reinhartz 1997–2001; Boyarin 1999, 2004, 2007a, b). As Reinhartz (2001: 42–43) observes, John 12:11 says “many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.” But the verb used here for “desert” (*hypago*) elsewhere refers to leaving one place to go to another. This means the desertion was purely volitional, not an expulsion by Jewish authorities. Kysar's shift in position in “The Tale of a Theory” (ch. 15 in Kysar's *Voyages* and also his 2005a essay; see fuller description in “History of Scholarship” in my introduction) counts crucially in assessing the decline of the Martyn/Brown theoretical construction of the Johannine community as the key to understanding “expulsion from the synagogue.” Kysar's earlier view regarded the Martyn/Brown explanation for John's use of “the Jews” to be one assured fruit of Johannine scholarship. But Kysar's later distancing himself from that view typifies the trend of recent scholarship (2005). Martyn's explanation assumed that Pharisees gained power after the fall of Jerusalem (the other parties did not survive) and the Jamnia Council consolidated their power, leading to persecution against heretics, those who believed in Jesus as Messiah. Hakola's lengthy study, however, contends that the Pharisees had no such power in synagogue discipline (67–74). Martyn's thesis has now virtually collapsed in Johannine scholarship, though commentators continue to use it to focalize, if not explain, John's peculiar use of the term *the Jews*.

e. Blasphemy. An alternative explanation for John's threefold reference to Jesus-believers being *put out of the synagogue* is interconnected with Jesus' claims or actions that, in Jewish law, may be deemed guilty of blasphemy. This provides reason for local, sporadic expulsion or being cut off from the synagogue. Truex develops this point of view (as noted in this commentary on 2:11–22; 5:18 with 10:30; and 8:31–59). Truex contends that Jesus' opponents judged him guilty of blasphemy on “three *points of sensitivity* or *flashpoints*: the claim that Jesus was equal with God, the affirmation that Jesus was the New Temple, and Jesus' saying the *Ioudaioi* are of the Devil” (266). Truex establishes criteria from OT and rabbinic sources that show how these topics are flashpoints for blasphemy (chs. 5–12). Truex (chs. 13–15) then addresses each charge socioreligiously in light of belief in Jesus-as-Messiah. Jesus' *blasphemy* is why “the Jews” put believers out of the synagogue—likely local in practice (Lincoln: 49).

While this explanation helps, drawing directly on the Johannine text, it does not name a specific group as the referent of “the Jews,” though Truex proposes “Judean,” encompassing the geographical and religious (pace Cohen), is the better of the translational options (260). Jesus' words provoke “the Jews” to opposition. Truex (263) lists thirteen such statements: 3:10; 5:37,

42, 44a, 44b, 45, 46; 7:19; 8:44, 47; 9:39-41; 19:15; plus seven references for the charge “you seek to kill me” [Jesus]. These galvanize the blasphemy charges.

Schoon regards all efforts to identify “the Jews” historically as well as the more recently proposed reading strategies seeking to resolve the Gospel’s hostile view of “the Jews” as “escape routes” that lead to “dead ends” (2001)!

<sup>w4</sup> 3. Solutions from the “sense” of the narrative, that is, relational features of the narrative in characters or themes. In seeking the identity of “the Jews” based on their narrative role, differing proposals also emerge.

a. Unbelief [*Belief/Unbelief*]. Bultmann says that “the Jews” (or hostile Judeans) in John personify “unbelief.” Schnelle perceptively remarks that the unbelief of “the Jews” is not wholly their choosing. They seek to kill Jesus because they, like Judas, are under the power of the evil one. Jesus does not speak generally, as if to all Jews, but specifically and directly (*you/hymōn*, pl.) to those who seek to kill him. Unbelief is the result of being “imprisoned in the world through the work of the devil (cf. John 8:41-46; 13:2) or as an act of God that hardens people’s hearts” (Schnelle 2009: 662–63, quote on 715). Tonstad extends this emphasis by regarding Jesus’ confrontation and expulsion of *the ruler of this world* through his glorification in death (12:31) as the heart of the Gospel. The Gospel has at its center Jesus’ confrontation against this “ruler,” a.k.a. *the father of lies* in 8:44, who in his composite appearance is Judas, “the Jews,” and Pilate, “the mother of lies” (cf. Kovacs). “The Jews” act out the power of the evil one. Freedom comes through the truth, believing in the one glorified through being “lifted up” on the cross where “the ruler” is exposed and expelled (cf. Lincoln 2000: 136–38).

A related proposal is Smith’s identification of “the Jews” as parallel to or a cipher of “the world” (2005: 57–59).

b. Moyter’s solution to this puzzle identifies the *characteristics* of “the Jews” in the narrative: “These Jews are those for whom Torah, temple, and purity form the particularly passionate horizon of their lives. Most of them lived in Judea, since their kind of Judaism required proximity to the temple to facilitate dutiful participation in all the festivals” (2008: 150). Lieu, however, doubts Moyter’s point that John portrays “the Jews” as intensely devoted to Torah Law, since the word *Law* seldom occurs in John (2008: 170, but see Pancaro findings that make Lieu’s view dubious) [*Law in John*].

With Schoon, Lieu regards the various efforts, historical and theological, to explain the identity of “the Jews” unpersuasive. These efforts do not provide “a palliative for the uses to which the Gospel was later put” (171, quote on 182). Further, “in addition to what the Gospel

says, and why it says it, there is the question of *how*” (182). John’s language resists “irenic translation” (Lieu: 182, responding to Moyter who proposed various translations using principles of dynamic equivalence). Because the issue dominates John’s narrative, it “directs us to the fundamental theological impulses of the Gospel” (182). In short, Lieu contends there is no satisfying explanation.

Moyter’s earlier work (1997) turns the dominant depiction of the community’s relation to “the Jews” on its head, arguing that the riposte, even invective, in John against “the Jews,” is—agreeing with many scholars—intra-Jewish. But the Gospel was written to appeal to Jews, so that the implied (Jewish) reader reacts negatively to “the hostile Jews” of the narrative, and decides *for* Jesus and the new Jesus-Judaism that is marked by living the new commandment of love for one another. The Gospel orients Jesus’ ministry to Jewish festivals and institutions—feasts and temple, even weddings—and presents Jesus *within* the rubric of Judaism. While some have argued for a “replacement” of the Jewish festivals and institutions in John (Suderman, Culpepper 2001), the relationship is more subtly cast. Jesus remains a child of Judaism, within Torah’s authority. Jesus offers alternative interpretations to the dominant cultic and ritual emphases of his time, as perceived and presented by the fourth evangelist.

c. Both Keener (1.212–23) and de Boer (141–57) independently propose that the term *the Jews* has an ironic tone in the narrative, since most all the characters in John are Jews. De Boer holds that it is the *actions* and *behavior* that lead to the conflictive, hostile language. Jews as a people or ethnic group are not the referents. Only those who accuse, seek to kill, and finally cry, “Crucify!” are “the [hostile] Jews.” John’s portrait of them as Jews is ironic: are “the Jews” denouncing Jesus *really* Jews? Crucially, then “the [hostile] Jews” connotes actions and behaviors, not ethnic nor religious identity per se. John preserves deep connections to Judaism; he uses the Jewish Scriptures as warrant for his arguments. Jesus observes the feasts, infusing them with new meaning. John does not dissociate Jesus from Judaism or Jewish identity.

Moyter’s approach, though not meant as irony, could bolster Keener’s and de Boer’s point. Moyter sees striking parallels between how “the Jews” are depicted and the actions and questions of the disciples, also Jews: “This *relegation* of the disciples to the position of ‘the Jews’ is highly significant” (Moyter 2008: 157). The similarities are:

- *Judas* does the work of Satan, colluding with the authorities to kill Jesus (13:21-30; cf. to 8:44).
- Peter asks the question “the Jews” asked (7:35): *Lord, where are you going?* (13:36a) and hears the same reply “the Jews” heard (13:36b; cf. 7:36).
- Peter promises loyalty but is told he will deny Jesus three times (13:36-38), and his denials may be compared to the crowd saying Jesus is a deceiver in 7:12, to

the people of Jerusalem sarcastically saying *we know where this man is from* in 7:27, and to the Pharisees saying no prophet comes from Galilee in 7:52.

- Thomas in 14:5 queries, *Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?* This resembles “the Jews” puzzlement in 7:35.
- Philip asks Jesus in 14:8, *Lord show us the Father, and we will be satisfied*, echoing the “implicit request of Nicodemus in 3:2.”
- Judas, not Iscariot, questions Jesus in 14:22, *Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?* This echoes “the unbelieving challenge” of Jesus’ brothers in 7:3-4. (Moyter 2008: 157–59).

Raymond Collins notes that Jews are spoken of only twice in the Gospel in Jesus’ direct discourse: *Salvation is of the Jews* (4:22) and . . . *as I said to the Jews, so now I say to you, “Where I am going, you cannot come”* (13:33). The latter is connected to similar statements directed to *the Jews* (in 7:33-34 and 8:21), but in these Jesus concludes with stinging words (*but you will not find me and you will die in your sins*); in addressing his disciples this latter statement does not occur (2001: 158–75; note also Collins’s treatment of “the Jews” in the passion narrative).

Moyter’s effort to shed new light contends—controversially, for sure—that ecclesiology is absent in John. There is no church in John, though such might be envisioned in the future in Jesus’ high priestly prayer. The community of believers will be on trial for its adherence to truth and nonviolence (here drawing from Volf’s comments on John in *Exclusion and Embrace*). The authenticity of the community will be tested (future tense) by four criteria: greater works in 14:12, answered prayer in Jesus’ name in verses 13-14, the Spirit’s presence manifested in the community’s quality of love in verses 15-21a, and receiving revelatory insight from the Holy Spirit in verses 21b-26. From Jesus’ standpoint in the narrative that community is not formed yet (Moyter 2008: 162).

d. Brant’s proposal that John’s narrative is drama for stage production seeks to neutralize the hostility of “the Jews” and Jesus’ harsh words. Though her proposal is persuasive, it may compound the problem, since stage production may engender hostility [*Drama in John*].

The search for better solutions continues, which O’Day calls for (1995: 507). Hakola contends that John deliberately leaves the identity of “the Jews” in John unspecified. Given the varied explanations of the term in the text and referent, Hakola proposes that John is intentionally ambiguous. (Cf. Michael’s provocative comment: “The author retains his privacy, a privacy that even the most inquisitive commentator will do well to respect” [24].) Hakola further maintains that John’s Gospel witnesses to both continuity and discontinuity with Judaism(s) in the first century (218–19).

Sources on this topic abound. The several books of essays, one edited by Farmer, another by Beiringer, et al., and another by Evans and Hagner, together with the four essays in Bauckham and Mosser, eds., cover the scope of work, and point to hundreds of other sources in their footnotes. Other accessible and useful treatments are Carter 2006: 67–69; 2008: 156–58; and Moyter 1997: 46–57. Hakola is iconoclastic of most all efforts of Johannine scholarship to address the issues correctly (1–86). For further treatment of the history of research and alternative reading strategies, see Swartley 2006: 281, n6 and 312–13, n23.

[An ancillary issue to the above is “the parting of the way(s)” between Christians and Jews (articles and books passim—Dunn has two books, one as editor). Yoder (2003a: 43–66) and Boyarin (1999, 2004, 2007a, b) question the notion of any early (official) “parting of the way(s)” between Jews and Christians. Their contributions date the separation of the Jesus-community from the synagogue to either the second (Yoder) or fourth to sixth centuries (Boyarin, see his 2007b essay, 71–85 in *The Ways That Never Parted*, Becker and Reed, eds.); the three volumes of *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* address both topics.]

### **Love Ethic in John**

<sup>w1</sup> McDermond (223) says regarding 1 John 4:7–5:4:

We must recognize, however, the centrality of “love” in this passage: the verb *to love* (*agapaō*) is used twenty-eight times in 1 John, and eighteen of those occurrences are in this subunit. Additionally, the noun *love* (*agapē*) is employed thirteen times here with an additional five occurrences in the rest of the letter. Clearly, “love” is a central theme in these verses. The question then becomes: what is “new” that warrants such a concentrated focus on *love*, despite having already addressed the subject twice?

### ***Sophia and Logos***

<sup>w1</sup> Witherington presents the entire Gospel as Wisdom! He holds that *Sophia-wisdom* is the portal for understanding Jesus in John: “[R]ecognizing that Jesus is being portrayed as God’s Wisdom, indeed Wisdom incarnate, in this Gospel Wisdom is the *key* to understanding the presentation of the central character of the story” (20). Wisdom is clearly in the prologue and once we see it, we can see “that Wisdom is the key to every aspect of this complex work” (20). On John 1:38 where the disciples seek out Jesus and go to where Jesus is staying, Witherington quotes Sirach 51:23, 25-27, “See with your own eyes,” and Wisdom 6[:12]: “*Wisdom is . . . easily discerned by those who love her, and is found by those who seek her*” (70). A more convincing connection appears in his treatment of Jesus’ *I Am* declarations and his exposition of John 6:53-58. First, “light and life are the two chief things that Wisdom . . . bestow[s] on the devotee in the Jewish wisdom

literature” (157; Prov 8:35-36; Wis 7:25-26; 8:3). The true vine image has a precursor in Sirach 24:17, but numerous OT prophetic texts speak of Israel as a vine also (Isa 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Hos 10:1; Jer 2:21; Ezek 15:1-6; 17:5-10; 19:10-14). Second, Jesus’ offensive command to eat his flesh and drink his blood may reflect wisdom’s invitation to “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed” (Prov 9:5; cf. Sir 24:21; Witherington: 158). These connections are spotty in his commentary, and hardly make the case that wisdom is the key to the Gospel, even though he also connects abiding in Jesus to the “Word/Wisdom of God” (260).

Sharon Ringe also sees wisdom explicitly at work in Jesus’ entire ministry in John. She first analyzes the OT wisdom texts and then focuses on *friendship* in John. She believes *Logos* in the prologue is best understood in the wisdom tradition. But she also recognizes her presumption, acknowledging that wisdom (*sophia*) never occurs in John, thus a matter “unresolved in this study” (62). She cites three sources that overcome the problem of no express mention of wisdom in differing ways but see John as Wisdom Gospel (Scott; Brown; and Elizabeth Johnson). But she also cites three sources from “the opposite side”: Luise Schottroff, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and Judith E. McKinley, “who conclude that the grammatically masculine *logos* and the male Jesus have so eclipsed ‘Lady Wisdom’ that not only her grammatical presence but even her feminine traits and female roles have been thoroughly co-opted and masculinized” (Ringe: 62). Strong cases can be made for both sides. While her contribution on friendship is persuasive and helpful (she makes no distinction between *phileō* and *agapaō*), her treatment of wisdom in John is left hanging. Quite striking is Hengel’s 1990 article on the OT in the fourth Gospel. He treats John’s OT quotations but never mentions wisdom.

Ashton undertakes one of the more thorough treatments of wisdom’s relation to John’s Gospel (1994: 5–31; 2007: 366–83 and aspects of his Excursus VIII, “The Fourth Gospel and the Wisdom of Solomon,” 384–453). He emphasizes a double characteristic in Jewish wisdom literature. It is both remote (Job 38) and accessible (the frequent admonitions to seek wisdom), hidden and revealed, a mystery and yet instruction to follow. But significant variants occur between wisdom and *Logos* in John. Whereas in *I Enoch* 42:1-2 wisdom seeks a place to dwell among humans but didn’t find any (cf. John 1:11), she then returns to her place among the angels (in *I Enoch*; however in Sirach 1:15 she abides faithfully). In John *Logos* becomes incarnate and dwells among humans on the earth. Ashton (1994: 31) holds that John’s prologue shows dual interests: to present a variation on the wisdom tradition and a hymn lauding the *Logos*.

While parallels between the wisdom tradition and John abound, nonetheless *John does not connect Jesus explicitly to wisdom and chooses rather to connect Jesus to the Logos-Word tradition.*

Why? Because John's Gospel is fully incarnational. *Logos* takes on human flesh. In a recent article, Frey holds that 1:14b-c is pivotal: *glory* is unveiled and climactically disclosed in Jesus' death on the cross (13:31-32; 17:1-5). The crux of Jesus' glory is revealed in "the crucified one in his 'hour'" (2008: 375, 382-83). In chapter 12 and the farewell discourse, *glory* points toward the cross, the "hour" (384-97). John's *lifted up* (*hypsōō*) on the cross lies at the heart of the Gospel. Frey's perception is correct. The Gospel's distinctive character as *theologia crucis* does not fit the wisdom tradition.

The *Logos* tradition, rooted in the OT prophets, knows the suffering and death of Jesus' messengers (Matt 23:34-35; Luke 11:50-51); the *Sophia* tradition knows little of this (the closest is Wis 2:12-22 where the righteous person is unjustly accused, rejected, and "condemn[ed] to a shameful death." This is exceptional in wisdom, but dominant in the prophetic tradition). Wisdom 2:12-22 is also thought to echo Isaiah 52:13-53:12. John's *Logos* stands in the prophetic tradition as these texts show: "'You are my *witnesses*,' says the LORD, 'and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may *know* and *believe* me and understand that *I am he*'" (Isa 43:10) and "the *testimony* of Jesus is the spirit of *prophecy*" (Rev 19:10c) (emphases mine).

What we think about Jesus and the cross is strategically important, as Moltmann puts it eloquently in *The Crucified God*: "Christian faith stands and falls with the knowledge of the crucified Christ, that is, with the knowledge of God *in* the crucified Christ, or to use Luther's bolder phrase, with the knowledge of the 'crucified God'" (65). Similarly, Chris Marshall gets it right, saying of the Gospel writers: "They see Jesus' death as more than simply the foreseeable or inevitable consequence of this confrontation with injustice, though it is that too. They portray it as a unique event, the climactic expression of his [Jesus'] vocation of manifesting God's reign and the fulfillment of God's intention for his mission" (2003: 85, see nn. 66-78). Robert Webber graphically makes the point in his title for chapter 6 of *Divine Embrace*: "God's Story: *He Stretched Out His Arms of Love on the Hard Wood of the Cross*" (125). In Matthew and John this "inevitable consequence" accords with Scripture. The fulfillment motif laces both passion narratives. The necessity of Jesus' death is *theological* in that it demonstrates God's covenant faithfulness unto death. On the human side it exposes "what has been hidden from the foundation of the world," generative violence under sacred mask (Girard). It is *political* in that the Jewish temple leaders and Pilate (Rome) thus maintain peace and order (cf. Östman: 103-4).

In addition to this heart of the matter, we might consider other factors as well:

1. *Sophia/Wisdom* is the first *created*: "The Lord created me at the beginning of his work" (Prov 8:22). This is not what John 1:1 says about *Logos*. In John the *Logos* belongs to and reveals God's essence (1:18; 14:9). *Logos* is the agent of God's creating

and redeeming the world (not the third emanation from the Father, as in Valentinian Gnosticism). If *Logos* anticipates Jesus Christ, and it surely does in John, the church's creed (owing to John's Christology) holds that the Son was preexistent from all eternity with/in the Father, "begotten, *not made* [created]" (Nicene Creed, emphasis mine).

John, by his silence on *Sophia*, chooses *Logos* because the Gospel emphasizes the preexistent *oneness* between Father and Son. John is best understood within the prophetic tradition (Meeks, 1967; Hanson; Lincoln [2000] for the OT prophetic "lawsuit" genre as central to John).

2. A phrase describing Wisdom (Wis 7:25-26) may conflict with John's theology:  
*For she is a breath of the power of God,  
 and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty;. . .  
 For she is a reflection of eternal light,  
 a spotless mirror of the working of God,  
 and an image of his goodness.*

This wisdom text speaks of *Sophia* "as a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty." The word *emanation* is problematic, for it smacks of gnostic language, where various eons—*nous* (mind) first, and then *Sophia* (wisdom), a total of thirty—*emanate* from the Father God, and then after Wisdom's battle against Silence, Wisdom creates the inferior Creator God. The notion of *emanations* does not fit with John's emphasis that the Word/*Logos* is coeternal with God, let alone that the Revealer God the Father must win back the sparks of light (salvation) from the evil matter (*hylē*) of the Creator God. The *Logos* Christology protects against gnostic error, as Talbert obliquely points out, and insures "the permanent union of the pre-existent Word and the human Jesus" (74). Talbert speaks of the interchangeability of *Word, wisdom, angels, and Holy Spirit* (272, when discussing the descent/ascent motif). But John, unlike Philo seeking to wed Judaism to Hellenistic philosophy, does not regard these as interchangeable. The Word/Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit into the disciples (20:22). While the Holy Spirit's role in the farewell discourse is continuous with Jesus' presence and work, the Spirit nevertheless is distinct from Jesus. Jesus' appearances to his disciples continue after Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on them. Jesus the Word is of God, with God, and is God in distinct manner, and also one with humanity in incarnation.

To grasp the issues involved, Richard Bauckham's *God Crucified* (1998) clarifies that the NT's high Christology does not develop from the gradations of holy figures, angels, *hypostases* (wisdom), to get to Jesus Christ as one close to or with God. Rather, what is said of God in OT Scripture, both in identity and activity/work, is said also of Jesus Christ in the NT. Thus a "high Christology" does not jeopardize monotheism! Jesus Christ is included in the one God (Swartley 2007: 230–35).

<sup>w2</sup> Heath considers Mark 10:18 (//Luke 18:19) where the rich ruler calls Jesus “Good Teacher” and Jesus sharply reacts, saying, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.” Matthew’s change to “what good thing” (19:16-17) may or may not suggest demurring on Mark’s point. Matthew does, however, make a similar point in his use of *teleios* (“complete” or “perfect”) in 5:48 and 19:21, connoting approximation of the unity of the Father and the Son (520–21).

<sup>w3</sup> The roots of trinitarian theology appear in John. John’s presentation of the Father-Son unity is strong. The Father and the Son are one, yet distinct. The work of the Holy Spirit continues the work of the Son (chs. 14–16; 20:19-23). Trinitarian theology seeks to maintain distinction between God’s oneness in divine identity and threefold unity of Father, Son, and Spirit. The eastern Cappadocian fathers spoke of Trinity as one God with three *faces* (*prosopoi* or *hypostases*), while the western fathers, especially Athanasius, emphasized that all three are the same *being*—thus *homoousion*. The East was more flexible in understanding the “threefold” dimension and stressed simply the *unity* of God. The West was more philosophically concerned that the three share the *same being* to protect monotheism, conceived in this rational way.

One point of dissension, related to the *sophia* issue in John, was interpretation of Proverbs 8:22-23, “The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.” This verse became a sticking point between Athanasius and the Arians. Both took the *me* created (later *I*) to refer to Jesus Christ. Athanasius limits it to “the human nature (economy) that Christ took on for our salvation” (LaCugna: 38). This *economy* includes Jesus Christ’s historical role in effecting salvation. Athanasius thus accommodates *economic* distinctions within the Trinity while keeping intact the three-in-one substance (*homo-ousia*) of the Trinity.

### Unsettled Matters

<sup>w1</sup> *Structure of chapters 7–10*

The case of the three different structural options noted in my commentary are:

*9:1–10:21 (O’Day)*. As usual in the Gospel, a miracle sign or work (John 9), often including dialogue, is followed by a discourse (thus 10:1-21 belongs to ch. 9). Indeed, 10:21 readily serves as the bookend to Jesus’ healing of the blind man, in that “the Jews,” in their blindness, rhetorically ask, even after Jesus’ word to them in 9:40-41: *Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?* The weakness of this ending-point is that the *shepherd-sheep* imagery in 10:1-18 continues in 10:25-30 and verses 31-39 resume the “the Jews”/ Jesus verbal “flyting” [*Drama in*

*John*], with “the Jews” negative response to Jesus (10:31-33). This is followed by Jesus’ resounding defense of his high christological claims, and then his furtive escape (parallel to the ending of ch. 8). Still further, chapter 10 introduces new imagery of the sheep/ flock and Jesus as gate/door and shepherd. Unlike the motifs of water and light, the sheep/shepherd motif does not fit with the Feast of Tabernacles.

7:1–10:21 (*Moloney*). The temporal marker, all during the Feast of Tabernacles, is the strength of this division. However, the sudden shift of imagery between chapters 9 and 10 and the similar endings of chapters 8 and 10 seem to argue otherwise. Chapters 7–8 and 9–10 appear as two parallel parts of one whole. Also, if this is seen as one whole, John’s usual pattern of sign-discourse is interrupted, for this unit then consists of discourse-sign-discourse, a deviation from John’s previous literary style. It is true, however, that in chapter 11 the discourse, or better, dialogue, is interwoven with the sign.

7:1–9:41 (*Talbert*). Jesus’ healing of the blind man gives *light* to him, enacting Jesus’ claim in 8:12: *I am the light of the world*. Also, Jesus’ telling the blind man to wash in the pool of Siloam to receive sight (light) fulfills the water and light symbols of the Feast of Tabernacles. Thus “Jesus proclaims himself the fulfillment of the Tabernacles’ ceremonies of water and light” (*Talbert*: 163). This view, though strong, requires a shift in literary sequence: the lengthy discourse (chs. 7-8) precedes the sign (ch. 9), which *Talbert* recognizes (143).

*John Poirier* contends that Hanukkah embraces as well the entire *light of the world* narrative, beginning with 8:12, since light is the primary symbol of Hanukkah. *Poirier* holds that all of *John* 7–10 is one structural unit; he regards all of 8:12–10:39 oriented to Hanukkah. Thus 8:12–10:39 constitutes the Hanukkah unit, with *light* and *good shepherd* complementary symbols. *Poirier*’s view resolves the problem of splitting the Shepherd’s discourse into separate times, two months apart. *Poirier*’s argument also recognizes the superiority of *At that time (egeneto de)*, over the NSRV textual reading “then after . . .” (*egeneto tote*) at the beginning of verse 22, thus connoting continuity of time, rather than marking a new time (468–69), as well as the significance of Solomon’s portico lit with lights during the rededication of the temple, evoking also Solomon’s earlier dedication (469–70). The *egeneto de* reading has stronger manuscript support and is preferred as the more difficult reading (468–69). It might then be translated: *In those days* (cf. *Mark* 1:4, 9, with same Greek verb) *the festival was taking place in Jerusalem* (my translation). The RSV translation is closer to this sense: *It was the feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem; it was winter and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon*. Transition to new time is not indicated. *Poirier*’s argument calls for a fine-tuning of the Gospel’s feast-structure.

## Witness and Testify

<sup>w1</sup> Bauckham identifies the seven witnesses in the Gospel's first phase of testimony, and two witnesses in the second phase, as follows:

There are two phases of the trial and thus also of witness. In the first phase, which comprises the Gospel's own narrative scope, there are seven witnesses. The number is not accidental, in view of the other series of sevens in the Gospel. Seven witnesses add up to complete witness, exceeding the Torah's requirement of two witnesses for adequate witness. The seven witnesses, in order of appearance, are John the Baptist (1:7, etc.), Jesus himself (3:11, etc.), the Samaritan woman (4:39), God the Father (5:32), Jesus' works or signs (5:36), the Scriptures (5:39), and the crowd who testify about Jesus' raising of Lazarus (12:17). In the second phase of the trial, the phase that lies in the future from the perspective of the narrative, there are only two witnesses: the Paraclete (15:26) and the disciples (15:27), of whom the Beloved Disciple is one (19:35; 21:24).

The temporal succession of the two phases of the trial is clear. The seven witnesses bore their witness in the period of the history of Jesus, while the disciples, with the Paraclete, bear their witness in the period of the Paraclete. But the relationship is more than one of temporal succession. The testimony of the Paraclete and the disciples both continues and explicitly refers back to the witness of Jesus. It has the history of Jesus for its content. The special role of the Beloved Disciple's witness is in part that it puts the witness of the disciples into written form, as the Gospel, and thereby it enables the seven witnesses to continue to testify. There is a nice *inclusion* between the references to the witness of the Baptist in the Prologue and the witness of the Beloved Disciple in the conclusion. Of both it is said that they testify—in the present tense (1:15; 21:24).

(Bauckham 2008a: 123)

## Women in John

<sup>w1</sup> Following the order of John's narrative presentation, my pairing (not necessarily gender balanced) would be: Nicodemus with the Samaritan woman (contrast); the Roman official with the paralyzed man (contrast in faith-initiative); the blind man with Martha *and* Mary (parallel in faith and devotion); Lazarus with the beloved disciple (both *whom Jesus loved*)—however, both never speak except for the beloved disciple briefly in 12:25 and 21:7 with similar wording but both crucially shape the narrative from chapters 11–21—this parallel though is tenuous, since it just might be the case that the beloved disciple is Lazarus [*Beloved Disciple*]; Peter with Judas (both desert Jesus); Mary Magdalene with Thomas (parallel in strong confession); and the restored Peter with the beloved disciple (parallel, but with vocational difference in 21:15-24).

<sup>w2</sup>For more, see: Kopas 1986; Nortje 1986; Seim 1987; Rena 1987; Thiessen 1990; Fletcher 1994; O'Day 1998; Schneiders 1999/2003: 93–114; Graham Brock 2009.



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