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Editorial

This issue is unique for two reasons: first, it marks the transition from one editor to another and second, it has a distinctly Johannine flavor. I shall say something about the former as I conclude. The journal features twelve selected articles from SATS's annual e-conference titled, "Jesus and the Fourth Gospel," followed by two book reviews. Covering a broad spectrum of themes ranging from Johannine historicity to the gospel's implications for leadership, youth work, and public theology, the ensemble will prove enjoyable to readers across the spectrum of theological sub-disciplines. As you immerse yourself in the various dimensions of the Fourth Gospel, our hope is that this issue will be life-giving and faith-affirming, like the subject of its content (see John 20:30–31).

Conspectus 32 articles

The issue launches into Prof. Paul N. Anderson's article, "Jesus in Johannine Perspective: Inviting A Fourth Quest for Jesus." Here, Anderson critiques the parsimonious quests for the historical Jesus, lamenting the neglect of the Gospel of John. He advocates for a Fourth Quest for Jesus—one inclusive and appreciative of John's unique and historical contribution.

In another article about John's historicity, "Is Jesus John's Mouthpiece? Reconsidering Johannine Idiom," Dr. Lydia McGrew aptly challenges the view that Johannine idiom is indicative of elaborations of Jesus's discourses on the part of the evangelist. Rather, by referring to explanatory "asides" and unexplained allusions, she argues that John was scrupulous in his recordings and retellings of Jesus's teachings.

Moving on to hermeneutics, in her article, "Jesus, our Liberator: An Intercultural Dialogue," Prof. Elizabeth Mburu underscores and demonstrates the importance of contextual African hermeneutics, illustrating how such a reading reveals Jesus as liberator in John 8:31–47 and what the significance is for African contexts.

Next is an article entitled, "On Understanding and Translating *ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν* in John's Gospel against the Backdrop of English and a Selection of African Languages," by Dr. Lynell Zogbo. Zogbo maps out and analyzes the use of John's unique double "amen" formula, offering insightful suggestions to Bible translators in Africa and beyond.

In his article, "The Use of *πιστεύω* in the Gospel of John: Some Considerations on Meaning and Issues of Consistency and Ambiguity," Dr. Tony Costa analyzes the Fourth Gospel's use of *πιστεύω* by assessing how John uses this word and its other word associations and descriptors in various contexts to distinguish true believers from those embodying a counterfeit faith.

Dr. Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh enters the world of socio-rhetorical analysis in his article, "The Purpose of *σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα* in the Gospel of John: A Socio-Rhetorical Reading of John 4:46–54," by engaging the inner texture of socio-rhetorical reading to re-interpret John 4:46–54. He considers the pairing of *σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα* and the mode of healing as critical factors for understanding the narrative and its rhetorical aims of inducing faith and promoting Jesus above others.

In his article, "Denial Versus Betrayal: A Case Study Analysis of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot in the Fourth Gospel," Prof. Dan Lioy undertakes a case study analysis of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot in the Fourth Gospel with the intent of exploring the reason for the two radically different outcomes of both disciples' lives.

Next, Drs. Cornelia van Deventer and Bill Domeris, in an article entitled, "Spiritual Birth, Living Water, and New Creation: Mapping Life-Giving Metaphors in the Fourth Gospel," launch from Cognitive Metaphor Theory to illustrate how images of birth, water, and new life work together to create a metanarrative of reproductive language that includes the gospel's female hearers in a significant way.

In his article, "Of Sheep, Shepherds, and Temples: A Social Identity Reading of the Good Shepherd *Paroemia* on the Way to a Destroyed Temple," Dr. Christopher Porter analyzes the Good Shepherd discourse in John 10 in light of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, foregrounding an exilic context strengthened by the intertextual use of Ezekiel 34 and Zechariah 10–11.

In another article on the Good Shepherd discourse, Rev. Isaac Boaheng ushers us into the realm of Practical Theology with his essay entitled, "Exegetical and Theological Reflections on John 10:1–18: Implications for Contemporary African Christian Leadership." Boaheng responds to the challenge of ineffective leadership in the contemporary African society by exploring how leadership principles embedded in John 10:1–18 might inform the behaviors, styles, and leadership philosophies of African leaders.

Another Practical theological offering includes Mr. Kevin Muriithi Ndereba's article, "Engaging Youth Worldviews in Africa: A Practical Theology in Light of John 4." Ndereba problematizes worldview engagement in Africa from a Kenyan context, arguing that robust youth engagement must straddle the traditional/animistic, modern, atheistic, and postmodern worldviews. Launching from Osmer's approach, he analyzes John 4, exploring the ramifications of John's Christology for youth ministry practice and higher education.

In his article, "The Prologue of John: A Conceptual Framework for African Public Theological Discourse," Dr. Reuben Turbi Luka explores whether the incarnational theology of the Johannine prologue could be instrumental in the formulation of a normative methodology for doing public theology, particularly in Africa. Turbi concludes by arguing that God's invasion of human history in the incarnation serves as an enduring hermeneutical springboard, a defining model for carrying out the goal of public theology in a normative fashion.

Last, but not least, the issue concludes with two book reviews: Dr. Dustin Burlet reviews *Origins: The Ancient Impact and Modern Implications of Genesis 1–11* by Paul Copan and Douglas Jacoby, and Mr. Moses Vongjen reviews *Majority World Perspectives on Christian Mission*, edited by Nico A. Botha and Eugene Baron.

New Editorial Board Member

On behalf of the Editorial Board chairperson, Dr. Johannes Malherbe, I am honoured to welcome Dr. Wanjiru Gitau of Palm Beach Atlantic University, Florida, to the board. Dr. Gitau lectures in Practical Theology, Intercultural Studies, and World Christianity. She is the author of the 2018 IVP monograph *Megachurch Christianity Reconsidered: Millennials and Social Change in African Perspective*, the winner of the 2019 Christianity Today award in the Global Mission category. We are grateful for Dr. Gitau's partnership. Welcome, colleague.

New Editor

As mentioned, *Conspectus* 32 marks the transition from one journal editor to another. Dr. Manyika has served as editor for three issues (*Conspectus* 29, 30, and 31) and has been instrumental in building and equipping the *Conspectus* Editorial Team and ushering the journal into a new era. Dr. Manyika, your Johannine colleague is pleased to dedicate this Johannine issue to you. We acknowledge what you have poured into *Conspectus*, and we look forward to your continued partnership as member of the Editorial Board.

In Christ
Dr. Cornelia van Deventer
Editor

Jesus in Johannine Perspective: Inviting A Fourth Quest for Jesus

Paul N. Anderson
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Abstract

Despite the fact that the Fourth Gospel has been a puzzlement to modern scholars seeking to construct a solid, bare-minimum understanding of Jesus and his ministry, a parsimonious approach cannot suffice critically. If all worthy sources are to be utilized, the Gospel of John cannot be neglected. The question is how to do so. Bolstered by three paradigms within an overall Johannine theory (John's Dialogical Autonomy), the Fourth Gospel can be seen as developing over at least two editions, with the first edition augmenting and modestly correcting Mark. The later material functions to harmonize with the Synoptics, added by the author of the Epistles after the death of the Beloved Disciple, the evangelist. As the first three Quests of Jesus have excluded the Gospel of John, improved criteria for determining historicity are here advanced: *corroborative impression, primitivity, critical realism, and open coherence*. Within such an approach, the Johannine witness provides an independent corroboration of the Synoptic accounts. Additionally, the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John make distinctive contributions of their own. This calls for a Fourth Quest for Jesus—an inclusive Quest—at the dawn of the new millennium.

1. Introduction

The Gospel of John has been called a stream in which a child can wade…, *and* an elephant can swim. The question is "Why?" Of course, the main answer lies in its perplexing riddles—theological, historical, and literary—which have puzzled readers and scholars

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Keywords
Johannine riddles, historical Jesus, a bi-optic hypothesis, interfluentiality, John's dialogical autonomy, historicity, memory theory, archaeology, realia, verisimilitude

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for the last two millennia.[1] It was John's Christological tensions that precipitated four centuries of theological debates (Anderson 2010d),[2] and it is John's historical and literary perplexities that have created the most intense of scholarly debates over the last two centuries of Jesus and gospel studies within the modern era (Anderson 2006c, 1–41; 2000, 5–39). Within that discussion, David F. Strauss leveraged two dichotomies, dividing theology from history and John from the Synoptics. However, such polarizations lack nuance and a measured analysis of the literary facts.[3] The Synoptics are also theological, and many features of the Johannine witness are more plausibly historical than the Synoptics, so more measured analyses are required. Given the fact that the first three Quests for Jesus have programmatically excluded the Fourth Gospel within their reductionistic and parsimonious enterprises, a more critically adequate and inclusive approach is required. This calls for a fresh consideration of Jesus in Johannine perspective, which, with more fitting criteria for determining historicity, invites a *Fourth Quest for Jesus*. Introducing that enterprise is the thrust of the present essay, and indeed, this new and inclusive paradigm within Jesus research is already underway.[4]

2. The Johannine Riddles: Their Character and Origins

As an overview of earlier research, an analytical sense of the character and origins of John's riddles establishes a critical basis for such an exploration. Again, one of the main reasons that top Johannine scholars have disagreed with each other on matters of John's composition, origin, and development is that different methodologies and disciplines have been applied to addressing John's perplexing features. This has created disconnects between scholars using differing approaches to the issues, as well as disagreements on the outcomes, even when the same methodologies are being used.[5] In my view, however, an interdisciplinary approach is required by the text itself.[6] The best methodologies must be applied in the most suitable ways to the particular issues being addressed, leading to the most plausible ways forward in seeking to address the Johannine riddles. That being the case, here is an overview of my best judgments regarding how to understand and interpret the particulars of the Johannine riddles, given their character and origins.

2.1 John's Theological Tensions

The first riddle, John's theological tensions (the flesh and glory of Jesus, the subordinate and egalitarian Father-Son relationship, John's present-and-future eschatology, John's embellished and existentialized semeiology, etc.), are factors of four primary origins:[7]

- *The evangelist as a dialectical thinker*, operating in both-and ways instead of either-or dichotomies (Anderson 2010d, 137–165; 2004, 127–149).
- *The Prophet-like-Moses agency schema* (Deut 18:15–22), inviting a response to the divine initiative of the Revealer (Anderson 1999, 133–159).

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[1] See my outlining of three dozen such riddles (Anderson 2011, 25–90).
[2] See also Anderson (2018c, 84–108).
[3] For a critical analysis of Strauss's flawed dichotomies, see Anderson (2013b, 63–81).
[4] The title of this essay anticipates that of a forthcoming book with Eerdmans (scheduled for 2022): Jesus in Johannine Perspective: A Fourth Quest for Jesus. See also Anderson (2014c, 168–176).
[5] See Carson (2007, 133–159).
[6] This is the approach I take (Anderson 2006c; 2010d).
[7] This was the conclusion I reached (2010c, lxxix-lxxxi, 252–265). See also Anderson (2011, 158–162).

- *The dialectical Johannine situation*, involving no fewer than seven crises over seven decades (Anderson 2007c, 133–159).
- *The rhetorical design of the Johannine narrative*, inviting hearers and readers into an imaginary dialogue with the protagonist, Jesus (Anderson 1997, 1–59).[8]

2.2 John's Historical Problems

The second riddle, John's historical problems (theological-historical tensions, differences with the Synoptics in terms of order and chronology, John's omissions of Synoptic material, John's material being absent from the Synoptics, the originative character of John's account—memory or folklore, and so on), are factors of four primary origins (Anderson 2011, 162–166):

- *An alternative and distinctive Jesus tradition with its own perceptions and reflections*, aware of at least Mark, but developing independently with its own take on things (Anderson 2015, 169–218).
- *Intra-traditional dialectic*, reflecting interactivity between earlier and later perceptions and experiences (Anderson 2010d, 167–193).
- *Inter-traditional dialectic with at least Mark*, reflecting interactivity between various stages of the Johannine tradition and various forms of the Synoptic traditions (Anderson 2013a, 197–245).
- *History as theology and theology as history*, engaging developing issues within the evolving Johannine situation (Anderson 2010d, 194–251).

2.3 John's Literary Perplexities

The third riddle includes John's literary perplexities (dependent on alien sources or the Synoptics or independent, composed in one edition or several, relations to other Johannine writings, the Beloved Disciple—a literary device or a dead author?) (Anderson 2011, 166–169). I propose these are factors of four primary origins:

- *A synchronicity of tradition within a diachronicity of situation*, engaging as many as seven crises or issues over seven decades (Anderson 2007c).
- *The memory of the evangelist as the second biography of Jesus* (*ca*. 80–85 CE), to which the compiler added later material following his writing of the Epistles (*ca*. 100 CE) (Anderson 2006c).
- *John's first edition* as an augmentation of and modest corrective to Mark, an apologetic narrative (Anderson 2001; 2013a).
- *John's later material* added after the death of the Beloved Disciple, featuring pastoral, incarnational, and egalitarian thrusts (Anderson 2015).

Of course, some of John's riddles may have more than one origin, but these comprise at least a primary origin of each in my judgment. Much has been written regarding my overall Johannine theory, which I describe as *the Dialogical Autonomy of the Fourth Gospel* (Anderson 2006c, 38–41; 2011, 125–155), but this overview suffices for now, in laying out the broad scope of the territory for addressing John's historical character and potential contribution to understanding its subject: Jesus of Nazareth. Three central elements of this paradigm will be outlined further below: John's composition, John's relations to the Synoptics, and the history of the Johannine situation. Nonetheless, these riddles also account for the

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8 Here, I perform with John 6 what J. Louis Martyn achieved with John 9.

fact that John's historical contribution has been marginalized within the last two centuries of critical biblical scholarship.

3. The First Three Parsimonious Quests of Jesus…, and their Problems

While an extensive overview of the last two centuries of Jesus research cannot be laid out fully in the present context,[9] a rough overview of some of the highlights illustrates several of the challenges involved.

The Nineteenth-century Quests of Jesus can be seen as involving several phases. Launched on the continent by the work of Hermann Samuel Reimarus, published a decade after his death (1768) by the German playwright Gotthold Lessing, a wedge was leveraged between the Jesus of the gospels and objective historicity (Reimarus 1970). Reimarus argued that the political goal of Jesus was likely the ridding of the Romans and their occupation of Palestine; but upon his failure, gospel writers concocted stories of miracles and the resurrection, having stolen his body. Thus, cause-and-effect historicity was distinguished from the religiously motivated fabrication of narratives.

As debates ensued, the place of the Gospel of John became especially vulnerable because of its high theological motifs and its differences from the Synoptics. In 1820, Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider disparaged the Johannine writings, claiming they cannot have been written by the same person—the Apostle John.[10] While he later affirmed John's authenticity, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1975) argued with force that the Gospel of John was the only gospel rooted in eyewitness memory, in contrast to the fragmentary character of the Synoptics. Some other scholars came to see the canonical gospels as "lives of Jesus," within the genre of Hellenistic biographical narratives (*bioi*), although some attempts to harmonize the gospels along those lines amounted to mere speculation.

Challenging the traditional view of John's apostolic origin, along with F. C. Baur, who saw John as countering Gnostics around 170 CE, David F. Strauss (1972) posed several arguments against John's historicity. First, he countered the inference of biographical narratives with the inference of mythic folklore. Assuming that miracles cannot happen, the wonders of gospel narratives must have originated in contemporary religions which narrators gathered into their own stories of Jesus, so the speculation went. Second, Strauss wedged a dichotomy between history and theology. If an account is highly theological in its thrust, its subjective interest obliterates its objective reliability. Third, because John's narrative is theological and different from the Synoptics, John's value must be restricted to the Christ of faith, not adumbrating by any means the Jesus of history.[11]

The Continental Abandonment of Historical Aspirations: With William Wrede's challenging of Mark's historicity in 1901 (Wrede 1971), Albert Schweitzer (1964) completely gave up on the historical quest for Jesus as a possibility; he comes to us as one unknown, calling us to follow him without knowing whence nor whereto. On the Continent, scholars moved from the history of Jesus to investigating the history of gospel traditions. Along these lines, the work of Rudolf Bultmann was emblematic. Not only did he seek to identify the form-critical features of the materials underlying the Synoptic

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[9] See the fuller overview in Anderson (2006c, 1–37).

[10] See also Eduard Schwartz (1907, 342–372; 1908a, 115–148; 1908b, 149–188; 1908c, 497–560).

[11] Published the year after Schleiermacher's postmortem book on Jesus, in its preface Strauss declares that in this book, as in his other writings, his primary goal has been to debunk the views of Schleiermacher. Thus, while Strauss divorces theology from history, does his self-declared theological interest obliterate his historical agenda? If Strauss is right, then he is wrong. Not the case, however, because his dichotomies themselves are fallacious from the start, so nothing of his argument holds ultimate reasonable sway. For a critical analysis of Strauss's dichotomies, see Anderson (2013b, 63–81).

Gospels, but he also produced the most expansive (and brilliant) diachronic theory of John's composition and development. Inferring three major sources underlying John (a *Sēmeia* Source, a Revelation-Sayings Source, and a Passion Source), the evangelist's narrative fell apart, which the ecclesial Redactor reordered (wrongly) and added disparate material reflected in the Johannine Epistles. Thus, John may possess some historical material, but it is not written by an apostle or an eyewitness, given the assumption of "the early death of John" and Bultmann's inference of folkloric material (Jewish signs, proto-Gnostic sayings, and a Christian Passion account) as the basis for John's narrative (Bultmann 2014).

The New Quest: While Jesus research continued in America and Britain during the first half of the twentieth century,[12] the "New Quest" was launched by the presentation to the "Old Marburgers" by Ernst Käsemann, published in 1954 on "The Problem of the Historical Jesus" (Käsemann 1954, 125–153).[13] Following the Holocaust, the Jewishness of Jesus could not be ignored. Given the challenges posed by the Gospel of John in the mix (Käsemann [2017] indeed saw John's narrative as naively Docetic), minimalistic criteria were designed to provide sure steppingstones within the quest, which functioned to exclude John's content from the mix. Over the next several years, the criteria of *dissimilarity*, *embarrassment*, *multiple attestation*, *naturalism*, and *coherence* paved the way for a positivistic approach to Jesus research from a verification standpoint. As Norman Perrin of the University of Chicago put it, "When in doubt, leave it out." These criteria were especially designed to pare off distinctive Johannine material from otherwise "historical" presentations in the Synoptics.

The Third Quest: As new methodologies came to be applied to Jesus research over the next several decades, including social-sciences inquiry, political-economic analyses, and religious anthropological studies, N. T. Wright (1982, 20–27) coined the term "the Third Quest for Jesus" in 1982. Signaled by the works of George Caird, Geza Vermes, Ben Meyer, John Riches, Martin Hengel, Marcus Borg, Ed Sanders, and others,[14] Third Questers posed new lenses for understanding the sociology and Mediterranean-based setting of the Jesus movement to great benefit. Jesus was indeed a Jew, and understanding his situation in the light of Roman occupation and Jewish attempts to achieve liberation and a thriving existence has been greatly helpful. Nonetheless, most of the Third Quest studies have steered clear of the Fourth Gospel, primarily for disciplinarily conservative reasons—not wanting to risk error or controversy in posing new methodologies within the reductionistic venture.

The Jesus Seminar and the Renewed Quest: Even more striking was the rise of the Jesus Seminar in 1983, which drew in some Third Questers. John Dominic Crossan, however, described it as "the Renewed Quest"—distancing it from the Third Quest and seeking to instantiate the gleanings of the New Quest. This consultation, meeting twice a year in cities around the nation so as to attract local and national media attention, voted on all the sayings and deeds of Jesus with colored marbles. Including the Gospel of Thomas as "the Fifth Gospel," scholars were forced to get off the fence and to vote for or against the historicity of a passage (or even a phrase or a detail) on the basis of outlined reductionistic criteria. Virtually none of John's material received a pink or a red vote by these seventy or so scholars (Funk, Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar 1993).[15]

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[12] See the critique of periodization and its permeability by Allison (2002, 135–151).

[13] See also Käsemann (1964, 15–47). James M. Robinson (1959) stamped the new movement with his book, which was furthered by several of Bultmann's other students, including Gunther Bornkamm (1960).

[14] Wright continues to include the following in the Third Quest: Caird (1965); Bowker (1973); Vermes (1973); Meyer (1979); Riches (1980); Hengel (1981); Borg (1984); Sanders (1985).

[15] See also Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998).

More specifically, fewer than 18% of the verses in the Synoptic Gospels were deemed to contain anything likely or certain in terms of historicity regarding the sayings or actions of Jesus (pink or red). In my (2002b) *Quaker Religious Thought* engagement with Marcus Borg, Marcus put things in more nuanced terms. Rather than see the results as denoting "only this much" going back to the historical Jesus, a better way to understand things is to affirm that "at least this much" casts light on the historical Jesus from the Synoptic.[16] By contrast, the Gospel of Thomas was deemed to possess nearly 25% likely or certain historical statements by Jesus, and the Gospel of John was judged to possess less than 1% likely or certain historical content. Only seven of John's 879 verses received a pink or a red designation, and nearly all of John was accorded black status (*certainly not* historical), with only a few references accorded *unlikely* (grey) status. *Plausible* reports in John were thus limited to the arrest, crucifixion, and death of Jesus, along with Annas being the father-in-law of Caiaphas. The only Jesus saying in John accorded a pink score is that which echoed in Mark 6:4, regarding the prophet not being honored in his hometown (John 4:44). It is at this point that the operations of the Jesus Seminar are exposed as inconsistent and biased: a Johannine-Synoptic mundane detail may be accorded historical weight, but a theologically laden detail definitely may not.

In particular, Synoptic and Thomasine echoes of Johannine themes were denied historicity by the Seminar simply because they sounded Johannine. Jesus being "the light of the world" was excised from Matthew's historical record because it is echoed in John (Matt 5:14; John 8:12; 9:5). A Johannine echo thus became a basis for rejecting a saying in Matthew. Even more striking, "the bolt out of the Johannine blue" was excised from the Q tradition—otherwise privileged as the most historical by Seminarians—solely because of its Johannine ring: "none knows the Father except the Son" (John 3:35; 5:19–26; Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22). Ironically, Jesus is also "the light" in Thomas (77:1), and the relationship of Jesus and the Father is also referenced with prominence in Thomas (61:3). Thus, the strategic operation of the Jesus Seminar eliminated all content from the three Synoptic Gospels, the Q tradition, and even the Gospel of Thomas that sounded Johannine. In following this procedure programmatically, the results of their voting are no surprise. By that strategy, Robert Funk was able to declare both the basis for the stance and the outcome of the program:

> In the Gospel of John, Jesus is a self-confessing Messiah rather than a self-effacing sage. In John, Jesus seems to have little concern for the impoverished, the disabled and the religious outcasts. Although John preserves the illusion of combining a real Jesus with the mythic Christ, the human side of Jesus is in fact diminished. For all these reasons, the current quest for the historical Jesus makes little use of the heavily interpreted data found in the Gospel of John. (Funk 1996, 127)

And again,

> The first step is to understand the diminished role the Gospel of John plays in the search for the Jesus of history. The two pictures painted by John and the synoptics cannot be both historically accurate.... The differences between the two portraits of Jesus

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16 I invited Marcus to respond critically to my essay (Anderson 2000), which he did generously (Borg 2002, 21–27). See also my response (Anderson 2002b, 43–54).

> show up in a dramatic way in the evaluation, by the Jesus Seminar, of the words attributed to Jesus in the Gospel of John. The Fellows of the Seminar were unable to find a single saying they could with certainty trace back to the historical Jesus. (Funk and the Jesus Seminar 1998, 10)

Having assumed the *dehistoricization of John*, they proceeded with the *de-Johannification of Jesus*.[17] If it looks, sounds, smells, feels, tastes like John, expunge it from the historical record; *nothing* distinctively Johannine can be allowed to stand among "real" historians. The question, however, is whether such were indeed the last word among Jesus scholars worldwide, or whether such reflects the last gasp of the New and Renewed Quests, seeking to hold onto Jesus portraitures within a parsimonious reductionism, welcoming all other sources but remaining untainted by assumedly corruptive Johannine influence. Again, this would be acceptable if John's features bore no historical semblance. The problem, though, is that such is the furthest from the truth. Along these lines three major problems present themselves, critically.

First, many of John's details seem more historically plausible than those in the Synoptics. Second, the realia of Johannine details have piqued the imaginations of readers and artists over centuries, connecting later audiences with John's illustrative content, not just its theological claims. Third, John's distinctive detail also coheres with mundane facts, reflecting verisimilitude with the topography, material culture, and archaeological findings of the region.[18]

4. Problems with Omitting Johannine Details and Distinctive Contributions (A)—John's Compelling Realism.

While many of the presentations of Jesus in the Synoptics are superior to John's (Jesus speaking in parables about the Kingdom, Jesus dining with sinners and others, Jesus sending his followers out on ministry trips, Jesus healing lepers and exorcizing the afflicted, and so on), there are many ways in which John's presentation is more plausible when compared with the Synoptics. Some of these include:

- Jesus ministering alongside John the baptizer for a period of time before John's arrest
- An informal welcoming of followers of John the baptizer prior to a more programmatic calling of the Twelve
- An early temple incident as an inaugural prophetic sign, contemporary with the baptizer's prophetic challenges to religious and political authorities
- Traveling to and from Jerusalem at least four times, rather than a single visit
- Traveling through and ministering in Samaria, rather than avoiding the region
- Engagements with religious authorities in Jerusalem, not simply in Galilee

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[17] On the six planks in each of these platforms—the dehistoricization of John and the de-Johannification of Jesus—and their structural instability, see Anderson (2006c, 43-99), published in slightly revised form (Anderson et al. 2007, 13–70). From a critically evaluative perspective, none of the planks are robust in their stability, so it is impossible for them to comprise an enduring set of platforms despite hailing the mantle of scholarly authority. Although real issues are addressed, and while good points are made, if anything, they represent critical claims destined for the dustbin when second criticality is applied. See also the literature reviews along these lines in Kysar (2007, 75–102), Verheyden (2007, 109–120), and Powell (2007, 121–133).

[18] Thus, if all worthy resources are considered within serious Jesus research, how can the one gospel claiming direct access to the subject be excluded (Anderson 2019b, 7–46, 264–269)?

- A ministry extending over three Passovers, rather than a single Passover
- Including women among the close followers of Jesus, rather than men only
- An egalitarian and Spirit-based approach to leadership, rather than structural hierarchy
- Informal table fellowship as the final meal, rather than an instituted rite.

In these and other ways, John's account appears more historically plausible than the Synoptic ones.[19] Further problems, however, also abound.

5. Problems with Omitting Johannine Details and Distinctive Contributions (B)—John's Vivid Detail.

Even more so than the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of John features a proliferation of non-symbolic illustrative details. While critical scholars have assumed that such details were added to make John's narrative *seem* more realistic—features of a lively imagination rather than experiential memory—contemporary practices demonstrate the opposite. Matthew and Luke *omit* Markan details rather than adding them (Anderson 2010d, 187–192). This is an empirical fact. The ancient authors most closely related to the Johannine narrative add sections, but they largely omit names, places, and incidental details. Thus, if John is thought to have followed parallel conventional practices, adding details would have been the *exception* rather than the norm.

Another fact is that Johannine details and distinctive presentations have captured the imaginations of artists and sculptors over centuries of classic artistry and historic representations of gospel narratives. I might estimate that, other than the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke, over three-quarters of paintings over the last half millennium and more have featured particular Johannine details. Is this an accident, or do John's mundane details strike interpreters as realia within the narrative, evoking a graphic link between the experience of later readers and remembered situations and events? If none of John has a historical root, and if all of John's details reflect theological flourishes rather than first-hand memory, these paintings should be regarded as fictive cartoons rather than representational masterpieces. That move has not been embraced, however, within the greatest museums of the western world. Johannine realia featured in classic art include:

- Religious authorities coming from Jerusalem, interrogating John (John 1:19–25)
- John declaring: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!" (1:29, 36)
- Peter, Andrew, Philip, and the unnamed disciple leaving John and becoming followers of Jesus, along with Nathanael (1:35–51)
- The wedding feast and the turning of water into wine launching the beginning of Jesus's ministry (2:1–11)
- Jesus using a whip of cords in the Temple Incident (2:15)
- Jesus conducting a nocturnal conversation with Nicodemus, a religious leader of Jerusalem (3:1–8)
- The reference to the uplifted brazen serpent of Moses is associated with Jesus on the cross (3:13–14)

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[19] See a fuller analysis in Anderson (2006c, 154–173).

- Jesus engaging the Samaritan woman at the well, and the Samaritans receiving him, extending Jesus two days of hospitality (4:1–42)
- The healing of the lame man at the Pool of Bethzatha in Jerusalem (5:1–15)
- The feeding of the multitude featuring the contribution of two loaves and five fishes by a boy (6:9)
- Jesus healing the blind man by the Pool of Siloam, placing spittle-mud on his eyes, and instructing him to wash and present himself to the priests (9:1–7)
- Jesus remembered as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (10:1–18)
- Jesus walking among the Colonnade of Solomon in the temple area during the Festival of Dedication (10:22–23)
- Jesus embracing Lazarus, Mary, and Martha in Bethany (11:1–32)
- Lazarus coming forth from the tomb (11:38–45)
- Mary of Bethany identified as the one anointing the feet of Jesus and wiping them with her hair (12:1–8)
- Judas holding the money bag for the disciples (John 12:6)
- Palm branches spread on the ground, honoring Jesus's entry into Jerusalem (12:13)
- Greeks coming to see Jesus and brought to him by Philip (12:20–22)
- Jesus washing Peter's feet (13:1–17)
- The Beloved Disciple leaning against the breast of Jesus (13:23)
- In the garden, soldiers arriving with weapons, lamps, and torches (18:3)
- Peter identified as the one severing the right ear of Malchus, the named servant of the high priest (18:10)
- Peter, warming himself by the fire, interrogated by the female servant (18:16–18)
- Jesus being slapped, flogged, and clothed in a purple robe (18:22; 19:1–2)
- Pilate declaring: "Behold, the Man!" (19:5)
- Written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek, Pilate's announcement reads: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (Latin initials: *INRI*, 19:19–20)
- Jesus's seamless robe contested among the soldiers (19:23)
- At the foot of the cross are the three Marys and the Beloved Disciple (19:25–27)
- After receiving vinegar from the sponge, Jesus bows his head and dies (19:29–30)
- The side of Jesus pierced with a spear; water and blood pour forth from it (19:34–35)
- The body of Jesus removed from the cross and buried in an unused tomb by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (19:38–42)
- A hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes brought to embalm Jesus (19:39)
- Mary Magdalene finding the tomb empty early in the morning and reporting her findings to Peter (20:1–2)
- Peter and the Beloved Disciple arriving at the tomb and beholding folded burial cloths within the empty tomb (20:3–5)
- Mary encountering Jesus in the garden (20:14–17)
- Jesus appearing to his disciples behind closed doors and showing them his hands and side (20:19–20)
- Thomas later beholding the nail holes in Jesus's hands and his pierced side (20:25–27)

- The Beloved Disciple pointing out Jesus to Peter, having fished all night, and Peter jumping in the water, coming to Jesus (21:7)
- The great catch of fish is 153, and yet the nets do not break (21:11)
- Jesus eating fish and bread with his disciples on the shore (21:12–13)
- Peter is instructed to care for the flock of Jesus (21:15–17)
- The Beloved Disciple referenced as the author of the narrative (21:20–24).

While some of these details are developed theologically, most of them are not; most of them are mentioned only in passing in the Fourth Gospel, serving no discernible theological or symbolic function.[20] If the Gospel of John really has no connection with grounded realities or Palestine-based memory, none of these details would have been rooted in historical recollections. They would have had to emerge from imaginative, mimetic imitations of realities that just happen to cohere with cultural and temporal realities in Palestine. Now *that* wonder would strike against naturalistic likelihoods. Again, this is not to claim that any or all of these details are historically verified. It is simply to acknowledge the graphic and mundane character of these details, which has created experiential bridges between later audiences and the ministry of Jesus in distinctively compelling ways over the centuries, however the material came together.

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[20] Within John 18–19 (the section with greatest Johannine-Synoptic parallels other than John 6), the details are roughly distributed equally in four categories: clearly symbolic, likely symbolic, possibly symbolic, and non-symbolic (occurring only once, only in John, with no scriptural association, with no further reference or role within the narrative) (Anderson 2006b, 157–194).

6. Problems with Omitting Johannine Details and Distinctive Contributions (C)—Topographical Realism and Archaeological Discoveries

In addition to John's detailed realism, much of its account also coheres with archaeological discoveries and topographical realia. Places, distances, elevations, and mundane features match the material culture of Palestine, demonstrating the verisimilitude of first-hand acquaintance with the region. Thus, in the light of recent discoveries, John's narrative stands totally against second- and third-century gospels and other narratives (such as Matthew and Luke), which are rooted in gathered traditions rather than first-hand recollections.[21] Archeological and topographical realia in John include:

- The Transjordan baptismal site of John the Baptist (Wadi Kharrar, confirmed by the Madaba Map—*Bethabara*)
- Bethsaida excavations—Et-Tell as Bethsaida-Julias or El-Araj as Bethsaida—either way, a fishing village
- Lathed stone jars found in the burnt house in Jerusalem (six on display)
- Large houses found in Cana of Galilee (large enough to host a wedding)
- Aenon near Salim—one of John's baptismal sites (much water there)
- Sychar in Samaria—Ell er-Ras as a worship site on Gerizim
- Jacob's Well in Sychar

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[21] On John's mundane and archaeological features, see von Wahlde (2006, 523–586); Anderson (2006a, 587–618); Anderson (2011, 39–45). See also Anderson (2021).

- Roman water-heated houses in Capernaum—the royal official's village
- Sheep Gate (area near Bethzatha—a Byzantine church on this site which was called the *Probatica*—"of the sheep")
- The Pool of Bethzatha—two pools surrounded and divided by five porticoes—a healing center
- The Capernaum Synagogue—built upon earlier foundations
- The large purification Pool of Siloam—discovered in 2004
- The Migdal Stone in Galilee—note the menorah and connections with Jerusalem's leaders
- Jesus teaching in the treasury area of the Temple, walking among Solomon's Porticoes
- The tomb of Lazarus in Bethany—cohering with tombs and rolling stones in the region
- The Kidron Valley is crossed on the way to the Garden
- The courtyard and houses of Priests in Jerusalem
- The Stone of Pontius Pilate—Caesarea Maritima
- Pilate's Praetorium (*Gabbatha*) and the stone pavement (*Lithostrōtos*) in Jerusalem
- The nail-pierced heelbone of Yehohanan (Jerusalem, *ca*. 70 CE)
- Golgotha—the place of the skull
- The Tomb of the Holy Sepulcher
- The Garden Tomb and burial sites and customs in Jerusalem.

It would be fair to say that not only does John's account of Jesus and his ministry contain the greatest amount of sensory-based content among the gospels, but that it contains more archaeologically and topographically corroborated content than all the other gospel presentations combined, canonical and otherwise. Thus, while John is different and theologically inclined, it is also the most grounded, mundane, and realia-featuring account of Jesus and his ministry in ancient literature. That being the case, such statements as the following ring hollow when the phenomenology of the Fourth Gospel is considered closely.

> It must be remembered that topography and chronology were among the least of the author's concerns. His head was among the stars. He was seeking to determine the place of Jesus in the spiritual universe and his relations to the eternal realities. These were the matters that interested and absorbed him, not itineraries and timetables, so that practical mundane considerations that might apply to Mark, Matthew, or Luke have little significance for his work. (Goodspeed 1937, 310)

7. Scholarly Movements Within the New Millennium

In response to the overstated claims of the Jesus Seminar claiming to represent the judgments of New Testament scholars overall, other scholars began to object. For one thing, the Jesus Seminar had very few Johannine scholars in the mix. Robert Fortna was an exception. For another, citing far more red and pink sayings in the second century, gnosticizing Gospel of Thomas than any of the canonical gospels called into question the methodologies of the group, as well as the results.[22] Then again, part of the issue involves how the results themselves are viewed.

It was concerns about the overstated claims of the Jesus Seminar and the parsimonious quests for Jesus that led some of us to establish the

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[22] See, for instance, the critique of Luke Timothy Johnson (1996).

John, Jesus, and History Project at the national SBL meetings (Anderson 2019a, 222–268).[23] Over our fifteen years of meetings (2002–2016), we commissioned 264 papers by top scholars internationally, inviting contributors to argue any thesis they desired, but to do so with evidence and compelling reason. Along those lines, we have published eight volumes so far, with one in press and three more to be gathered, for an even dozen. Several of these were within the central series, published by SBL Press,[24] and others addressed such subjects as John and Qumran (Coloe and Thatcher 2011), the contributions of C. H. Dodd (Thatcher and Williams 2013), the Johannine Epistles (Culpepper and Anderson 2014), John and Judaism (Culpepper and Anderson 2017), portraits of Jesus in John (Koester 2020), and Archaeology and John (Anderson 2022a). Again, one of the reasons this new Quest was launched at the beginning of the new millennium is that the first three Quests had programmatically excluded the Gospel of John. However, an inclusive quest requires new criteria for determining history, including critically adequate means of addressing John's perplexing riddles. That's what a Fourth Quest is designed to address.

In setting forth an inventory of the issues, our first volume included several disciplinary approaches to the issues, five literature reviews, and a case study and response. This was introduced by an analysis of the two pervasive critical platforms—the dehistoricization of John and the de-Johannification of Jesus—showing the frailty of each of the planks within each of the platforms. That led then to the next two volumes, addressing aspects of history in John (Vol. 2) and glimpses of Jesus though the Johannine lens (Vol. 3). Along with several book reviews and joint sessions with the Johannine Literature Section and the Historical Jesus Section, our final six years addressed the themes of Jesus Remembered in the Johannine Tradition and Jesus Remembered within the Johannine Situation. We also continued engaging some of the issues mentioned above, as well as criteria for determining Johannine historicity. In addition to the John and Archaeology volume (forthcoming), our hope is to get these three more books into press in the near future.

The sessions at the national SBL meetings were well attended—ranging between 40 and 300 in attendance but averaging over 100—and scholars began to acknowledge a change in Jesus and Johannine studies. Mark Allan Powell (2009, 121–128), for instance, noted that Jesus studies can no longer continue without taking notice of the Gospel of John.[25] Likewise, James Charlesworth (2010, 3–46) noted a shift in paradigms beginning within the new millennium. Showing five examples of the old paradigm, functioning to exclude John from Jesus research, Charlesworth lodged ten reasons as to the inadequacy of the old paradigm and noted five examples of the new paradigm. The paradigm shift was already in play.[26] In these essays, both Powell and Charlesworth noted the John, Jesus, and History Project as one of the leading factors in such a shift.

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[23] Chairs of the steering committee included Tom Thatcher, myself, Jaime Clark-Soles, and Craig Koester; other members included D. Moody Smith, Mary Coloe, PVBM, Felix Just S.J., Alan Culpepper, Helen Bond, Catrin Williams, and Chris Keith.

[24] Volumes within the central series include those edited by Anderson, Just, and Thatcher (2007; 2009; 2016). Another three volumes are planned for future publication.

[25] According to Powell (2009, 124), "There is a new, cautious appreciation for the historical value of John's Gospel. In the 1990s, Jesus studies invariably involved analysis of the synoptic tradition; the Fourth Gospel was deemed too theologically developed and its compositional history was considered too complex for it to function effectively as a source for historical reconstruction. The growing trend in current Jesus studies is to recognize the Fourth Gospel as a 'dissonant tradition' that not only can be utilized but must be, if the synoptic tradition is not to be accorded free rein in a manner that seems uncritical."

[26] Following the contributions of Dodd (1963) and Brown (2003), Charlesworth notes five monographs that have launched the new paradigm in Johannine and Jesus studies: Meier (1991); Theissen and Merz (1998); Anderson (2006c); Bauckham (2007); and Smith (2008). See also Charlesworth's own contribution to the field (2020), as well as Thatcher (2006).

In addition, several other recent projects have advanced the inclusion of the Gospel of John in Jesus research. The Princeton-Prague Symposium held meetings at Princeton Theological Seminary in 2016, examining John's place in the historical quest of Jesus (Charlesworth and Pruszinski 2019). Within that conversation, it became evident that stages within the development of the Johannine tradition were significant in identifying earlier and later interests within John's story of Jesus. Another interest involved John's relations to other traditions, especially Mark, and a renewed focus on the Johannine-Synoptic set of questions surfaced as an important subject to consider. John's relationship with Mark also served as the focus for a special conference held at Athens before the 2018 SNTS meetings, where various theories of the Johannine-Markan relationship were advanced (Becker, Bond, and Williams 2021).

Another focus on John and religio-historical issues has been advanced by the Enoch Seminar, considering John's presentation of Jesus as a contribution within Second Temple Judaism. At the Camaldoli 2016 Conference on reading the Gospel of John as a form of first-century messianism, papers were presented on pre-existence within contemporary Judaism, sectarian and religious tensions within contemporary Judaism, and the presentation of Jesus as a Jewish prophetic figure within first-century Judaism (Reynolds and Boccaccini 2018). Other Enoch Seminar meetings, focusing on the historical development of the Johannine Jesus movement and the role of John the Baptist in relation to Jesus, have added sustained foci on John's Jewishness and understandings of Jesus and his followers from a historical Jewish perspective. In particular, the presentation of Jesus as the Eschatological Prophet in the Fourth Gospel poses a grounded, contextually viable portraiture of Jesus of Nazareth that is distinctive among the gospel traditions (Anderson 2018a, 271–299).

What the above developments show is that the Johannine-excluding quests for the historical Jesus may have dominated the last century and a half of critical studies, but they do not have the last word. Since the turn of the new millennium, the exclusion of the Gospel of John from Jesus studies no longer holds, although some may still pursue the parsimonious approach. Even so, a reductionistic historicity must at least consider ways that John's tradition is arguably more plausible—or equally plausible, or even independently corroborative or corrective—over and against the Synoptics. Along these lines, drawing in more nuanced and adequate approaches to disciplinary historiography itself has paved the way for an inclusive quest of Jesus, over and against von Rankian objectivism.[27] In the light of Hayden White's (2014) *Metahistory*, for instance, the question of "whose history" is worth considering when more than one perspective on a historical subject is put forward. It is precisely the defense of an alternative perspective that the two endings of the Johannine witness in John 20:30–31 and 21:24–25 assert: an individuated and distinctive historical memory, *not* an abstract theological treatise (Anderson 2006c).

Nonetheless, it is not enough simply to call for an inclusive Quest without understanding the particulars of the Johannine tradition and its development. Thus, three new paradigms within an overall Johannine theory make such an inquiry critically plausible, in my judgment.

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[27] As the founder of the historicism paradigm: wie es eigentlich gewesen ist (how things actually were), Leopold von Ranke (1874, vii) set the standard for the value of objectivism in historicity, bolstered by text-based verification. Of course, the rational fallacy, exemplified by parsimonious Jesus researchers, is the assumption that the lack of external verification implies the demonstration of inauthenticity. As Mark Allan Powell (2002, 32) puts it, "my principal critique of the Jesus Seminar is that they have not clearly distinguished between what is 'historically unverifiable' and what is 'historically false'."

8. Three Paradigms Within an Overall Johannine Theory—Critical Bases for an Inclusive Quest

While there indeed has been a great deal of dissention among Johannine scholars worldwide, on how to address the Johannine riddles, Raymond Brown was correct when he proposed an overall Johannine theory in his approach to the Gospel and Epistles of John. Indeed, the most compelling of Johannine studies have all proposed at least something close to an overall Johannine theory, and these elements must include theories of John's composition, John's relation(s) to other traditions, and the history of the Johannine situation.[28]

8.1 Paradigm I—A two-edition theory of John's composition

While the Gospel of John deserves to be read as an overall synchronic unity—after all, with Barrett (1978), it made sense as a whole to *someone* by the time it was finalized—it also bears evidence of editorial elements that deserve to be taken seriously by critical scholars.[29] This gets us into, of course, John's literary riddles. Note, for instance, the following literary perplexities:

- John 20:30–31 appears to conclude the narrative, and chapter 21 seems to have been added as a second ending, with the last verse (v. 25) echoing the ending of the first edition.
- A final writer alludes to the death of the Beloved Disciple, referencing the evangelist, who was intimate with Jesus, in the third person (21:20–24; 13:23).
- The testimonies of the eyewitness, who saw water and blood flowing from the side of Jesus, and that of the Beloved Disciple, are attested as true (19:34–35; 21:24).
- The vocabulary and strophic form of the Christ-hymn in John 1:1–18 is closer to the prologue of 1 John (1:1–3) than it is to the rest of the gospel narrative.
- John 14:31 ("let us depart") seems to have led directly into the arrival at the garden (18:1), with chapters 15–17 (featuring a number of repetitive themes, echoing also the dialectical situation of the Johannine Epistles) plausibly having been added at a later time.
- The healing on the Sabbath in John 5 continues to be a matter of controversy in John 7, raising the possibility that John 6 was added at a later time.

Along these lines, a plausible inference is that at least some later material was added to an earlier edition of the Johannine narrative, which likely included parts of John 1:1–18; the eyewitness reference in 19:34–35; and chapters 6, 15–17, and 21. While it was earlier assumed that there were no text-critical clues to multiple editions of John, Brent Nongbri (2018, 345–360) points out that P^{66} displays a break of about four centimeters at the bottom of the page featuring the end of John 20. This is unusual among the other pages, suggesting a clean break between John 20 and 21, in the mind of the copyist, at least. This fact reflects a second-century impression that John 21 was regarded as a separate unit, one way or another, and even the possibility that John's narrative had circulated locally before the final chapter was added. If such was the case, other material may likely have been added, as well, including the Christ-hymn, which is more similar to 1 John 1:1–3 than the rest of the prosaic narrative. After all, later non-Johannine material was added, as John 7:53–8:11 and 5:4 are explicitly missing from P^{66}. The first reflects an added non-Johannine pericope (the style and vocabulary are clearly different), and the second reflects an explanatory gloss. If post-Johannine copyists added material, it is difficult to imagine that the Johannine compiler did not do something similar in finalizing the Beloved Disciple's witness. John 21, however, is clearly Johannine; but it seems to have been added to an earlier edition of the narrative, likely along with some other material.

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[28] This is why, in my literature review of John's Christology (Anderson 2010d, 1–69), I began with analyzing the overall theories of Bultmann, Schnackenburg, Barrett, Brown, and Lindars. These and other leading Johannine scholars have addressed John's theological, historical, and literary issues within distinctive overall theories, lending credibility to their approaches. Additional scholars with overall Johannine theories include Haenchen, Smith (D. Moody), Keener, von Wahlde, and Culpepper, among others.

[29] For an overall view of Johannine composition, see Anderson (2015).

Here, a number of judgments by Raymond Brown and Rudolf Bultmann come into play. Assuming at least the addition of later material by the redactor, Brown guessed that the Beloved Disciple continued to preach and perhaps write, even after his earlier material had been written, and that the final editor gathered up some of the material, comprising some of the material in the later chapters of the Farewell Discourse. This also accounts for some of its repetitive features. Second, there are clear echoes between the added material and the situation of the Johannine Epistles. 1 John 2:18–25 reflects a church split; in John 17, Jesus prays for unity. In John 13:34–35, Jesus gives his followers a "new commandment": to love one another. In 1 John 2:7–11 and 2 John 5, the "old commandment" they have heard from the beginning is to love one another. The docetizing tendencies of the second Antichristic threat (1 John 4:1–3; 2 John 7) are countered by the incarnational thrusts of the later gospel material (1:14; 6:51–58; 19:34–35; 21:18–20), and the Elder attests, along with the Eyewitness and the Beloved Disciple, that "our testimony is [also] true" (John 19:34–35; 21:21–24; cf. 3 John 12) (Anderson 2020b, 171–183).

Further, in addressing the proto-Ignatian (and Petrine?) hierarchical authority claims of primacy-loving Diotrephes (3 John 9–10), in the Elder's finalizing the witness of the Beloved Disciple, that completed narrative informs future audiences that the Beloved Disciple posed a priestly bridge between Jesus and Peter (John 13:23–24; 21:7); the direct leadership of the risen Lord is available to all believers through the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–26; 15:26–27; 16:7–15); and Peter is presented as "returning the keys of the Kingdom" to Jesus, where they belonged all along (John 6:67–70; cf. Matt 16:17–19) (Anderson 2007a, 6–41). Thus, it is likely that the final compiler of the gospel was the Johannine Elder, who added the Beloved Disciple's later teaching material after his death (chs. 15–17). His adding of chapters 6 and 21 also harmonize the narrative with the Synoptics, referenced indirectly in 21:25. Finally, the three verses of the Christ-hymn (1:1–5, 9–13, 14 and 16–18) echo the Elder's introduction to 1 John (1:1–3), all of which reflect a confessional response to the evangelist's witness, later added as introductions to the first epistle and the gospel, alike (Anderson 2007f, 311–345; 2010d, 252–263; 2011, 25–43, 158–162; 2016, 219–242). Therefore, a modest two-edition view of Johannine composition plausibly looked something like this. [30]

8.2 A two-edition theory of Johannine composition

- 80–85 CE—Following several decades of preaching, the composition of the Johannine witness by the Beloved Disciple provides an alternative complement to Mark.
- 85 CE—The composition of 1 John by the Elder, serves as a circular among the churches.

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[30] For a more detailed overview of Johannine composition, see Anderson (2015).

- 90 CE—The composition of 2 John by the Elder, is written to the chosen lady and her children.
- 95 CE—The composition of 3 John by the Elder, is written to Gaius.
- 100 CE—The finalizing of the Gospel by the Elder, is performed and circulated after the death of the Beloved Disciple.

While the counsel of Alan Culpepper is well taken, that one's view of John's composition should not depend on particular inferences of authorship, a couple of issues are important, here. First, despite the fact that the traditional view, linking John the son of Zebedee with the Beloved Disciple, has problems to it, every other theory also bears with itself new sets of problems and few of the advantages. The author of the epistles and the final editor of the gospel seems to have been the same person (with Bultmann and others, here), but the editor-compiler clearly references someone else as the evangelist, whose testimony is claimed to be true. Second, a major reason for challenging the traditional view was the 1888 essay by de Boor (1888, 167–184, esp. 170), claiming fifth- and ninth-century references to "the early death of John." This would be fine to know, but neither Philip of Sides nor George Hamartolos claims that James and John died *at the same time* (their suffering martyrdom simply references the prediction of Jesus in Mark 10:38–39, that they would share his cup and in his baptism. The Syrian martyrology, celebrating James and John on the same day, simply honors that tradition). Just because James died in 44 CE, this does not mean that John did too. There is no clear reference to such in *any* of the ancient literature, and Paul even reports meeting with Peter, James, and John (Gal 2:9) in the late 40s CE. Further, both Philip and George follow Eusebius in claiming that John the Apostle *died in Ephesus after the death of Domitian* (96 CE). So, neither of them said nor believed that John died early. The inference of such is an embarrassment to modern critical scholarship, and all solid evidence augurs firmly against it.[31] Nonetheless, such an inference became a key basis for many scholars assuming that John the Apostle could not have been the Johannine evangelist—against the univocal memory of second- to fourth-century Christianity. Lightfoot's (2015) expansive work on the subject deserves a fresh look, here.[32]

Further, an overlooked first-century clue to John's authorship was discovered three decades ago and noted in Appendix VIII of *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel* (274–277). Overlooked perhaps because scholars have not recognized the character and function of composite statements (statements by more than one person within a unit of material), Acts 4:19–20 presents Peter and John as speaking. The first statement is clearly Petrine: "we must obey God rather than men" (see also Peter's comments in Acts 5:29 and 11:17). The next statement, though, is clearly Johannine: "we cannot help speaking about *what we have seen and heard*" (see the claim of 1 John 1:3 and the words of Jesus in John 3:32). The second statement reflects John the Apostle (*not* John the Elder) making a clearly Johannine statement a full century before Irenaeus's citing John the Apostle as the

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[31] For a critical analysis of the so-called "early death" that never was, see Anderson (2018d, 17–82 and 241–249).

[32] Martin Hengel (1989), for instance, conjectures that the thesis of de Boor must be considered likely because the ancient appeals to Papias go against tradition instead of supporting it. While the logic is understandable, the facts augur against this move. In addition to the fact that Philip and George do not say what de Boor claims, they could be seen as simply celebrating the traditional honoring of the deaths of James and John in the Syrian martyrology, which itself was a traditional move. Hengel and others correctly, however, connect the contribution of the Johannine Elder with the witness of Papias, and as author of the Epistles, he certainly appears to have been the final compiler of the Beloved Disciple's contribution.

Fourth Evangelist (Anderson 2010d, 274–277; 2010b; 2018d). This does not prove the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, but it does connect the contribution of John the Apostle with the work of John the Elder as two individuated leaders within the Johannine tradition, who contributed to the narrating, writing, and editing of the Johannine writings in one way or another.[33] However, while no other authorial inference carries more weight—traditionally or critically—working with the phenomenology of the text itself is the surest way forward, regardless of who the Johannine authors and editors might or might not have been.

8.3 Paradigm II—Three periods in the Johannine situation—seven crises over seven decades

The history and setting of Johannine Christianity have been approached from a number of perspectives, but the most common treatments over the last century or so have seen the Johannine adversaries as either Gnostics or Jewish leaders in the diaspora. On the former, second-century Gnosticism as the Johannine backdrop ruled the day within continental scholarship for a century or more, but such amounts to mere speculation and projections of authorized institutional leaders against pietists, enthusiasts, charismatics, and such, rather than the best of Second Temple and Greco-Roman scholarship. Docetism was an issue in the later Johannine situation (and likewise referenced in the writings of Ignatius), but not all docetists were gnostics, despite the fact that most later gnostics were docetists. From such speculation it has been wrongly assumed that the main threat in the Johannine situation was perfectionistic enthusiasm. "When those perfectionistic enthusiasts claim to be led by the Spirit, challenging institutional leadership, they're just totally incorrigible!" So, the projection has gone by mainline Christian interpreters. The inference of perfectionistic proto-gnostics has thus served as a hermeneutical foil within various interpretive schools, but with absolutely no evidence. Yes, Montanism became an issue in the mid second century CE, but the debate in 1 John revolved around disagreements over the sin of idol worship and pagan festivals (1 John 5:21), not sinlessness perfectionism, proper. The later Montanists would have agreed with the Elder's admonition to "love not the world" on that and other scores. Further, locating the Johannine writings in the mid to late second century by Baur and others made the inference of Johannine pneumatism a facile paper tiger, enabling the dismissal of John's historical content, as well.[34]

On this matter, however, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls displaced the gnostic backdrop of the Johannine situation with the inference of a Jewish backdrop in a diaspora setting. Overall, this move reflects a historical advance, although shaving with Ockham's razor sometimes gets a little too close.[35] Indeed, the Johannine tradents—and their tradition—experienced tensions with Jewish family and friends, and dialectical engagements with local synagogue communities and leaders in their Asia Minor setting are palpable within the Johannine corpus. With Brown, Lightfoot, and others, there is no better location than Ephesus, so the traditional view remains plausible overall. The Johannine-Synagogue dialectic was precipitously advanced by J. Louis Martyn in 1968, and John Ashton (1986, 5) rightly judged that book to be the most important advance in Johannine studies since Bultmann's commentary in 1941. Martyn, however, in advancing his thesis, excluded all other factors in the Johannine situation so as to argue more pointedly a synagogue expulsion thesis, bolstered by inferring the *birkat haminim* to have been a reference to the *ἀποσυνάγωγος* references in John 9:22, 12:42, and 16:2. On this score, Martyn (2003) distanced the Johannine Epistles from the Gospel so as to exclude their antidocetic thrust from consideration.[36]

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[33] For a spirited challenge to inadequate views of the Johannine literature, see Anderson (2020a; 2021).

[34] Against fundamentalist and dispensational aggregating of the Johannine Antichrists and the Beast of Revelation, see Anderson (2007b, 196–216; 2007d, 217–240).

[35] Thus, versus Martyn, in contrast to a single audience addressed in the crafting of John 9, several other issues are being addressed within the larger passage (9:1–10:21) (Anderson 2020c, 441–470). Note also the four or five contextual issues addressed in the crafting of John 6 in Anderson (1997). See also Anderson (2007c, 133–159).

Another inference of the character of tensions within the later Johannine situation had been a long-term view that the main target in the Johannine dialogical engagement was the likes of Diotrephes and his kin (3 John 9–10) as a reflection of John's challenge to rising institutionalism of the mainline church. As von Harnack surmised, Diotrephes might not have been the first hierarchical bishop in the early church, but he is the first one we know of *by name*. Along these lines, Ernst Käsemann (2017) saw the Johannine thrust as challenging Petrine hierarchy, calling for a more Spirit-based ecclesiology. It was in support of such a view that Barrett refused to go along with Brown's inference of a localized Johannine community, seeing its target as the larger Christian community. Richard Bauckham (1998, 147–171) furthered that view, arguing that the gospels were written for all Christians, not just a particular community.

Among these views, though, I see the synthesizing work of Raymond Brown (1978, 2003) as the most comprehensive overview of Johannine Christianity in longitudinal perspective, and that model is the one most worthy of building upon.[37] Brown pointed out that we also have early dialogical tensions within the Johannine tradition's developments, reflecting at least two pre-70 CE dialogical engagements in Palestine: tensions between followers of the Galilean Prophet and the Jerusalem elite, and competition with followers of the baptizer.[38] Brown also discerned tensions with docetists in the later Asia Minor setting, along with synagogue engagements, so his view was more expansive—and realistic—than Martyn's. Brown also noted tensions with institutional developments in early Christianity, but he (wrongly, I believe) came to see John's challenge to Petrine hierarchy as originating beyond the apostolic movement (Anderson 2010d, 221–249; 1997; 2007a). He also overread the history-and-theology projection of the Johannine narrative onto inferences of the Johannine situation (I do not think crypto-Christians in Ephesus are the primary reference behind Nicodemus coming to Jesus by night in John 3:2; nor does John 4 imply there were Samaritans present in the later Johannine situation), and he totally misses the Roman imperial backdrop under Domitian, which was so incisive and determinative in the Asia Minor letters of Ignatius (Anderson 2010d, 110–136, 221–250).[39]

Therefore, what is required in sketching an overview of the Johannine situation (not just a singular community) is its development in longitudinal perspective over seven decades. That being the case, with Brown and Martyn, three overall periods can be inferred: the first within Palestine (30–70 CE), and the latter two within an Asia Minor regional setting (70–85 and 85–100 CE). Especially among the two later periods, however, each of these crises and situational engagements were largely overlapping, even if developing in somewhat sequential ways. Put otherwise, the next crisis never waits until the previous one has receded. Further, an earlier crisis never totally disappears; it simply gets pushed aside by more acute and pressing ones. Thus, the difference between the second and third stages is at least partially an external-versus-internal orientation. The tensions in the second period involved Jewish synagogue and Roman imperial forces (which preceded and followed 70–85 CE); the tensions in the third period involved intra-Christian tensions with assimilative Christian teachers and hierarchical emerging leaders (which preceded and followed 85–100 CE).

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[36] See also Martyn (2019).

[37] See also Meeks (1972, 44–72) and Smith (1984).

[38] For an overall evaluation of Brown's Johannine community sketch, see Anderson (2014b, 47–93).

[39] See also Anderson (2007e, xi–xxiii; 2009, 60–61).

These matters being the case, the following inferences regarding the highly dialectical Johannine situation involved the following engagements.

8.4 The Johannine dialectical situation in longitudinal perspective: Seven crises over seven decades

- Early Period (30–70 CE): The Palestinian Location of the Johannine Tradition:
  - o Rejections of the Galilean prophet and his followers in Jerusalem
  - o Competitive tensions with followers of John the Baptist.
- Middle Period (70–85 CE): Asia Minor I—The Emergence of Johannine Communities:
  - o Johannine participation with and individuation from local Jewish communities
  - o Adversity related to the Roman presence and imperial cult requirements under Domitian and following.
- Later Period (85–100 CE): Asia Minor II—Engagements with Other Christian Groups:
  - o Staving off assimilative worldly teachings and docetizing legitimation
  - o Challenging rising institutionalization—the likes of Diotrephes and his kin
  - o Dialectical tensions with Synoptic traditions, spanning all seven decades.

The last crisis, or set of dialogical engagements referenced, actually spanned all three periods, as Johannine engagements with alternative gospel traditions—Synoptic and otherwise—was ongoing from day one through and beyond the finalization of the Johannine witness. That being the case, a simplistic John-and-the-Synoptics literary theory cannot be sustained, critically. Inter-traditional engagements were far more complex than that. Thus, a comprehensive analysis of all the similarities and differences between John and each of the Synoptic Gospels must be conducted, leading to a third critical paradigm.

8.5 Paradigm III—A bi-optic hypothesis: An interfluential set of relations between the Johannine and Synoptic traditions

With our modern access to all three Synoptic Gospels and John side-by-side, the tendency is to perform comparisons and contrasts between the finished works, without evidentiary understandings of how inter-traditional contacts might or might not have transpired. The clearest way forward among the Synoptic Gospels, of course, is to infer Matthew's and Luke's access to the Gospel of Mark, probably in its relatively finished form without Mark 16:9–20. The tendency, then, is to infer a text-based approach to John's relation to the Synoptics, although the phenomenology of the contacts is completely different. While a number of similar words are present between John and Mark (see especially John 6 and Mark 6 and 8),[40] none of the similarities are identical or verbatim for more than a word, or at most, a phrase. Thus, even Barrett, who saw John as spiritualizing Mark's content, admitted that John did not make use of Mark as Matthew did.

Another analysis, that of Percival Gardner-Smith (1938), saw John as disagreeing with Mark at nearly every point of contact. At this, he surmised John's total independence from Mark, and C. H. Dodd (1963) referenced Gardner-Smith's work a good deal in constructing a view of John's material as historical tradition, parallel to the Synoptics, but not dependent upon them. Rudolf Bultmann (2014) also saw John as independent of the Synoptics, which is why he was forced to imagine disparate sources underlying John, assuming it did not involve an autonomous tradition. It was Moody Smith's (2001; 2015) analysis of Bultmann's work that convinced him of John's independence from the Synoptics. However, John's differences and distinctiveness could reflect its posing an autonomous, alternative witness rather than reflecting total Johannine isolation.

In my own analysis, I noted more than Gardner-Smith's four similarities and differences between John 6 and Mark. I found a total of forty-five instances: twenty-four similarities and differences between John 6 and Mark 6, and twenty-one between John 6 and Mark 8. Given the fact also, that some 85% of John is not included in the Synoptics, John's independence, or non-dependence on Mark, seemed obvious, critically. In 1999, however, I was an external evaluator of the doctoral dissertation of Ian Mackay (2004), under the supervision of Bill Loader, analyzing again John 6 and Mark 6 and 8. What I had not seen before is the structural similarities between John and Mark, suggesting at least familiarity with Mark's outline, while likely not having access to Mark's text literarily. In Mackay's view, given that Mark likely circulated among the churches as a performed reading, John plausibly heard Mark's text performed orally in one or more meetings for worship, so that familiarity became more of a plausibility, even if literarily independent. This caused me to change my language from Johannine *independence* of Mark to Johannine *autonomy*. John's narrator has his own story to tell, but his crafting of it might have followed Mark's pattern, even as an augmentation.[41]

As I thought about John's first edition having five signs instead of eight, these just happen to be the five that are *not* included in Mark. Assuming at least a general familiarity with Mark, part of John's original purpose appears to have involved augmenting Mark with non-duplicative material. Further, the numbering of the first and second signs in John 2:11 and 4:54 appears to reflect a knowing augmentation of the miracles in Mark 1 with earlier events in the ministry of Jesus. Likewise, the signs in John 5, 9, and 11 augment Mark geographically. Given that the Papias citation of John the Elder's opinion (*Hist. Eccles*. 3.39) that Mark's rendering of Peter's preaching is pretty good, but in the wrong order, John's distinctive chronology might reflect a timeline correction rather than a theological flourish. Further, a critique of Mark's content being situationally crafted rather than historical, and the Elder's critique of Mark's duplications account for many of John's differences from Mark. If the evangelist's general familiarity with Mark is imagined, (a) John's account sets some chronological issues straight; (b) the narrator also takes license to paraphrase and craft his memory to the needs of his audiences, as did Peter; and (c) he avoids duplications, which explains why most of Mark's content is *not* included in the first edition of John's material.[42] The Papias citing of the Johannine Elder's opinions about Mark coheres entirely with the earlier stages of the Johannine witness.

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[40] Nonetheless, in addition to the Leuven School, several scholars have seen the Johannine-Markan relationship as John's dependence upon Mark. See also Hunt (2011) and Brodie (1993).

[41] Thus, assuming that the Johannine Christ-hymn was added by the author of 1 John 1:1–3, the Johannine Elder, the evangelist's original beginning of the second biography of Jesus likely began with John 1:6–8, 15, 19ff., to which the three stanzas of vv. 1–5, 9–13, and 14 and 16–18 were added later (Anderson 2007f; 2016).

[42] For a fuller analysis, see Anderson (2013b).

John's first ending even seems to acknowledge familiarity with Mark while defending John's distinctive account. "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in *this* book [I know Mark's out there; stop bugging me for leaving things out!]. But these are written so that you may come to believe…" (John 20:30–31). John's second ending acknowledges the fuller Synoptic witness, and despite adding the well-known feeding, sea crossing, debate about the loaves, and Peter's confession (John 6, etc.), as well as rectifying the image of Peter (John 21, and so on), the compiler nonetheless defends Johannine selectivity. "But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written [Look! If we would have included *everything* in the Synoptics, you wouldn't have enough libraries in the world, let alone enough books, to contain them—get off our case for our selectivity!]" (John 21:25) (Anderson 2015). Three further points follow.

First, given that some of Matthew's and Luke's uses of Mark tend to leave out details (they add units, but normally summarize and reduce Markan narratives), the fact that John and Mark contain some common details (much/green grass—John 6:10 and Mark 6:39; 200 denarii—John 6:7 and Mark 6:37; 300 denarii—John 12:5 and Mark 14:5) raise a question about some sort of inter-traditional contact. It could be that these similarities are simply incidental or accidental. However, if they do reflect some sort of contact, Raymond Brown's explanation that oral-tradition crosses-influence seems a plausible inference (I call it *interfluence*—the sort of thing that must have happened as such figures as Peter and John preached together throughout Samaria in Acts 8). That being the case, however, it is impossible to know which direction the influence might have gone. Mark's source could have borrowed from John's just as easily as vice versa. Therefore, the most critically plausible inference accounting for some of the distinctive Markan-Johannine verbal similarities is some form of inter-traditional contact, or *interfluence*, between the formative stages of the Johannine and Markan traditions.

A second fact is that Mark, Matthew, and Luke all show signs of having made use of Johannine material, so it cannot be said that inter-traditional influence went in only one direction—toward the Johannine. Interestingly, the words of Jesus at the temple incident (John 2:19), "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," are cited twice in Mark—by false witnesses at the trial of Jesus (Mark 14:58) and by the derisive passersby at the cross (15:29–30). These facts suggest the Markan tradition's access either to the Johannine tradition, or to an independent Jesus saying corroborating the Johannine witness. Matthew also references healings of Jesus in Jerusalem narrated only in John: healing the blind and the lame in the temple area (Matt 21:14; John 5:1–15; 9:1–7). Matthew also locates the healings in Peter's household referenced in Mark 1 just after the healing from afar in Capernaum: the *second* sign of Jesus, according to John 4:46–54 (Matt 8:5–13). Even in the Q tradition (if there was one—i.e. if Luke did not have access to Matthew), "the bolt out of the Johannine blue" raises questions about whether the Q tradition might also have depended upon the Johannine: "All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22; cf. John 1:18; 3:35; 5:19–26). Even more telling is the fact that Luke departs from Mark no fewer than six dozen times in ways that coincide with John (Anderson 2010b). Conversely, characteristically Lukan material is not found in John. Thus, the formative Johannine tradition—likely before its finalization, as the great catch of fish is placed early by Luke, and Luke does not follow John's ordering of the temple incident—was clearly one of Luke's sources, and the reference to "eyewitnesses and servants of the *Logos*" in Luke 1:2 might even be seen as an expression of gratitude to Johannine and other sources for Luke's content. Again, influence also clearly flowed from the Johannine to each of the Synoptic traditions, albeit likely in different ways.

Third, the Johannine Matthean contacts are less pronounced in terms of particular diction, and yet, they still reflect some forms of engagement in the late first century situation.[43] In terms of presenting Jesus as the Jewish Messiah/Christ, Matthew and John reflect confirmations from Jewish Scripture—both explicit and implicit. Explicitly, numerous biblical texts are seen to be fulfilled in Jesus, reflecting apologetic interests. Implicitly, Matthew and John both show Jesus as fulfilling such biblical typologies as those of Moses and the Eschatological Prophet, especially in their crafting of their narratives. Nonetheless, Matthew's institutionalizing of Peter's memory (Matt 10:2; 16:17–19) must be held in tension with John's juxtaposition of Peter and the Beloved Disciple. Peter gets it wrong several times in John (also in the Synoptics),[45] and in narrative, miscomprehension is always rhetorical. While neither the Johannine evangelist nor the compiler need have known Matthew's text specifically, the inhospitable actions of primacy-loving Diotrephes in 3 John 9–10 likely evoked an ideological corrective to rising institutionalization in the late first century situation. In terms of historicity, John's presentation of a more familial and egalitarian ecclesiology reflects a more primitive memory of Jesus and his intentions for his followers than later, hierarchical developments, influenced by Matthew 16:17–19 and other texts. Thus, a larger view of *interfluentiality* between the Johannine and Synoptic traditions, likely included the following.

8.6 A Bi-optic hypothesis—A theory of Johannine-Synoptic interfluentiality

- The Johannine and Markan Traditions: Oral tradition *interfluentiality*, John's augmentation and modest corrections of Mark as the second biography of Jesus.
- Luke's (and perhaps Q's) access to the Johannine tradition: Adding Johannine details and content, preferring John's rendering of the feeding, and harmonizing Mark and John.
- Dialectical engagement between the later Matthean and Johannine traditions: Apologetically showing Jesus to be the Jewish Messiah/Christ, and reflecting conversations about leadership and church organization.
- The finalization of John's Gospel by the compiler after the death of the Beloved Disciple: Harmonizing the Johannine narrative with those of the Synoptics and presenting a more egalitarian and Spirit-based view of church leadership.

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43 Versus Barker (2015), the Johannine-Matthean relationship is better seen as a development of dialectical engagement rather than literary dependence.

44 See, however, Brown, Donfried, and Reumann (1973), who show a range of portrayals of Peter in the New Testament. This does not mean, though, that there was no ideological tension between the Johannine leadership and rise of Ignatian Petrine hierarchy. If anything, it documents the critique of institutional developments within the early church (and apostolic) memory more broadly. See my response delivered personally in 2006 to Pope Benedict and Cardinal Kasper (Anderson 2005, 3–39). See also Anderson (1991, 27–43).

- The second ending of Mark (Mark 16:9–20): Including Lukan, Matthean, *and* Johannine material; *interfluentiality* continues! (Anderson 2002a, 19–58; 2014a, 102–126).

9. New Criteria for Determining Historicity—A Key Element in the Fourth Quest

Understandably, many may demur at the idea of naming the inclusion of the Gospel of John in critical Historical Jesus research *the Fourth Quest*, but such a designation is not simply a factor of advances in the twenty-first century, or new paradigms for understanding the character and origin of the Johannine tradition. What really makes this a distinctive quest unlike the others is the introduction of new and inclusive criteria for determining gospel historicity, in contrast to the reductionistic criteria of the parsimonious quests. These were introduced in the introduction to Vol. 3 of the *John, Jesus, and History* series, and I largely repeat them, here (Anderson and Clark-Soles 2016, 1–25).[45]

9.1. Corroborative impression versus multiple attestation

A huge problem with the criterion of multiple attestation is that, by definition, it excludes everything that might be added to Mark's account of Jesus's ministry by other gospel traditions and writers. Further, if Mark was used by Matthew and Luke, then triple-tradition material may simply denote their uses of Mark rather than reflecting independent attestations of a historical memory or event. And, if anything within the Gospel of John is intended to augment or correct Mark, it is automatically excluded from consideration, even if the basis for such a judgment is flawed. A more adequate criterion looks for corroborative sets of impressions, wherein paraphrases, alternative ways of putting something, or distinctive renderings of a similar feature inform a fuller understanding of the ministry of Jesus. Such an approach would thus include the Johannine witness rather than excluding it programmatically.

9.2 Primitivity versus dissimilarity or embarrassment

While the criteria of dissimilarity and embarrassment might keep one from mistaking later Christian views for earlier ones going back to Jesus, they also tend to distort the historiographic process, itself. What if apostolic Christians and their successors *actually did get something right* in their memories of Jesus? Or, what if Jesus of Nazareth *actually did teach conventional Jewish views* during his ministry? The criterion of dissimilarity would thereby exclude such features from historical consideration, allowing only the odd or embarrassing features to be built upon. Even if such data is unlikely to be concocted, to exclude other material from the database of historical tradition creates an odd assortment of portraiture material, which, if used, is likely to create a distortive image of Jesus. A more adequate way forward is to seek to identify primitive material, seeking to distinguish it from its more developed counterparts. This may include Palestine-familiarity features, Aramaic and Hebraic terms, and other undeveloped material less influenced by the later mission to the Gentiles.

9.3 Critical realism versus dogmatic naturalism or supranaturalism

Just as dogmatic supranaturalism is an affront to historical inquiry, so is dogmatic naturalism—especially when it functions to exclude anything that might approximate the wondrous in gospel narratives. John's Prologue was probably added to a later or final edition of the gospel, so its cosmic perspective should not eclipse or distort the more conventional features of John's narrative, just as the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke should not eclipse their more mundane features. Rather, political realism, religious anthropology, and social-sciences analyses provide helpful lenses for understanding the perception of Jesus as a Galilean prophetic figure in all four gospel traditions. After all, John's narrative begins in ways similar to Mark's, launched by the association of Jesus with John the Baptist. Therefore, historical and critical realism acknowledges the historical problem of wondrous claims, but it also considers cognitive, religious, political, anthropological, and societal aspects of realism that might account for such impressions.

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[45] See also Anderson (2019a).

9.4 Open coherence versus closed portraiture

Two central flaws in coherence-oriented criteria for determining historicity in the quest for Jesus include the circularity of the approach and the closed character of its portraiture. On one hand, the gospels form the primary database for determining a coherent impression of Jesus of Nazareth; on the other, those same gospels are evaluated on the basis of information contained within them. Further, scholars too easily base a view of what cannot represent a feature of Jesus's ministry based upon the narrowing down of what he must have done and said.

9.5 Gradations of certainty

If indeed the Johannine tradition reflects an autonomous tradition, a considerable advance in Jesus research is that one need not identify extracanonical Jesus traditions to corroborate the Synoptic accounts. True, the distinctive Matthean and Lukan material (and even some of the Jesus sayings in the Pauline letters) corroborate the Markan account, but the Johannine witness does so in several distinctive ways. From a *corroborative impression* standpoint, even when neither the language of Jesus nor the incidents reported are the same, John's witness functions to confirm a good number of Synoptic presentations as an independent means of verification. It also may serve to correct Markan or Synoptic impressions, although in some other ways, the Synoptic witness is preferable to the Johannine. Thus, a more nuanced and measured analysis of the particulars is required.

Along those lines, rather than force a dichotomous choice among Jesus scholars for or against an item's historicity within four brittle categories, a larger middle ground is essential, lest overstated judgments be forced. Along these lines, some scholars have argued for the inclusion of *plausibility* as a more realistic category for some judgments precisely because evidence is often ambiguous. Therefore, in addition to "Certainly Not" and "Unlikely," sometimes an issue is simply "Questionable." Likewise, in addition to "Certain" and "Likely," sometimes an issue is simply "Plausible." Further, some issues might not compel a judgment in one direction or another, deserving a more open category, "Possible." Therefore, the most nuanced of analyses are well advised to stipulate their gradations of certainty, declaring also *why* they have chosen such a category for a particular judgment. That would allow gradations of certainty to be named and evaluated more serviceably. The gradations would be as follows:

- Certainly not (1–14%)
- Unlikely (15–29%)
- Questionable (30–44%)
- Possible (45–54%)
- Plausible (55–69%)
- Likely (70–84%)
- Certain (85–99%)

Therefore, the Fourth Quest—laid down in further detail in the deliberations emerging from the John, Jesus, and History Project—invites the use of more adequate and nuanced measures of historical plausibility, promising more textured impressions of Jesus and his ministry. But why is this important?

10. The Value of Including the Gospel of John in the Fourth Quest for Jesus of Nazareth

If the ministry and teachings of Jesus are considered in bi-optic perspective, this could launch highly significant advances in Jesus studies. The best way to proceed, in my judgment, is to begin with the Synoptics (especially Mark) and then to proceed with analyzing John and making sense of particular similarities and differences. Along those lines, I might offer three categories of historical information emerging from the analysis: (A) Johannine corroborations of Synoptic presentations of Jesus, (B) Synoptic contributions to understanding Jesus and his ministry, and (C) Johannine contributions to understanding Jesus and his ministry. While these features deserve fuller treatments, an overview of my earlier analyses is as follows (Anderson 2006c, 127–173).

10.1 Three contributions to historical Jesus studies in bi-optic perspective

When John and the Synoptics are viewed together, a more nuanced appreciation of Jesus and his ministry is availed.

10.1.1 Johannine independent corroborations of Synoptic presentations of Jesus—Synoptic-Johannine dual attestation:

- Jesus's association with John the Baptizer and the beginning of his public ministry
- Jesus's calling of disciples as a corporate venture
- A revolt in the desert? (the feeding of the multitude)
- Jesus as a healer—healing on the Sabbath
- Jesus's sense of prophetic agency from the Father and religious resistance
- Jesus's cleansing of the temple
- The culmination of Jesus's ministry—his arrest, trials, and death in Jerusalem
- Attestations to appearances and the beginning of the Jesus movement.

In dual attestation between John and the Synoptics, the above perspectives on the ministry of Jesus deserve to be researched and taken further by Historical Jesus scholars. Indeed, there is no figure in ancient literature attested to more fully than Jesus of Nazareth, and the addition of the Gospel of John as an independent and distinctive memory of Jesus bolsters many of the features included in the Synoptics. Although distinctive features abound among the above presentations, differences may actually bolster the likelihood of such memories being rooted in history, given the implausibility of literary dependence as the best accounting for their parallels.

10.1.2 Synoptic contributions to historical Jesus studies:

- Jesus's teachings about the Kingdom of God in parables and in short, pithy sayings
- Messianic secrecy and the hiddenness of the Kingdom
- Jesus's healing and exorcizing ministries
- Jesus's sending out his disciples to further the work of the Kingdom
- Jesus's dining with "sinners" and provocations toward renewal
- Jesus's cleansing of the temple as an intentional challenge to the restricting of access to God

- Jesus's teaching on the heart of the Law—the love of God and neighbor
- Jesus's apocalyptic mission.

Given Mark's contribution as the first biography of Jesus, attested also by the distinctive material in Matthew and Luke, the above Synoptic features provide a solid basis for understanding Jesus of Nazareth and his ministry. While most of these features are not included in the Gospel of John, the Synoptic contributions to Jesus studies nonetheless provide a sound framework for the inquiry. Along these lines, distinctive-yet-similar presentations of Jesus and his ministry in Matthew and Luke function to corroborate the Markan witness from a number of independent sources.

10.1.3 Johannine contributions to Historical Jesus studies

- Jesus's simultaneous ministry alongside John the Baptizer and the prolific availability of purifying power
- Jesus's temple cleansing as an inaugural prophetic sign
- Jesus's travel to and from Jerusalem and his multi-year ministry
- Early events in the public ministry of Jesus
- Favorable receptions in Galilee among Samaritans, women, and Gentiles
- Jesus's Judean ministry and archaeological realism
- The last supper as a common meal and its proper dating
- Jesus's teaching about the way of the Spirit and the reign of truth.

In addition to dually corroborated impressions and Synoptic contributions, the Gospel of John has its own contributions to make—some of them adding to Synoptic reports, and others correcting or being more historically viable than the Synoptic witnesses. On the latter point, such considerations are not motivated by religious conservatism; preferring one gospel against three others historically may raise consternation among literalists, both liberal and conservative. The value of an inclusive quest is that a multiplicity of perspectives can be considered rigorously, providing a more textured understanding of how Jesus of Nazareth was understood by his followers and others.

Along these lines, we are also helped in grasping a fuller and more adequate understanding of the character and significance of history, itself. Too often, the value of objective certainty tempts the modernist to dismiss the personal, contextual, and subjective aspects of memory, so as to distort the historical enterprise, itself. As Hans Küng (1976, 415–416) reminded us, "Truth is beyond mere facticity." On precisely this point, the 1927 Eisenach address by Rudolf Bultmann (1969, 146) expands upon the value of dialectical theology to include also the character of dialectical historiography:

> Insight into what is really meant by dialectical theology could lead to a deeper insight into the nature of history and thus modify, enrich or clarify the method of historical investigation…. What, then, is meant by *dialectic*? Undeniably it is a *specific way of speaking* which recognizes that there exists no ultimate knowledge which can be encompassed and preserved in a single statement.

Thus, what an inclusive quest for Jesus puts into play is a more humble, contextual, and dialectical approach to historiography, welcoming a multiplicity of perspectives whereby a more textured understanding of the subject is availed. If dialectical theology poses an advance over dogmatic theology, a dialectical approach to historiography poses a critical advance over reductionistic historiography, despite critics' claims to positivistic objectivism. This is also important as a corrective to dogmatic understandings of apostolic memory. As James Dunn (1990) reminds us, within New Testament Christianity abounded a good deal of diversity within the unity and unity within the diversity. This fact is also relevant for understanding the contributions of the apostolic and sub-apostolic sources of gospel traditions in bi-optic perspective, distinctive though they may be. How can historical memory over seven decades or more have been other?

Whoever was Mark's source (and I do think there is critical evidence of a Petrine trajectory underlying Mark, cohering with Peter's presentation in Acts and features of the Petrine Epistles; Anderson 2010d, 137–165; 2014c, 285–296, 321–338), and *whoever* the Johannine evangelist might have been (and I do think Acts 4:19–20 connects John the Apostle with Johannine phraseology), there was likely more than one apostolic perspective—let alone later perspectives—within the development of gospel traditions. Indeed, disputes about what Jesus did and meant are referenced in all four gospels, and like any other historic figure, first- and second-generation interpreters always dispute understandings and meanings. While a good number of advances have resulted from the first three quests for Jesus, their limitation lies primarily in what they have cropped. Here's where restoring the Johannine witness to Jesus research avails new considerations, which may yet be of interest to present and future audiences.

In 2010, Marcus Borg and I presented three public dialogues at the Center for Christian Studies at Reedwood Friends Church in Portland, Oregon on "The Gospels and Jesus in Bi-Optic Perspective." Marcus presented on the Synoptic perspective regarding the works, teachings, and last days of Jesus; I presented on the Johannine (Anderson 2010a). At the end of our first of three sessions, Marcus said to me, "Paul, what if the Gospel of John was the only account going back to eyewitness memory, what difference would that make? Is it just a matter of three Passovers and multiple trips to Jerusalem, or would it make any meaningful difference?" I was taken back at his allowance of such a consideration, but then I responded: "Well, actually, I don't care what the results produce; I just think the Gospel of John is an under-utilized resource for understanding Jesus of Nazareth." I continued: "Then again, John's presentation of women in leadership and in close relation to Jesus, plus an egalitarian and familial approach to church governance and leadership, *could* be really important in understanding the Jesus of history and the movement he founded." Thus, here are just a few values of an inclusive quest for Jesus.

10.2 Values of envisioning Jesus in Johannine perspective within the Fourth Quest

- The spirituality of Jesus
- The valued place of women in the Jesus movement and in church leadership
- An egalitarian, familial, and Spirit-based approach to church governance
- A more realistic chronology
- A grounded-yet-meaning-driven account of Jesus and his ministry
- An independent corroboration and engagement of the Synoptic accounts.

While including the Johannine witness within the Historical Quest of Jesus involves huge critical challenges, it also bears with it a number of timely advances. John's memory of Jesus, despite reflecting the Fourth Evangelist's paraphrastic representation of Jesus as developed within his own ministry, nonetheless corroborates a good deal of the Synoptic witness while also contributing valuably to ongoing understandings of spirituality, ecclesiology, leadership, women's issues, and cross-cultural outreach. Not only is the Fourth Quest demanded by the phenomenology of the texts; it is also beneficial in service to fuller and more textured understandings of Jesus and his ministry.

11. Conclusion

In conclusion, while the sure steppingstones of the parsimonious quests of Jesus need not be rejected, their limitation is that they do not go far enough in making use of all worthy sources, which cannot avoid meaningfully engaging the Gospel of John. Despite the critical challenges posed by the Johannine theological, historical, and literary riddles, the Fourth Gospel cannot simply be assigned to canons of theology or literary flourishes. Its historical features also demand consideration, and a compelling overall theory is required to make sense of John's composition, evolving situation, and relations to other traditions. What we see within the Johannine account is an individuated memory of Jesus, distinctive from the Markan perspective from day one, yet also engaging and engaged by other traditions as they all developed into the later first century situation. While John's presentation represents a paraphrastic crafting of Jesus and his ministry, the same can be said of other traditions, whether rooted in first-hand memory or second- or third-hand accounts. John's tradition includes primitive memory as well as developed understandings. Some of it corroborates Synoptic accounts; some of it augments Synoptic accounts; some of it counters or modestly corrects Synoptic accounts. But, such is the character of historical contributions, as there is no such thing as non-rhetorical historiography. It is precisely a set of myopic impressions—among general readers and scholars alike—upon which a bi-optic approach improves.

Not only is it the modern quests for Jesus that the Johannine witness complements and completes; such was also the claim of the original compiler at the end of the first century CE, with alternative accounts in view, who defended the distinctive witness of the Fourth Evangelist, claiming: "His testimony is true." As the Johannine Elder endeavored to set the record straight regarding a fuller grasp of Jesus around the turn of the first century CE, so a Fourth Quest for Jesus does the same at the dawn of the third common millennium, bolstered by a fuller grasp of Jesus in Johannine perspective.

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Is Jesus John's Mouthpiece? Reconsidering Johannine Idiom

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Abstract

Scholars commonly move from the premise that Jesus in the Fourth Gospel speaks in Johannine idiom to the conclusion that the evangelist elaborated Jesus's teachings. We can evaluate this claim better if we distinguish paraphrase from elaboration, restricting the former concept to reports that would be recognizable both in content and in historical context. We should further distinguish different things that could be meant by the phrase "Johannine idiom." When we do both of these, we can see the weakness of the argument from idiom to elaboration. There is also positive evidence supporting the counterclaim that John was scrupulous in recording the teachings of the historical Jesus. Two lines of such evidence come from the narrator's explanatory "asides" and from unexplained allusions in Jesus's teaching in the Gospel of John.

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1. Scholarly Consensus: John Elaborates Jesus's Teaching

Many Johannine scholars are convinced that John elaborates Jesus's teachings at least somewhat, putting these elaborations into Jesus's mouth.[1] Scholars also

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[1] I will refer to the author of the Fourth Gospel throughout this paper as "John" without pursuing questions of authorship in detail. The secondary literature on the topics discussed here is vast, and I want to show awareness of that fact. The mainstream view that John is historically free with the words of Jesus is exemplified by Jörge Frey (2018, 99–101). Alan Culpepper (1993, 57–101) is slightly more optimistic, believing that we can find some historically authentic sayings, or bits of historically authentic sayings, amidst much other material that has been invented by the Johannine community. Peter W. Ensor (1996, 41–57) suggests a more positive approach to John's authentic recording of Jesus's speech, but the outcome is only somewhat more optimistic than that in Culpepper. Richard Bauckham (2007, 30–36) emphasizes the realistic appearance of John's way of reporting Jesus's speech and notes that it is not clear that it is less historical than that of the Synoptics. D. A. Carson (1981, 122–129) argues that the presence of Johannine idiom does not provide an argument that John has historically invented or even significantly elaborated the words of Jesus as reported.

Conspectus

Keywords
Johannine idiom, historical Jesus, paraphrase, Fourth Gospel, Johannine discourses, Gospel historicity

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tend to take it for granted that he does so more than the Synoptic evangelists. Even those who are not invested in a developmental thesis concerning Johannine Christology are inclined to assume Johannine elaboration, though sometimes not specifying where or how extensively it occurs. Here, for example, is George Eldon Ladd:

> It would be fair to say that John and the Synoptics are today seen as being closer together than earlier in the twentieth century. John is regarded as deserving at least some respect as a historical source; the Synoptics are seen as theological documents that also involve deliberate interpretation of the tradition. Nevertheless, it remains true that the Fourth Evangelist is quite unique in the degree of freedom he has taken in retelling the story of Jesus. He thus repeatedly makes explicit what the Synoptics are content to leave implicit. He retells the story with all the advantage afforded by the post-resurrection perspective, bringing out the full meaning of Jesus for his readers. He does not give us a verbatim report of the words of Jesus or a strictly literal account of his deeds.... The story is not less true because of this, but in a way actually truer. If the Synoptics provide us with theological *history*, the Fourth Gospel gives us *theological* history. Both words are necessary in both instances. John's elaboration of core elements of the tradition tells us unerringly the significance of the historical Jesus for the church of the present. (Ladd 1993, 684 n. 82)

Craig Keener comments in a similar vein,

> Granting a significant a priori degree of probability [of historicity] in general does not obviate the importance of other considerations in various individual cases. The Fourth Gospel makes no effort to disguise the Johannine style of its discourses; most Johannine scholars see these discourses as including homiletic elaboration on Jesus's teaching, interpretation that the author would undoubtedly claim was guided by the promised Spirit of truth. (Keener 2019, 15)

Here Keener focuses on the discourses in John and makes explicit the role of Johannine idiom as a basis for the claim that John elaborates. Keener treats this style as requiring us at least to qualify our conclusions about the historicity of those portions of the Gospel. Similarly, Paul N. Anderson, who has urged that Johannine historicity be taken with much greater seriousness by the scholarly community, nonetheless suggests that the connected discourses in the Fourth Gospel represent John's own preaching more than the recognizable teaching of the historical Jesus in the contexts reported (Anderson 2011, 164, 215–216). The appeal of the idea that John treats Jesus as his mouthpiece (at least to some degree) is therefore not confined to the "liberal" end of the scholarly spectrum.

I will argue that scholars have overestimated the argument from Johannine idiom to Johannine elaboration and that there is positive evidence to the contrary—namely, that the author of the Fourth Gospel does not make Jesus his own mouthpiece.

2. Distinguishing Paraphrase from Elaboration

My methodological approach in this paper is both analytical and realistic. I assume that truth about history, including religiously relevant history, can be known, even if our justification is probabilistic rather than certain. I also assume that we will approach the task of this investigation best if we are as clear as possible about what we are saying and about why we think it is true. For this purpose, linguistic disambiguation is often valuable.

To discuss clearly the question of whether or not John deliberately elaborates Jesus's teachings, we need a sharpened idea of what constitutes paraphrase. In the quotation from Ladd, above, it appears that Ladd takes the alternative to "John elaborates" to be the claim, *inter alia*, that John gives a verbatim account of Jesus's teachings. On the face of it, this is a false dichotomy. Is there no middle ground between (on the one hand) putting one's own elaborations into another person's mouth, and (on the other hand) giving a verbatim account?

In his influential paper on this topic, Darrell Bock (1995) identifies three different categories, which he dubs "live," "jive," and "Memorex." The last of these is a verbatim record, like a transcript of an audio recording. The second ("jive") he defines thus: "[T]he Gospel writers had *and took* the opportunity *to create* sayings. They felt perfectly free to put words in Jesus's mouth that did not reflect at all what he had taught" (emphasis in original). Bock characterizes the "live" view, which he advocates, like this:

> [T]he text reports Jesus's sayings, even those that can be tied to the same setting, with variations of wording.... Each Evangelist retells the living and powerful words of Jesus in a fresh way for his readers, while faithfully and accurately presenting the "gist" of what Jesus said. (Bock 1995, 76–77)

This three-part distinction is an important step in the direction of avoiding a false dichotomy between elaboration and verbatim recording, but there remains some ambiguity. Bock states that the "jive" view involves putting words into Jesus's mouth that did not at all reflect what Jesus taught. But some who advocate the idea that John elaborates Jesus's teachings (e.g., creating long discourses that Jesus did not recognizably utter) would say that these elaborations do reflect what Jesus taught in the sense that they accurately explain the deeper meaning of his brief sayings or expound his message as shown in other stories recorded in the Synoptics. For example, Michael Licona (2017) seems to suggest that Jesus's more explicit claims to deity in John's Gospel might be John's way of making clearer what Jesus indicates only implicitly in entirely different Synoptic scenes. But this would in itself make the unique Johannine sayings unhistorical in their reported contexts and would plausibly make the scenes surrounding them (such as the dialogue leading up to and flowing from John 10:30) unhistorical as well.

Moreover, Bock says that it is compatible with the "live" view that the evangelists made changes to Jesus's words in order to "apply Jesus's teaching to their audiences." He also says that the reports of Jesus's teachings show that these teachings have been "reflected on in light of the significance his teaching came to possess" (Bock 1995, 76–77). Even if this is not Bock's intention, these comments might be taken to mean that creating longer discourses that elaborate upon Jesus's teaching is merely a kind of "live" paraphrase.

For the sake of greater clarity both among scholars and between scholars and lay audiences, I suggest the following as minimal criteria for referring to something as a paraphrase of spoken words. Even if a record of Jesus's teaching is not, or may not be, a precise record or an exact translation (e.g., from Aramaic into Greek), we should call it a paraphrase only if it has the following two properties:

> 1) The verbally expressed content would be recognizable, from the record given in the Gospel, to someone who was present and understood the relevant language(s).

> 2) The occasion on which the Gospel indicates that Jesus said these things would be recognizable by such a person (Carson 1981, 122, 125–126).

Naturally, there will still be debatable areas. Just how recognizable does the content need to be? But if we are to discuss these matters clearly, we need to have some anchor so that terms like "paraphrase," "gist," and *ipsissima vox* do not become indefinitely malleable. Just a few years after Bock's essay, Daniel B. Wallace (1999, 5–6) argued that evangelicals hold too narrow a view of *ipsissima vox*. He criticized Bock's essay in this respect, especially concerning John's Gospel. He went further the following year (Wallace 2000), suggesting that it is a form of *ipsissima vox* for John to change Jesus's words "My God, why have you forsaken me?" to "I thirst." This example illustrates the need for clearer definitions of such terms.

Ensor (1996, 36–38) has suggested that a paraphrase be distinguished from both a much shorter summary and an interpretive elaboration; all three are included in his "type c" category of "looser representations" of what Jesus said (as contrasted with verbatim quotations in Aramaic or very close verbatim translations into Greek). But interestingly, Ensor's "type c" category, even at the level of a recognizable paraphrase of content, contains no stipulation concerning context, and he seems to count a report as a paraphrase in his sense even if Jesus did not say something recognizably like that in the context given in the text (Ensor 1996, 118, concerning John 9:4). It seems that we should have a category in hand that stipulates both recognizable content *and* recognizable context, especially when we are considering the reliability of an evangelist. If an evangelist firmly situates a statement of Jesus in a context where it did not occur at all, this detracts at least somewhat from the evangelist's reliability as a historical reporter, and even more so if the change was made deliberately.

At times the scene that forms the context is so intertwined with the saying that, if the evangelist "moved" and "adapted" Jesus's words from a different scene, this would amount to inventing a scene in his own gospel. For example, suppose that Jesus did not agonize aloud before the crowds about his forthcoming death as recorded in John 12:27, resolving his musings by saying, "Father, glorify Thy name" (John 12:28a).[2] Suppose that, as Frey (2018, 73–74) suggests, this was John's adaptive use of the Markan Gethsemane tradition. In the scene in John, the voice from heaven, the people's speculation about the voice, and Jesus's comments about it (vv. 28b–30) all flow naturally from Jesus's musings. The voice from heaven responds to Jesus's conclusion, "Father, glorify Thy name," which (on the adaptation theory) did not historically occur at this time. If these words are invented in the sense that Jesus said no such thing on this occasion, then it is plausible that the voice from heaven and the dialogue about it are invented as well. While Frey would probably have no qualms about that conclusion, the point is that it is a stronger blow against John's historical reliability than one might realize from a bland statement like, "This is a paraphrase of an authentic saying of Jesus in another context." It is worthwhile to mark that point by restricting "paraphrase" to instances where both the content and the context would be recognizable to someone who was present at the time.

3. Three Possible Meanings of "Johannine Idiom"

With a sharpened concept of paraphrase in hand, we are in a better position to discuss the question, "What does 'Johannine idiom' mean?" and thereby to see whether its presence in the words of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel is a good argument for Johannine elaboration.

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[2] Scripture quotations are from the NASB (1977).

One possible meaning of "Johannine idiom" is the presence of terms that express themes prominent in the Johannine literature, sometimes in the mouth of Jesus, sometimes in the voice of the narrator of the gospel, and sometimes in I John. Examples of such terms include *μαρτυρέω* ("to bear witness, testify," John 8:18, 15:26–27, 18:37, 1 John 4:14, 5:9, etc.), *ἀλήθεια* ("truth," John 8:32, 14:6, 18:37, 1 John 4:6, and so on), and *ζωὴν αἰώνιον* ("eternal life," John 3:15–16, 6:47, 17:3, 1 John 5:11–13). There are also common Johannine themes that cannot be reduced to a single term, such as knowing the Father through the Son (John 3:13, 6:46, 14:6, 1 John 5:11, 20, etc.).

We should immediately ask exactly how the argument is supposed to go from the prevalence of these conceptual themes to Johannine elaboration. One possible route for such an argument goes through the fact that these themes, and the words that express them, are statistically more common in Johannine literature, including in the words of Jesus, than they are in the teachings of Jesus recorded in the Synoptics. Why is this an argument that John elaborated Jesus's words so as to bring up these themes? It seems that there must be an unstated premise concerning the statistical representativeness of both the Synoptic and the Johannine records. One would need to assume that the teachings of Jesus recorded in the Synoptics are meant to be taken as a representative sample of how often Jesus addressed certain themes and used the terminology appropriate to those themes, and the same for John. If we make that strong assumption, then we have what might be called a statistical contradiction, since Jesus does talk more often in the Fourth Gospel about bearing witness or testifying than he does in (say) Mark.

But why should we accept any such premise? No Gospel claims to present such a sample, and there is every reason to believe that the evangelists engaged in selection of material, though that selection could easily have come from entirely historical material. Moreover, the Synoptic Gospels are famously interdependent (though theories of the causes and nature of that dependence vary), and apparent Synoptic dependence often affects precisely the selection of Jesus's teachings. Therefore, the Synoptics do not constitute three separate statistical "testimonies" to how Jesus *usually* taught or what themes he *most often* discussed. (A similar point is made by Anderson 2011, 46.)

The appearance of supposedly "Johannine" themes and language in the Synoptics also supports the suggestion that the different statistics represent different selection from historical material. Besides the famous "Johannine thunderbolt" in Matthew 11:25–27, on the topic of the Father's endorsement of the Son and the need to know the Father through the Son, there is the use of "eternal life" in the Synoptics (e.g., Luke 10:25), including in a place where Jesus himself treats that phrase as synonymous with "kingdom of God" (Mark 10:17, 24–25, 30, noted by Bauckham 2007, 35–36), the prevalence of the theme of witness and testimony in Luke and Acts (Luke 24:45–49; Acts 1:8, 21–22), and Jesus's use of "children" for his disciples (Mark 10:24). There are also too many similar sayings to list in this paper—compare, to take just one example, "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you" (Matt 7:7) with, "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full" (John 16:24).[3] All of these considerations should lead to considerable skepticism about the strength of the argument from Johannine idiom, conceived as the presence of Johannine themes, to elaboration.

Space does not permit a detailed discussion of the claim that John systematically replaces “kingdom of God” with “eternal life” (Kim 2010, 55; Keener 2003, 328; Bauckham 2007, 35–36; Bauckham 2015, 192). Depending on the context, such a replacement could in many cases be a minor, fully recognizable paraphrase. But the evidence for that replacement is only statistical, since the occasions in question are non-overlapping scenes between John and the Synoptics. That is, the argument is that Jesus seems to use the one phrase more often in the Synoptics and the other more often in John. As already noted, an argument for deliberate authorial alteration based purely on such statistical considerations is on shaky ground, and this is true even when the replacement is relatively minor (McGrew 2021, 190–192). This consideration is all the more relevant given that the Synoptics do use “eternal life” and even show people other than Jesus doing so.

A second potential meaning of the term “Johannine idiom” relates it to specific aspects of Greek grammar and style that are typical of Johannine literature (Abbott 1906, 97–171; Burge 2013, 87–89; Poythress 1984, 312–340). The idea is supposed to be that there is something suspicious about the fact that Jesus appears to follow these aspects of style in the Fourth Gospel and also that the narrator and the author of the other Johannine literature (such as 1 John) does so. Jörg Frey draws strong conclusions from a combination of such stylistic matters and other kinds of Johannine idiom:

> If we observe, then, that in the Fourth Gospel Jesus speaks to individuals as well as to groups in the same style as the Baptizer…, the Johannine narrator, or the author of the Johannine Epistles, the conclusion is unavoidable that this is the language of the Johannine community, and that the traditional words of Jesus have been transformed into the diction and style of the Johannine community or author(s). The direction of the transformation is suggested by linguistic and theological considerations: The synoptic tradition in its earliest strata is closer to the teaching of the Jesus of history. Compared with the Synoptics, the Johannine words and speeches of Jesus have undergone a more thorough transformation with regard to their language and quite likely also with regard to content and theology. (Frey 2018, 100)

Notice the swift movement in the last sentence from “language” to “content and theology.” This is where the above distinction between paraphrase and elaboration is especially helpful, as becomes evident when we consider some of the specific idioms in question. There is, for example, the well-known adversative καὶ (“and”). The author of the Fourth Gospel has a tendency to use καὶ to indicate a contrastive meaning, where one might expect him to use a different Greek word (for example the strong contrastive ἀλλά [“but”] or, even more likely, the weaker, common contrastive δέ [“but”]). In John, we find καὶ used as an all-purpose conjunction, including in places where it seems to have the meaning “but” or “and yet,” and this occurs both in the voice of the narrator (1:10–11) and the voice of Jesus (3:6, 11).

Another example of Johannine idiom in this sense would be the use of καθὼς followed by καὶ to mean “just as … so” (6:57, 13:15, 33; 15:9; 17:18; 20:21). If these same sayings were found in Luke, for example (they are not), we would expect them to be rendered using καθὼς … οὕτως (“just as … so also”), as in Luke 11:30. So in these places, John defaults to his favorite καὶ to complete a comparison.

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3 For more examples of similar sayings in John and the Synoptics, see McGrew (2021, 380–389) and Leathes (1870, 300–320).

One more example is asyndeton—the absence of conjunctions where we might expect them. So, in the preface, we find, “For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17) and in the mouth of Jesus, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you” (John 14:27). There are many such examples (1:49, 14:1, 15:5, 17:17, are just some) where John, and Jesus as recorded, do not bother to use conjunctions, either to subordinate one thought to another or to express their relations. The relations of the ideas are left implicit; the effect is surprisingly forceful.

But we must ask why Frey is justified in considering such minor matters of style to be evidence for the elaboration of content not expressed recognizably by Jesus on the occasions in question. Once we understand that recognizable paraphrase is a different matter from elaboration, it is a *non sequitur* to take the similarity of Jesus’s idiom in this sense to that of the narrator as evidence that the narrator has put his own words into Jesus’s mouth in any significant sense.

To push the point even farther, since these are not sayings and discourses recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, it is difficult to say why we should think that the use of δέ as a connective is either more or less historical in reports of Jesus’s words than the use of καὶ. We do not have “competing” records of those specific sayings, since they appear only in John. If Jesus was speaking in Aramaic on the occasions recorded, he did not use either Greek connective. And if he was speaking in Greek, we have no reason to think that he used δέ in the places where John records καὶ.

In any event, these are hardly matters of great importance to the clear, recognizable meaning of what Jesus said on those occasions. There is not even any reason to put John and the Synoptics in competition, as Frey (2018, 98–99) attempts to do when he suggests that, if we took John’s reportage of Jesus’s teaching to be literally historical, we would have to think that the Synoptic authors “altogether depart[ed] from the language and style of the ‘real’ Jesus.” “Altogether departed” is far too strong. These stylistic variations in both John and the Synoptics are compatible with recognizable, historically accurate recording of Jesus’s authentic teaching on particular occasions. The very fact that themes, metaphors, and other distinctive content (and even style) can be translated into multiple languages shows that these variations in Greek usage do not amount to “altogether departing” in either direction—whether Jesus’s verbatim speech was (in some sense) more like that recorded in John in these minor ways or more like that recorded in the Synoptics.

Finally, “Johannine idiom” can refer to the fact that, in John, Jesus teaches in a more connected, repetitive way than he does in the Synoptics. A good illustration of this type of Johannine idiom occurs in John 15:1–17. In this passage, Jesus repeats himself in what one might call a spiral fashion, ringing the changes on particular terms. He begins (vv. 1–3) with the metaphor of the vine. Next comes the repetition of the word (and concept) of abiding (vv. 4–7). First, he links this concept of abiding with the metaphor of the vine, but then he links it with a new concept in this passage—keeping his commandments (v. 10). The concept of “commandment” leads to the concept of love, since that is a major commandment he has given them (vv. 10–14). “Love” and “commandments” lead to the concept of friendship, since keeping Jesus’s commandments for love is the way to be his friend rather than just a servant (vv. 13–15). At the end, Jesus circles back to the notion of bearing fruit (v. 16), only here it is the fruit that remains. Then we come back to “command” and “love” once again (v. 17). In this passage, too, the lack of connectives (asyndeton) fits together well with repetition. The absence of connectives goes almost unnoticed as the repetition and linking of concepts replaces subordinating connectives as a structuring element. Jesus, like a good preacher, hammers home the words and ideas not only by repetition but by weaving them together, so that one concept leads naturally to another and then back again to a word that he dropped several verses ago.

In contrast, a passage of similar length from the Sermon on the Level Place does not show this same looping repetition. In Luke 6:20–35, which includes a series of beatitudes, Jesus uses parallelism and aphorism, but the passage moves much more abruptly from one thought unit to another.

Here it is useful to contrast the conclusions that different scholars draw about the realism of these ways of speaking. Frey thinks that not only could Jesus have spoken in the more choppy, less repetitive manner of the Synoptic discourses, he probably did so. Hence, to Frey, the more repetitive, connected style in John is almost certainly a Johannine invention:

> [T]he character of Jesus's language in John is overwhelmingly different from his language and style in the Synoptics. The genres of the teaching of the synoptic Jesus—prophetic and sapiential sayings, brief apophthegms and especially parables—are absent in John and seem to be replaced by longer, repetitive, spiraling discourses or lengthy dialogues that create larger webs of metaphors throughout the whole Gospel.... Thus, the decision is clear: Jesus spoke either in the style and the forms of the synoptic tradition, in brief sayings or parables, or in the style of the Fourth Gospel, in lengthy discourses and extensive exemplary dialogues. [T]he conclusion is unavoidable that this is the language of the Johannine community, and that the traditional words of Jesus have been transformed into the diction and style of the Johannine community or author(s). (Frey 2018, 99–100)

That there are no "story parables" in John of the same sort that we find in the Synoptics is a weak argument from silence that can be set aside and treated separately from the argument from Johannine idiom. It is not an idiom *not* to speak in parables. And John would have been able (if he had so desired) to record or invent story parables in a repetitious style. There is nothing about a parable *per se* that requires that it be told in Jesus's style in the Synoptics. (Rather surprisingly, at the other end of the scholarly spectrum, Anderson (2011, 57, 195) appears to concede that we must choose between John and the Synoptics concerning whether or not the historical Jesus spoke in pithy aphorisms and parables. I do not see that we are forced to make such a choice at all.)

In contrast to Frey, Richard Bauckham argues that the more connected style of Jesus's discourses in John appears more realistic than the terse, choppy style found in the Synoptics:

> The way [the Synoptic Gospels] represent what Jesus said on such occasions is mostly by means of a collection of Jesus' aphorisms and parables, sometimes with explicit thematic structuring of the material, sometimes more loosely grouped according to topic or catchword. A point that historical Jesus scholars rarely make is that this cannot have been how Jesus actually taught. If Jesus did, as Mark represents (4.1), address the crowds from a boat on the lake of Galilee, he cannot have spoken merely the three parables Mark attributes to him on this occasion or even the larger collection of parables that Matthew provides. The issue here is not what Jesus said on a specific occasion, but the way in which Jesus generally taught. He must have taught in a much more discursive and expatiating way than the Synoptic Gospels attribute to him.... Formally, [the] teaching or discourse material [in John] is quite

> varied, but it has in common the negative characteristic that it does not consist of collections of the kind of aphorisms and parables the Synoptics provide. Aphorisms and short parables, even sayings we also find in the Synoptics and sayings that would not have been out of place on the lips of Mark's, Matthew's, or Luke's Jesus, are found, but they are scattered through the discourse material and in many cases embedded in it. The main point to be made here is that, formally speaking, Johannine discourses and dialogues could well be regarded as more realistic than the typical Synoptic presentation of his teaching. (Bauckham 2007, 31–32)

Bauckham does not draw the conclusion that John's own presentation is strongly historical, for he adds,

> Both the Synoptic and the Johannine ways of representing the way Jesus taught combine realism and artificiality. In one sense, John's presentation is more realistic than theirs, but at the same time it required much more than theirs did the putting of words into Jesus' mouth. (Bauckham 2007, 33)

Before we agree too readily with this further comment, we should pause to contemplate the stark difference between Bauckham's judgement and Frey's. Frey insists that the less connected, more aphoristic speech recorded in the Synoptics, even considered as discourse material, is wholly realistic. This, in turn, he takes to undermine the robust historicity of John's records of Jesus's discourses. Bauckham, in contrast, insists that a more connected style is more realistic, and that it is unlikely that Jesus moved so abruptly from subject to subject when he spoke at any length, as he certainly did on many occasions as a teacher.

Bauckham does not say why he is so confident that John's more realistic records must require putting words into Jesus's mouth "much more than" the Synoptic records. If a real teacher would be likely to speak in this more connected way, why could the evangelist not have known that Jesus did so? Why could he not have represented Jesus's connected discourses on real occasions in an historically recognizable way? Perhaps Bauckham's unstated premise is that no one could remember accurately such relatively long, connected discourses (Keener 2003, 53–54; Ensor 1996, 58). In contrast (so might go the reasoning) it would be easier to remember authentic short sayings and parables, which could be stitched together at will in longer compilations.

There is something historically dubious about using an aprioristic premise about the amount of content a disciple could have remembered to conclude that apparent reportage is *less* historical precisely because it appears *more* historical. Again, the notion of recognizable paraphrase is useful here. A witness (even without supernatural help from the Holy Spirit) with an excellent (but not necessarily eidetic) memory could have remembered at least *approximately* the way that Jesus connects the ideas of bearing fruit, keeping commandments, and abiding in John 15:1–17 and the way that he repeats himself there. If a clever student produced an imitation of a professor's historical discourse on the topic of looking in the syllabus before asking a question, the student might portray the teacher as repeating, "Look in the syllabus!" or "Read the syllabus!" five times when the teacher did so only three times (or *vice versa*), not because he is elaborating but merely because of the limits of verbatim memory. Nonetheless, his representation of the teacher's discourse could be strikingly faithful to what the teacher said on that day in class. He could even include some phrases and sayings verbatim as part of a recognizable paraphrase of the professor's remarks as a whole. It seems that the evangelist could do so as well. Perhaps surprisingly, the entirety of John 14–17, including the dialogue, can be read in a leisurely fashion in only twenty-five minutes.

It is also worth remembering that preaching can have more than one effect. The phrase "homiletic elaboration" conveys the image of the evangelist preaching his own interpretations and "making" the historical Jesus say them. But by telling others what Jesus historically taught, beginning shortly after Jesus departed, John could fix in his own mind his memories of what Jesus said, not elaborating but consolidating.

Once again, I am not suggesting that the Synoptics are unfaithful reporters. Cutting out repetition and giving only part of what Jesus taught on particular occasions are also legitimate forms of recognizable paraphrase and (for that matter) easier than elaborating. And if the evangelists had any scruples about trying to represent the words of the historical Jesus accurately, the former is a more likely modification than the latter.

The words of Papias about his interest in talking to those who had personally heard Jesus are pertinent:

> Nor did I take pleasure in those who reported their memory of someone else's commandments, but only in those who reported their memory of the commandments given by the Lord to the faith and proceeding from the Truth itself. (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.3–4, trans. Bauckham 2017, 154)

Far from supporting a notion of ancient unconcern with accurate speech reportage, Papias shows a strong interest in getting as close as memory will allow to the historical teaching of Jesus on real occasions as opposed to the teaching of others. Nor does he make an exception for the apostles. He does not say that he would be just as interested in hearing "someone else's commandments" if the others were apostles putting their own words in Jesus's mouth, since their interpretations were guided by the Holy Spirit.

The careful separation of the concepts of paraphrase and elaboration, combined with a separation among different things that might be meant by "Johannine idiom," allows us to see that the argument that Jesus is (even in part) John's mouthpiece has been overstated.

4. Evidence that John is Scrupulous: Asides

Space does not permit a discussion of the many types of evidence for John's literal reliability; there is much pertinent data not directly related to speech. The attempt to seal off the evidence of, for example, geographical and cultural confirmations of John's accuracy and to declare dogmatically that it is quite irrelevant to the question of whether John invents incidents and discourses (Frey 2018, 95–97) is arbitrary. Indeed, it is fundamentally anti-inductive. If one finds that an author is accurate again and again in other matters, this cannot be historically irrelevant to whether or not the author invents material, including the spoken word. It is obvious that if matters were otherwise—if John were found to have repeatedly erred on historical, geographical, and cultural matters—that would be considered negatively relevant to his reliability, and rightly so. As Carson says,

> The verifiable [J]ohannine accuracies ought to be given more weight than is common at present. I am referring to details of topography and the like.... If his sources and/or traditions are so good where they are verifiable, why should they be judged largely suspect where they are not verifiable? (Carson 1981, 115; see Blomberg 2001, 63)

Here I will focus on two kinds of evidence that can be brought to bear specifically on John's reporting of Jesus's speech, supporting the conclusion that he is a faithful reporter rather than an elaborator. First, consider the matter of John's "asides" to the reader. There are multiple contexts where John reports what Jesus says, and the narrator pauses to explain what Jesus meant. Put starkly, if the picture of the evangelist putting his own interpretations into Jesus's mouth were correct, we would not expect this at all. These asides are especially improbable given the claim that the evangelist believed that, since he was guided by the Holy Spirit, it was permissible for him to take the interpretations he thought were correct and report them as if spoken by the historical Jesus. If that were the case, why would he bother to pause in reporting Jesus's words precisely at the point where he provides his own interpretations?

One example of this phenomenon occurs in John 2:18–22:

> The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews therefore said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body. When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.

The evangelist clearly thinks that he is correct to interpret Jesus as speaking of his own resurrection. If he thought consciously of himself as guided by the Holy Spirit, he presumably believed that this interpretation was Spirit-led. Yet he does not, for example, construct a scene in which Jesus explains privately to his disciples that he was speaking of his body.

Another such aside occurs in a passage that is perhaps even more significant, since the narrator believes that Jesus is referring to the Holy Spirit:

> Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37–39)

The Fourth Gospel is by no means lacking in places where Jesus is quoted as speaking about the Spirit. Yet here, the narrator does not portray him as doing so explicitly but instead pauses to tell the reader in his own voice that this is what Jesus meant.

A third example occurs when Jesus, after washing the disciples' feet, states, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet; but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not all of you" (John 13:10). This saying concludes a dialogue with Peter in which Peter has at first urged Jesus not to wash his feet and then switches to asking Jesus to wash his head and hands. One might even have guessed that Jesus is alluding to Peter's forthcoming denial here, since he has just been speaking with Peter and refers to Peter's denial in verse 38. But the narrator glosses, "For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, 'Not all of you are clean'" (v. 11). This is not an implausible interpretation since Jesus mentions the betrayal by Judas a few verses later (vv. 21–27). But it is not completely obvious, either. What is interesting is that the narrator inserts his own gloss immediately after verse 10 and does not portray Jesus as explaining his own comment with reference to Judas. It would have been quite easy for the narrator to place the remarks about one who will betray Jesus at the earlier point and to link them via words placed into Jesus's mouth. ("You are clean, but not all. For I tell you that one of you will betray me.") But he does not do so. There is something almost clumsy about the aside informing us that Jesus was speaking of Judas. This is as far removed as possible from the picture of an evangelist who considers himself licensed to elaborate Jesus's words. Carson has rightly noted these asides as a mark of accuracy in the Fourth Gospel:

> It is not at all obvious that John is confused on this matter. One might even argue plausibly that anyone who preserves this distinction so faithfully and explicitly is trying to gain credence for what he is saying, and if he errs in this matter, it will be because of an unconscious slip, not by design. (Carson 1981, 122)[4]

5. Evidence that John is Scrupulous: Unexplained Allusions

An unexplained allusion occurs in a document when a speaker or the narrator refers to something that, within that document, remains a "loose end." It appears that the speaker or narrator has something in mind, but he does not gloss it. In some cases (as when Paul speaks of baptism for the dead in 1 Cor 15:29) we may have reason to believe that the original audience understood the allusion. In that case it serves as evidence of a genuine understanding between the author and the original audience; the author was writing for a historical audience (e.g., in an epistle) with whom he shared background information. Compare Paul's reference to an earlier conversation in 2 Thessalonians 2:5 (Paley 1850, 135–136). Sometimes there is more than one audience in view. Jesus's original hearers probably knew about the eighteen on whom the Tower of Siloam fell, whom Jesus mentions in Luke 13:4, but there is no reason to think that Theophilus knew (Luke 1:3). Thus, the allusion to this incident is a mark of genuineness in Luke's reportage of Jesus's teaching.

The Fourth Gospel contains a surprising number of such "loose ends" in its narrative. Just one example is the reference to a dispute between the disciples of John the Baptist and an unnamed Jew about purification in John 3:25. The Baptist's disciples ask him about Jesus's popularity (v. 26); the narrator does not bother to explain how this question relates to the dispute.

Such allusions are a largely unexplored type of evidence for the historical accuracy of the Gospels, though some of them have been individually noticed by commentators. One of the most interesting things about unexplained allusions is that they make for poor fiction, even by the anachronistic standard of modern fiction, and all the more so in an ancient document that did not have a genre precedent of highly realistic fiction. What they do resemble when they occur in narrative or in reported speech is unstudied memoir or oral history, in which the narrator tells what he thinks to mention, drawing from what he believes to be true, without attempting to make it fit into a literary pattern (See McGrew 2021, 350–360). In the Fourth Gospel, this evidence crosses the divide between narrative and the reportage of speech, including Jesus's speech, showing once again that it is an artificial distinction. If John is faithful in recording events, we should also take him to be faithful in recording speech.

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[4] I am aware of the scholarly trope that it is often difficult to tell when Jesus finishes speaking and the narrator picks up. As Carson points out in the same passage, this is incorrect. There is only one such place in the Fourth Gospel. On the growth of this claim, see McGrew (2021, 167–169).

John 6:36 provides an example of an unexplained allusion in the words of Jesus. Jesus says, "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe." As Leon Morris (1969, 159) has noted, we cannot find anywhere earlier in John that Jesus has said this. If the evangelist were given to putting words into Jesus's mouth, why would he put these words into Jesus's mouth without also crafting the earlier occurrence of the saying? Or, if these words happen to be historical, but he had no qualms about putting words into Jesus's mouth, why not craft an earlier occasion on which Jesus says this? It would be (on one understanding) an "authentic" saying to attribute to him on an additional occasion. After all, Jesus himself tells us that he said it earlier. What's the harm in "making" a scene where he says it earlier if none is otherwise known? But John does not do so. Interestingly enough, this unusual saying occurs in the Bread of Life Discourse, which is strongly Johannine and hence suspect from the perspective of critical scholarship.

Similarly, John 7:37–39, already noted for the fact that it contains a narrator's aside, contains an unexplained allusion. Jesus says, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" But it is a matter of some conjecture as to what OT text Jesus is referring to. Certainly, there is no single OT text that says what Jesus says here.[5]

If the evangelist feels free to put words into the mouth of Jesus, why record an unclear allusion to Scripture? It would be easy to craft a saying that alludes clearly to a Scripture about the Holy Spirit. For example, Joel 2:28–29 was understood by the early church as being in some sense fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2:16ff), and John could have "made" Jesus refer clearly to those verses.

Morris puts the matter well:

> It is intelligible that Jesus cited Scripture in an unusual fashion. It is not intelligible that someone who was manufacturing the incident would affirm that Jesus ascribed certain words to Scripture, but do it so badly that no one has been able to find the passage. (Morris 1969, 159–160)

Another example occurs in yet another location where critical scholars have cast doubt upon John's record of Jesus's speech—namely, John 12:23ff. For Frey (2018, 73–76), the use in this passage of language similar to that in Mark, such as the "hour," and the resemblance to Jesus's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, is evidence that John has ahistorically adapted Mark's Passion narrative. Frey is struck by the fact that Jesus in John does not go quite so far as to ask the Father that the cup might pass from him, as in Mark; this is allegedly a function of John's higher Christology. A more positive, but similar, perspective is Keener's: While (he suggests) John is moving and adapting sayings from a Synoptic-like tradition, putting them into different contexts, at least he is not inventing without *any* historical source (Keener 2003, 873–876).

In both of these approaches, the scene *qua* scene is to some degree invented: Allegedly, Jesus did not recognizably speak in all these ways in the historical context described in John 12. What is left out is the very real possibility that Jesus did think and speak of his Passion using a term like "the hour," and that he was in mental anguish and mused about his expected crucifixion on more than one occasion, including this one. This would be quite natural as a human matter (Blomberg 2001, 181–182). Since John and the Synoptics are both writing about the same Jesus, they both show historical knowledge of how he spoke of his death. In other words, Jesus is not "so different" in John and the Synoptics after all.

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[5] Keener (2003, 725–728) surveys various scholarly suggestions, focusing on texts that might have been read for the Feast of Tabernacles, such as Zechariah 14:16–21.

Evidence for the historical approach to this passage comes from the odd connection between the context and Jesus's mention of the "hour" in John 12:23—an unexplained allusion. Some Greeks come to Philip asking to see Jesus. When Philip and Andrew ask Jesus if he will see them, John records,

> And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (John 12:23–24)

Why does Jesus give this answer to this request? What is it about the approach of Andrew and Philip on behalf of the Greeks that leads him to say that his hour has come? We are not told, nor do we ever learn whether Jesus spoke to the Greeks or what was said at such a meeting. Carson (1991, 436) has suggested, plausibly enough, that Jesus sees the approach of the Greeks as a sign of his "hour" because the Gentiles are seeking him when the Jewish leaders have decisively rejected him. But if this is correct, the narrator leaves out the connection. He does not even explain it by way of a theological aside. He just records what Jesus said. We should consider the very real possibility that he does so because it happened and because he found it striking (if cryptic) and worth telling.

While many unexplained allusions in John are found in the narrative of events, several fascinating ones occur in the words of Jesus. The evidence of unexplained allusions should lead us to suspect that the evangelist's project is primarily testimonial. Whatever his literary abilities and interests, they are not permitted to get in the way of his testimonial mission.

6. Conclusion

That John elaborates Jesus's speech, using Jesus as his mouthpiece, and that the presence of Johannine idiom in Jesus's words is strong evidence for this conclusion has become a scholarly axiom. Often scholars do not pause to spell out the argument from premise to conclusion. Precisely how does Johannine idiom support Johannine elaboration? Separating paraphrase firmly from elaboration and explicitly constructing a category of paraphrase that is historically recognizable both in content and in context is an important step in making our approach to this question rigorous. Next, distinguishing different senses of "Johannine idiom" enables us to tease out the unstated necessary premises for an argument from Johannine idiom to elaboration.

These analytical activities work well together when we encounter the premise, stated or unstated, that the evangelist could not have remembered a connected discourse of the length and type found in several places in the Fourth Gospel. For it is far more plausible that someone remembered a fully recognizable historical paraphrase of such a discourse, uttered on a literal occasion, than that he remembered such a discourse verbatim. Of course, short sayings and passages within a longer discourse could have been remembered verbatim or nearly so, as is generally assumed for the Synoptics.

Finally, positive evidence from the narrative asides and unexplained allusions in Jesus's speech in the Fourth Gospel point to a far different picture of the evangelist from the one often assumed in critical scholarship. The author of the Fourth Gospel is so scrupulous that we find him explicitly refraining from putting his own words into Jesus's mouth; that is the evidence of the asides. He also records Jesus's words even when they raise unanswered questions, leaving them "as-is" for his readers to take or leave;

that is the evidence of unexplained allusions. Why, then, should we think that he ever deliberately elaborated Jesus's teachings? This argument from unexplained allusions suggests the possibility of further, fruitful research into the relevance of apparent casualness in both the Synoptics and John for our conclusions about historicity. If the evangelists' project was more testimonial than literary, we may expect to find other "loose ends" left unexplained; this somewhat casual approach to composition would suggest that reporting what really happened, just because they believed it, was of primary importance. While the claim that the Fourth Evangelist never elaborated may be a surprising one in the current scholarly milieu, if we are to be open to the evidence of the text it is a conclusion that deserves serious consideration.

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Conspectus

Jesus, our Liberator: An Intercultural Dialogue

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Abstract

Do contextual readings have value? And by contextual is meant re-readings of the text that take into account the contextual situatedness of the reader. With advances in the study of hermeneutics, there is the recognition of the two-sided nature of historical conditioning. While the text stands in a given historical context and tradition, so does the interpreter, and the two are in constant engagement. In addition, the Christian faith is a multi-dimensional faith. Christological studies have, understandably, used Western categories. The question is, given multidimensionality, might there be other categories that better speak to us in our contextual and historical situatedness? This paper shows that an intercultural approach to the gospel of John will uncover facets of the Johannine Jesus that may not be immediately evident to Western readers. It begins with a brief introduction to how the Bible is read in Africa. This is followed by an overview of African Christologies to establish the current views. It is proposed that the view of Jesus as liberator best captures who the Johannine Jesus is in an African context. In order to arrive at this conclusion, an African intercultural hermeneutic will be applied to the text of John 8:31–47. It is hoped that such an approach will provide a more holistic understanding of Christology for African believers as well as complement existing Christologies.

1. Introduction

Do contextual readings have value? With advances in the study of hermeneutics, there is the recognition of the two-sided nature of historical conditioning. As Thiselton (2005, 11) points out, the interpreter also stands in a given historical context and tradition; and the text and the interpreter are in constant engagement.

As an example, take the story of the tortoise and the hare that is common in many parts of the world.

Keywords
contextual, Christology, intercultural hermeneutics, four-legged stool, Johannine Jesus

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SATS
Bible-based. Christ-centred. Spirit-led.

Tortoise challenges hare to a race and of course nobody expects him to win. What tortoise does is to recruit his relatives and place them strategically along the path of the race. Each one jumps out of the bush ahead of hare in sequence as the one behind him hides to avoid being seen. At the end of the race, tortoise is the undisputed winner. Without knowing which rules to apply, or "how to read," one might misunderstand this story to be a criticism of tortoise's deception. This story actually teaches that cooperation is necessary in society. It is also a story that emphasizes the importance of honor in an honor/shame culture. It "is an appeal to a higher moral ethic, and that ethic is that a family (or village or clan) must work together in unity to see that disgrace never comes to it" (Buchele 2020). Our contextual situatedness leads us to different ways of reading this story. This paper proposes that contextual re-readings are valid because they reveal insights we might not otherwise see.

This paper will show that an intercultural approach to the Gospel of John uncovers fresh facets of the Johannine Jesus.[1] It begins with a brief overview of how the Bible is read in Africa and of African Christologies. An African intercultural hermeneutic will then be applied to the text of John 8:31–47 to uncover the overriding Christological theme of "liberator" that emerges and its implications. It is hoped that such an approach will provide a more holistic understanding of Christology for African believers and that it will complement existing Christologies.

2. Reading the Bible in Africa

Hermeneutics is not new to Africa. African literature demonstrates that there are rules to interpreting stories, poetry, proverbs, riddles, and songs that make understanding possible. Where the Bible is concerned, history records that interpretation of the Bible was being done by Africans almost two thousand years ago. Some of the most important early interpreters of the Bible include church fathers like Origen and Augustine in northern Africa. More recently, missionaries re-introduced biblical hermeneutics into Africa, inevitably bringing with them cultural baggage from their Western context. Because colonization was also taking place at the same time, some Africans have objected to Western approaches, preferring instead to "decolonize" hermeneutics. Consequently, biblical hermeneutics in Africa generally tend to be liberational and against the colonial missionary enterprise (Mburu, forthcoming).

Much biblical interpretation is done by ordinary Christians or church leaders at the "grassroots" level, for example, in worship, prayer, and preaching. African biblical hermeneutics is not limited to academic study or even written forms of interpretation, but also includes oral hermeneutical reflection (Van den Toren, Mburu, and Bussey 2021). It also tends to be functional. In other words, how does the text speak to concrete, contextual realities being experienced by African people? How Africans approach the discipline of biblical hermeneutics may look different from that of the West, as it includes both the theories of interpretation as well as general principles and methods implicit in practices of interpretation (Van den Toren, Mburu, and Bussey 2021). There is the consensus now that Africans need to move away from the Western approaches that have been imposed on us, because they promote a "foreign" way of reading the Bible that introduces a "double hermeneutical gap." This is the general impetus or motivation behind the approach of this paper.

As with all hermeneutical approaches, there are some weaknesses to look out for. One, some of these approaches encourage syncretism. This is particularly true of those approaches that give equal or almost equal weight to the African (particularly religious) context. Of course, syncretism is not just an African problem. Two, some of these approaches make the reader more important than the author or the text. Three, some impose meaning on the text because of an overemphasis on what the reader needs to hear. This results in a distortion because what the author intended to communicate or even what the text actually says might be ignored. Four, some collapse the two horizons of meaning and significance by moving directly from text to application without fully engaging in interpretation. Again, this distorts the intended meaning of the text. Five, there is the risk of a canon within a canon. Some methods might focus only on texts that are relevant to them and ignore the larger biblical metanarrative.

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[1] For an application of this model to Galatians, see Mburu (forthcoming).

3. Overview of African Christologies

While Western categories are useful, we also need a Christology that is deeply relevant to the lived experiences of African people. It cannot be an abstract, philosophical Christology. An African Christology simultaneously asks the questions, “Who is Christ?” and “How does he affect my life?” To answer these questions, various African scholars have come up with categories that resonate with the church in Africa. While these are not limited to the Gospel of John, they are nevertheless important in helping us situate ourselves in the current context of African studies related to Jesus Christ.

Scholars generally propose two categories of African Christology. According to Wachege (1992, 176), Nyamiti (1989), and Stinton (2004), African Christology is divided into Christologies of liberation and Christologies of inculturation. Most scholars lean towards this categorization. Charles De Jongh (2008, 3) introduces another paradigm. He identifies two main trends which he describes as cultural and functional. While useful, these two-fold categorizations are nevertheless limiting.

Some titles of Jesus Christ that have emerged from various African Christologies include Liberator (Takatso Mafokeng, Allan Boesak, Jean Marc Ela, Laurenti Magesa, T. Souga, L. Tappa, M. A. Oduyoye, and E. Amoah, to name some), Chief, Master of Initiation (championed originally by Anselme Titianma Sanon), Healer (Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike), Ancestor (Charles Nyamiti [brother-ancestor] and Benezet Bujo [proto-ancestor]), and Victor (John Mbiti) (Gathogo 2015).

4. An Intercultural Approach to the Johannine Jesus

How does this relate to our approach to the Johannine Jesus? The Christian faith is a multi-dimensional faith. Multi-dimensionality recognizes that while theology is universal, it must also be specific to specific contexts. In other words, multidimensionality captures “the global character of the Christian faith.”[2] Pobee (1992, 15) rightly argues for a cultural consideration in Christology in Africa and affirms that it is “important who the African is, because *homo Africanus* is encountered by Christ as he or she is.”

In surveying the history of Johannine research in Africa, van der Watt (2015) notes that, in recent times, African scholars have promoted inculturation (intercultural) readings of the text. A critical analysis of intercultural readings reveals that it takes the context in which the interpreter is found seriously (Ukachukwu 2003, 32). Indeed, the variety of indigenous interpretive resources that Africans used with their oral traditions should be viewed as a valuable resource in the hermeneutical task (West 2005, 6).

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[2] This is a dominant theme that characterized Lamin Sanneh’s writings.

5. Approach: The Four-Legged Stool

The method used here lies in the cultural trend. However, as is the case with many African Christologies, it does not make a clear distinction between ontology and functionality. African scholars that have employed an intercultural approach that provided insight into the model used here include Ukpong, Ukachukwu, and Loba-Mkole.[3]

This intercultural approach is based on the concept of moving from the known to the unknown.[4] It uses the readers' contexts as a starting point, moving directly from theories, methods, and categories that are familiar in our world into the more unfamiliar world of the Bible, without taking a detour through any foreign methods. Foreign methods introduce a double hermeneutical gap. This occurs when a reader is forced to confront at least two cultures in the process of interpretation. For African readers, this includes the Western culture since most hermeneutical methods currently in use in Africa are developed in Western contexts. Readers face the challenge of first understanding the assumptions inherent in these methods before dealing with those in the biblical texts. It recognizes that parallels between biblical and African cultures and worldviews can be used as bridges to promote understanding, internalization, and application of the biblical text. It, therefore, has an intercultural dialogue as its basis. It is similar to what Jesus and Paul did. This approach proposes that the biblical culture, as well as African material and non-material culture, should play a significant role in hermeneutics intended for an African audience. It incorporates techniques and categories found in African literature—both oral as well as post-colonial. It applies principles of interpreting genres such as African stories, proverbs, songs, and similar genres to the biblical text (Mburu 2019). This approach recognizes that there are numerous African worldviews but that the commonalities make it possible to address African worldview as a single entity.

This approach is described using the metaphor of a four-legged stool (Mburu 2019, 65–69). Each of the legs, as well as the seat, are steps that move the process of interpretation forward. It is interdisciplinary in methodology and recognizes the importance of culture and worldview, as well as the theological, literary, and historical aspects of the text. While these steps are distinctly separate for purposes of analysis, it is understood that there is overlap between them as each step must necessarily enhance the others until greater precision in understanding is achieved—much like the so-called "hermeneutical spiral" in Western hermeneutics (Osborne 2010, 22–23). This approach does not collapse the contexts of author, text, and reader. All three stand in a context that must be interrogated, and the two horizons of meaning and significance are kept distinct.

6. An Intercultural Analysis of John 8:31–47

This text raises two crucial questions, both of which are surrounded by controversy around Jesus's identity. The first question is "Whose Son is Jesus?" and the second, "Whose children are the Jews?" The narrator develops the plot in such a way that at the end of this text we recognize that the second question can only be answered in light of the first. This dialogue between Jesus and the Jews aptly captures the essence of the conflict between belief and unbelief that drives the entire narrative of John and is therefore a valid representation of the purpose statement (20:31). A global view will be taken in identifying representative parallels from the gospel as a whole. For practical reasons, the rest of the model will be applied to the specific text of John 8:31–47.

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[3] See van der Watt (2015) for a summary of other scholars that have provided contextual readings within the African context such as Kang (2003), Dube (1992), Ngele (2011), and Ahoua (2008).

[4] The following summary of this intercultural method throughout the paper is taken from Mburu (2019).

6.1 Leg 1: Parallels to the African context (both traditional as well as modern)

The first leg primarily involves identifying parallels between our African contexts and the biblical text. It is a bridge between the two contexts that allows us to do two things. One, to understand the biblical text from a familiar position. These "shared mutual interests" (Ukachukwu 2003, 25) orient the listener as to how to hear and interpret the text and form the basis on which the narrator earns the right "to be heard." Two, to examine ourselves so that we correct any faulty assumptions that may hinder the interpretive process. It guides us in identifying both points of contact as well as differences with the biblical context. Space allows us to focus only on two aspects, namely, parallels within the socio-cultural and the religious contexts.

6.1.1 Socio-cultural parallels

a) Negative ethnicity

The first socio-cultural parallel is negative ethnicity. The concept of the ethnic group has both an objective and subjective dimension. The subjective dimension is characterized by the presence of socio-psychological boundaries whose major characteristics are group-inclusion and exclusion (Bokombe n.d., 3). The African worldview regarding people can best be described as "existence-in-relationship," (Gehman 2005, 52),[5] also known as *Ubuntu*. This positive aspect of our worldview regarding anthropology provides the African with a unifying worldview. However, ethnic identity is so strong that the "other" is often regarded in dehumanizing terms. This results in negative ethnicity expressed through ethnic rivalries that often lead to violent conflicts, and is fueled by historical, political, social, economic, and religious factors.[7]

Negative ethnicity is also seen in this gospel. The enmity between Jews and Samaritans had deep historical roots. Jews hated Gentiles because they believed that their Jewishness made them ethnically and religiously superior. Texts in which Samaritans are mentioned in a negative way include John 4:1–42 (the Samaritan woman) and John 8:48 (in which Jesus is disparagingly called a Samaritan and demon-possessed in the same breath). Our situations of negative ethnicity help us relate to the ethnic tensions that dot the landscape of this gospel.

b) Gender Inequalities

The second socio-cultural parallel is gender inequalities. Our understanding of gender has deep roots in our traditional cultures, and some gender problems in Africa predate the arrival of Islam and Christianity, as well as the colonial era (Mombo 2020, loc. 9969). Even in modern Africa, there are obvious gender disparities. This is because patriarchal cultural ideas and practices are still dominant in many parts of the continent, even where modernization and globalization have had an impact. These differences in status and value are closely linked with the culturally and socially defined roles assigned to men and women (loc. 4945–4947).

Gender issues in John must also be understood from a historical perspective. Gender inequalities are reflected in the stories of the Samaritan woman and the woman caught in adultery (John 4:1–42; 8:1–11). In the first century, women had almost no rights in society and were oppressed in every area of life (Oepke [1964] 2006, 777). Although there are a few instances in which women are referred to positively (for instance, in a culture where the testimony of women was considered meaningless, Jesus chose a woman to be the first witness to his resurrection), in general women were openly despised (ibid.).

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[5] This phrase was originally coined by Swailem Sidhom.

[6] For this perspective, see http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2013/01/2013116142546193334.html.

6.1.2 Religious Parallels

a) Spiritual blindness

The first religious parallel is spiritual blindness. While there are many sound churches in Africa, there are also many deceptive doctrines that are propagated by religious leaders to the detriment of the people. In an environment where false "gospels" bombard us from every direction, fueled by modern technology and the digital age, the truth is often difficult to recognize. The most prominent false teaching is the prosperity health and wealth gospel. This is now manifesting itself in some forms of Neo-pentecostalism that overemphasize power encounters, deliverance from ancestral and other curses, signs and wonders, as well as placing an emphasis on objects believed to have power. There are also many thriving cults.

The theme of spiritual blindness runs like a thread throughout the gospel. However, this theme is epitomized by the Jewish religious leaders and the Jewish religious establishment in general. The story of the man born blind (John 9) is the best illustration of this theme. The irony of this narrative is that Jesus is operating on two levels—the first is that of actual physical blindness while the second is the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees.

b) Syncretism

The second religious parallel is syncretism. While there are many cultural aspects that are positive, there are also many negative syncretistic beliefs and practices that confuse African Christians about what genuine biblical faith and practice should be. Syncretism is "the unresolved, unassimilated, and tension-filled mixing of Christian ideas with local custom and ritual." (Sanneh 2003, 44). In a rejection of the identity imposed on them by "others," many African Christians seek to redefine their identity by looking back to traditional religious beliefs and practices resulting in "double loyalty" or "dual belonging" (Galgalo 2012, 27). Witchcraft is one of the major manifestations. The African worldview(s) regarding external reality and dynamism means that people seek to gain power and control over their circumstances in any way possible (Turaki 2006, 34–35). However, syncretism is not purely an African phenomenon, and it exists everywhere that the Church is found.

Samaritans reflected a syncretistic religious orientation. The Samaritan Pentateuch consisted only of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. They rejected all the other texts. They also believed that Mount Gerizim, not the temple in Jerusalem, was the place appointed by God for sacrifice and worship. Additionally, they also believed in the return of Moses as *Taheb* (the "restorer" or "returning one"), who was primarily a political figure but who was also expected to restore true worship, since he was of the tribe of Levi (Williamson and Evans 2000, 1059).

6.2 Leg 2: Theological Context

The second leg is the theological context. In Africa, biblical hermeneutics is inseparable from theological reflection, as the emphasis is generally to address contextual realities within our culture (West 2005, 4). Since this model recognizes a distinct separation in the two horizons of meaning and significance,[8] application at this point, while expected, can only be tentative. As is characteristic of the Johannine style, the theological emphases of this text are expressed in contrasts.

6.2.1 Belief versus unbelief

The first theme is belief versus unbelief. Belief in Jesus is the central theological theme, not only in this text, but in the gospel as a whole. John highlights the unbelief of the Jews. Although they think that their ethnic heritage as Abraham's descendants is enough, they are wrong. Their spiritual blindness is evidence of their estrangement from God, regardless of their ethnic identity.

6.2.2 Sonship versus slavery

The second theme is sonship versus slavery. Those who accept Jesus and hold to his teachings are God's sons. On the other hand, those who reject Jesus are slaves to sin. God is not their father. Rather, their familial line is traced all the way back to the devil. Although they are ethnically Abraham's descendants, their works reveal their illegitimacy and hence their true spiritual identity as slaves and not sons.

6.2.3 Truth versus lies

The third theme is truth versus lies. In the context of this text, truth is the divine, liberating message revealed both in and through Jesus and is the only avenue through which true liberation from sins can be obtained. It is also the sphere in which God and Jesus operate. This truth is diametrically opposed to the very essence of the devil who is incapable of functioning in truth. Those who reject Jesus's truth automatically function in the sphere of the devil.

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[7] See Hirsch (1978, 79–80) for this distinction.

6.2.4 Tentative application

There are two tentative applications that emerge. First, Jesus Christ is the only one authorized by God to free humanity from the bondage of sin. Second, a rejection of the truth that Jesus is and brings is, in essence, a choice for the devil.

6.3 *Leg 3: Literary Context*

The third leg is the literary context.[8] Here one identifies the genre, literary techniques, language used, and the progression of the text.

6.3.1 Genre

A literary analysis begins with an identification of the text's genre. The Fourth Gospel, in general, provides us with challenges in isolating its genre, not least of which are due to its similarities to Greco-Roman "lives" or *Bioi*.[9] However, because the "life" of Jesus is set in the broader context of Israel's history, it has an undisputed salvation-historical dimension. Because of this wider theological scale, the genre of this gospel may be understood as a historical theological narrative. This text falls into this category as well.

African stories exist in two distinct but interconnected "worlds"— the world of the agents of communication and the world of the story. These provide us with an interpretive key.

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[8] A summarized version of this text is discussed in Mburu (2010).

[9] Within the broader framework of "gospel," the Gospel of John has been characterized as a biography (bios) (included in this category are theological biography, historical biography, biography using different modes such as tragedy, and so forth), an aretalogy, history, a novel, Greek drama (whether tragedy or comedy), a new literary form, narrative, narrative Christology, Jewish Trial, and even a Jewish theodicy. For a discussion of these various options, note especially the discussions by Keener (2003, 1:4–11) and Guelich (1991, 173–208).

6.3.2 The world of the agents of communication

The agents of communication include the narrator and the listener. In biblical narratives, the narrator is usually the same as the author. Following the classic approach initially proposed by Westcott, it is likely that the author was a Jew, of Palestinian origin, an eyewitness, an apostle, the beloved disciple, John, the son of Zebedee.[10] It is also likely that he was known to his readers and served as a guarantor of the oral tradition that stemmed from Jesus's ministry.[11]

The listener is also usually the same as the original readers in written biblical narratives. As is the case with all the gospels, the life situation of Jesus *(sitz im leben Jesus)* and that of the Church *(sitz im leben der kirche)* must be considered. Scholars have disagreed as to whether the original readers were Jews or Gentiles. The narrator's emphasis on the new temple, conflict with the synagogues (16:2), as well as an emphasis on Pharisees suggests that "their opposition is somehow related to the opponents his readers face in their own communities" (Keener 2014, 246). This suggests a primarily Jewish audience.

6.3.3 The world of the story

Within the world of the story, we first identify the plot. Plot development in this text is structured around both the recognition, and the lack thereof, of Jesus's identity.[12] The conflict between belief and unbelief is evident as the narrator strives to uncover Jesus's identity through his interaction with the Jews. There is "conscious plotting" by the narrator which reflects the clearly articulated purpose statement (20:30–31).[13]

The spatial setting is centered mainly in the temple courts (8:20, 59). Although the temporal setting is not clearly demarcated, this incident took place shortly after the end of the feast of Tabernacles (7:37). This is important because the narrator uses this incident to demonstrate that the feast is fulfilled in Jesus (see 8:12 and the reference to Jesus as the "light of the world").[14]

The narrator uses several literary and structural devices to weave his story. There is alternation between narration and dialogue, with the narration playing a supportive role. The dialogue in this story is contrastive with the characters expressing themselves in their own way, thus effectively revealing their ideological mentalities. Thus, the listener becomes part of the story as they identify with first one character, and then the other. Dialogue also slows down narrative time enabling us to experience a sense of "real-ness" and "immediacy" as we are caught up in the conversation. Other devices include the use of misunderstandings and irony which not only propel the plot forward but shift its direction in unexpected ways. The movement is therefore not purely linear as there are some surprises.

The story revolves around two characters: Jesus and the Jews. The term οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in the Fourth Gospel often carries negative overtones. The narrator generally uses it, not as an ethnic designation, but to characterize the response of unbelief concerning, and rejection of, Jesus's revelation.[15] Through the development of the character of the Jews as they interact with Jesus, the narrator explores the heart and soul of unbelief.

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[10] See Westcott (1975 [1881], v–xxviii) for the development of this idea. See also Blomberg (2001, 27–30) and Morris (1995, 218–292). Due to its limited scope, this study assumes certain conclusions regarding the historical background and composition of the Fourth Gospel, while at the same time conceding that there is by no means a consensus on most of these issues.

[11] For this discussion, see Bauckham (2006, 300–302).

[12] Culpepper (1987, 85–88) provides an excellent discussion of this plot and its development.

[13] Carson (1991, 90, 662) argues that this should be understood not as "Jesus is the Christ," but as "the Christ is Jesus," which has the effect of emphasizing kind rather than identifying. However, the context of this story points to identity.

[14] By stating that he is the light of the world, in the context of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus points to himself as the fulfilment of the torch-lighting ceremony that formed part of this feast (cf. 9:5) as well as all that the Torah signified with regard to light (cf. Ps 119:105; Wis 7:26) and life (cf. Deut 30:15–20; Sir 17:11; Prov 8:35). So Köstenberger (2004, 282) and Lincoln (2005, 265).

6.3.4 Wider literary context

This text must be understood in light of its immediate literary context. In the sections just prior to our text (8:12–30), Jesus points the Jews to the authority of his Father, his sender, thus validating his testimony in accordance with their own law, which states that the testimony of two men is valid (8:17). In the section following (8:48–59), the Jews continue to refute Jesus's claims about himself. They fail to understand that the promises to Abraham are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It is in this section that we find one of the "I am" statements (8:58). But even this testimony to Jesus's identity is rejected by the Jews who try to stone him for his blasphemy (8:59).

6.3.5 Analysis of the text[16]

a) Whose Son is Jesus? (8:31–38)

This section, beginning with the logical conjunction *οὖν*, consists of Jesus expounding on the true impact of his presence.[17] It displays characteristics common to a trial or lawsuit as is evidenced by the repeated motif of testimony.[18] The notion of testimony was crucial in Jewish society.[19] Jewish law preferred external testimony, recognizing it as more valid than personal testimony because legal procedure was based on an examination of the witnesses rather than the accused. In fact, self-witness was regarded as invalid in both Jewish and Hellenistic legal proceedings (Schnackenburg 1980, 2:120). Nevertheless, Jesus testifies in his own defense.[20] Lincoln (2005, 264) points out that, as was the case in 5:17–49, "Jesus starts off as a witness in his own defense and then the roles become reversed as he becomes prosecutor and judge of the opponents, leveling counter-accusations and charges against them."[21] This switching of roles is not uncommon in the Fourth Gospel and finds a precedent in the Old Testament lawsuit (cf. Isa 41:21–24, 26; 43:9) (Trites 1977, 84). Jesus's identity is once again in question, and it is crucial that the veracity and character of the witnesses on either side be established.

The narrator tells us that, in spite of active opposition, many Jews continue to put their faith in Jesus (8:30; although the next few verses reveal that their belief is spurious; see 8:33, 37, 59).[22] While it may appear that in this context John's use of *οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι* is neutral (referring to the people of Jerusalem or Judea in general, as Brown suggests) the conversation that follows reveals that this is not the case (Brown 1966, 1:355). These Jews are hostile to Jesus. Culpepper points out that, "The pathos of their unbelief is that they are the religious people, some even the religious authorities, who have had all the advantages of the heritage of Israel."[23]

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[15] While this is generally true, it is not always the case, as seen in 2:6 and 5:1 where it is neutral and in 4:22 where it is positive (salvation is from the Jews).

[16] Some of the conclusions arrived at in this analysis have been taken from Mburu (2010).

[17] It is possible that, rather than having merely a transitional force (so Wallace 1996, 674), the conjunction οὖν should be interpreted logically. See also Morris (1995, 404).

[18] There are several other confrontations recorded by John that are also set in the form of interrogations or mini-trial scenes (cf. 5:19–47; 7:14–36; 8:12–58; 10:22–39). See Lincoln (2005, 8) for this discussion.

[19] See the background to the legal principle of witness in Deut 19:15; 17:6 and Num 35:30 (Brown 1966, 1:223).

[20] Note that earlier, Jesus had himself stated that his own self-testimony was not valid, but had gone ahead to include ample testimony from others that proved that his testimony was acceptable (cf. 5:31–45).

[21] See also Lincoln (2000, 86).

[22] No semantic distinction should be made between πιστεύω plus the dative and πιστεύω plus εἰς. Lincoln (2000, 90) rightly refers to the response of the people as "pseudo-belief."

As is characteristic of Johannine style, the plot is propelled forward by misunderstandings laden with irony. Jesus begins by stating that true discipleship is measured by whether or not one remains in his word. He concludes with the explanatory statement (*καὶ* is used in an epexegetical sense here) *καὶ γνώσεσθε τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια ἐλευθερώσει ὑμᾶς* (8:32; cf. 1 John 2:21). Here, truth is firmly located in a Jewish background. It should not be understood as general or philosophical truth, but the divine liberating message revealed both in and through Jesus. The usage here reflects the understanding that *ἀλήθεια* points to "the eschatological revelation of salvation which Jesus, as God's messenger, has brought (18:37)" (Schnackenburg 1980, 2:205). Truth, personified as a liberator, is both an object to be known and it is also what effects liberation. Carson (1991, 348–349) may, therefore, have a point in seeing this as close to the meaning of gospel.

There may be in this context an implicit contrast between the power of Jesus's revelation and the law. While Judaism taught that study of the law makes a man free, John goes further to show that the law points to Jesus (5:39, 46), who, as revealed later, is himself the truth (14:6).[24] For the Jews, knowledge was focused on knowledge of the law through interpretations and traditions (Keener 2014, 247). But in this context, *γινώσκω* has both an abstract and an experiential sense (cf. 1:14, 17; 8:36). Jesus, therefore, introduces a revolutionary understanding of the path to liberation—one that is embodied and personal. This liberating function of truth demonstrates the narrator's authorial intent in pointing to Jesus as the Messiah who brings God's salvation (20:31).

The implication is that the listeners are in bondage, and their indignation at being assigned slave status is expressed in their words, that they, being Abraham's descendants, have never been in bondage (8:33). This reveals their ideological mentality. Given their obvious history of bondage under various masters (Babylon, Persia, Greece) and their present situation under Roman rule, this obviously refers to something other than political bondage. Their claim is that because of their kinship with Abraham, they have never been under the power of an external spiritual force (Borchert 2002, 303). Or, perhaps, it may indicate that although they have briefly experienced subjection to foreign masters, they have never actually been enslaved (Brown 1966, 1:355).

The Kiswahili saying "*Uhuru ukiondaka, utumwa utawala*" (when freedom leaves, slavery rules), underscores the reality that freedom and bondage are mutually exclusive. One's identity is either as a slave or a free person. With his characteristic double *ἀμήν*, Jesus points out that *πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν δοῦλός ἐστιν τῆς ἁμαρτίας* (8:34). This introduces a twist in the plot and moves the story forward in a surprising way. Jesus clarifies that he is not talking about physical or political liberation, but rather release from bondage to sin. The relative clause refers to a general attitude of opposition to God, rather than actual acts of sin, in which case their rejection of Jesus is included here.[25]

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[23] Culpepper (1987, 129) writes, "[t]he reasons for the Jews' response are explained not in terms of their 'Jewishness' but in universally applicable characteristics: they have never heard or seen the Father (5:37), they do not want to come to Jesus so that they might have life (5:40), they do not have the love of God in themselves (5:42), and they do not receive Jesus (5:43) or seek the glory of God (5:44). An even more basic reason emerges later: they are from a different world order (8:23)."

[24] Early rabbinic writing contains the idea that the study of the Law is a liberating factor, freeing one from worldly care (Pirqe Aboth iii, 6; See Brown 1966, 1:355).

[25] For the former, see Schnackenburg (1980, 2:208). For the latter, see Barrett (1978, 345).

Borchert (2002, 407) notes that an understanding of the Feast of Tabernacles is important for understanding Jesus's words about liberation in this context. Because the Feast commemorates the experience of the Israelites in the wilderness, it therefore alludes to more than political freedom. In view of the Johannine concept of sin, it refers to "freedom existentially as liberation from the realm of sin and death, from the darkness of an existence remote from God (cf. 8:12), from the ordinary unsaved situation of man in 'this world' (see 8:23)" (Schnackenburg 1980, 2:206).

Jesus rearticulates the liberation motif with the words ἐὰν οὖν ὁ υἱὸς ὑμᾶς ἐλευθερώσῃ, ὄντως ἐλεύθεροι ἔσεσθε (8:36). He corrects their mistaken belief by pointing to himself as the liberator who effects true freedom in the lives of sinners. Being made free is nothing other than a synonym for salvation (Barrett 1978, 345). We recognize Jesus's identity and ideological mentality in his words—this authority to provide true freedom comes from his status as God's Son (8:36).

b) Whose children are the Jews? (8:39–47)

Although the Jews continue to protest that Abraham is their father (8:39–47), Jesus points out that by their rejection of him and the truth he conveys from God (8:37), they show no relationship to Abraham. We catch a glimpse of the Jews' ideological mentality through their words and the note of indignation in their voices. They are Abraham's children (8:39a) and cannot be illegitimate because God is their father (8:41). By implication, they are guaranteed salvation. Morris notes that, "Jews held themselves to be sons in God's household. They presumed accordingly on rights that, being really slaves, they did not possess" (Morris 1995, 407).

As this conflict between belief and unbelief continues to build, Jesus denies them any right to claim either Abraham or God as their father. Evidence of their Abrahamic lineage should be obvious in their actions (8:41b). Because belief takes center stage in Abraham's righteousness, one can only claim to be a child of Abraham if one believes in Jesus because he is the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise. Their inability to understand that not only has he been sent by God but that what he conveys is from God, is evidence in itself that they do not belong to God (8:47). Köstenberger (2004, 188) explains that, "Jesus's role as the sent son highlights both Jesus's equality with the Father in purpose (and even nature) and his subordination to the Father in carrying out his mission: 'it is a legal presumption that an agent will carry out his mission' (b. `Erub. 31b–32a; cf. b. Ketub. 99b)." As God's sent Son, Jesus is the only one qualified to offer and effect liberation (10:30; 14:10; 17:2). Consequently, to reject the Father's appointed agent is to reject the Father. Here we see that Father and Son operate in community.

The Jews reveal their illegitimacy by their failure to love Jesus who has been sent by God (8:42-43)[26] and their inability to hear (8:47). As a result, Jesus explicitly places them in the lineage of the devil with ἐκ in this case functioning as a preposition of source (8:44; cf. 1 John 3:8, ὑμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστὲ.). The familial imagery, "your father, the devil" is even more striking because Jesus contrasts it with their previous claim that Abraham is their father (8:38). Jesus's ideological mentality is revealed through his words (8:44). A lack of love for Jesus, which is ultimately a failure to believe in him, demonstrates an allegiance to the devil. Jesus adds that their intention is to carry out their father's desire (with ἐπιθυμίας in this context indicating strong desires directed to the wrong things; Morris 1995, 411). Immediately after this, the reader will notice that the Jews try to stone Jesus (8:59). According to Jewish tradition, Satan's lie had led to Adam's death (Gen 3) (Keener 2014, 274). His character as a murderer is therefore ingrained in him (ἐκεῖνος ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἦν ἀπ’ἀρχῆς). The devil is also incapable of standing for truth because there is none in him (causal use of ὅτι). With these words, the narrator highlights the conflict between belief and unbelief in Jesus that lies at the center of the plot.

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[26] This second class contrary to fact conditional sentence should be understood thus: "If God were your Father (but he is not), then you would love me."

Jesus finishes (8:45) with the reason why his hearers do not listen to him (causal and not temporal use of ὅτι as the NLT suggests). It is because he speaks the truth (ὅτι την ἀλήθειαν λέγω). As is expected of trial scenes, truth and lies feature prominently in the interaction between Jesus and the Jews. In line with the modified dualism represented in this gospel, the personification of truth and lying are found in Jesus and Satan respectively and a radical opposition exists between their followers (Brown 1966, 1:365). Their inability to hear has as its basis the fact that they do not belong to God and are consequently unable to recognize the truth before them (8:45–47). It is they, not Jesus, who have misunderstood their identity.

Both Carson (1991, 351–352) and Ridderbos (1997, 311–312) note that the issue of fatherhood is prominent in this discussion, ultimately separating Jesus from those who would kill him. Jesus is pointing beyond physical descent, which is ultimately irrelevant, to the manifestation of spiritual characteristics that accurately reflect one’s lineage. He redefines the identity of the “children of Abraham,” basing it not on ancestry or ethnicity but on belief in him. It is a spiritual identity.

6.3.6 Tentative application

The tentative applications from this literary analysis strengthen those suggested earlier. First, Jesus is the only one authorized to liberate us from slavery to sonship because he represents the Father and is the sent one of God. Second, the chains of bondage to sin have been broken in Christ, and believers have been moved from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God. Third, Jesus chose to liberate us by entering into our human existence. Because of this, we are assured that he liberates us not from a distant, transcendent plane of existence, but from within our own circumstances.

6.4 Leg 4: Historical and Cultural context

The final leg is the historical and cultural context. In addition to theological and literary concerns, African literature is informed and shaped by socio-cultural, political, and economic conditions within the continent. Thus, “behind the text” issues provide crucial data in the interpretive process.

6.4.1 Slavery

The first context is slavery. Slavery was deeply entrenched in the social and legal framework of the first-century Greco-Roman society. The NT understanding of slavery has a double heritage, both Jewish and Greek. Theologically, early Christians inherited the OT conception of slavery (see Exod 21:1–11; Lev 25:39–55; Deut 15:4–18), which regarded slavery as an undesirable result of unfortunate economic circumstances. It was a necessary evil but not a permanent status. Unlike sons, slaves were part of a household, although not permanent members (Keener 2014, 274). Culturally, the early Christians lived in a context that was dominated by the Greek conception of slavery, which was both economic and ideological.

6.4.2 Jewish identity

The second context is Jewish identity. The main identity markers in Judaism consisted of shared ethnicity, culture, and religion. Circumcision, observance of the Sabbath, and keeping the Mosaic law were badges of identity peculiar to the Jewish people (Hansen 1993, 227). Because Abraham is the progenitor of Israel and Jewish teachers regarded him as the model convert to Judaism, he is vital to the Jews' argument (Keener 2014, 274). Belief in Christ would result in a questioning of one's Jewish identity.

This brief overview of pertinent historical and cultural issues clarifies the application points arrived at in the other three legs.

6.4.3 Summary

What is the meaning of this text? On the level of the life situation of Jesus, the unveiling of Jesus's identity as liberator serves as a mirror that exposes the Jews' wrong assumptions about their own identity as free people. It forces them to confront their identity markers and to examine the evidence that Jesus gives regarding his identity as God's Son who is the only one with the authority and power to provide liberation from bondage to sin.

On the level of the life situation of the church, the original readers of John's Gospel are forced to reconsider their understanding of their own identity as Jewish Christians. This is especially important for two reasons: one, their faith is confirmed as being genuinely Jewish because Jesus is the fulfilment of the Jewish cultus (it is their opponents who have misrepresented biblical Judaism); two, emperor worship was gaining prominence and believers were being forced to decide to whom they owed allegiance.

6.5 *The seat*

The last step is the seat. These four legs together reveal the probable meaning as it was intended for the original listeners. The seat is where we derive significance. This is the application to the context of the listener expressed in terms that we understand in our own African society. The seat is a confirmation of the tentative application of the text as uncovered in the legs above. The application of this understanding of Jesus as liberator for African Christians today is addressed in light of the parallels noted above.

6.5.1 Socio-cultural: negative ethnicity and gender

The first application relates to socio-cultural aspects. Jesus includes non-Jews and women who were socially disenfranchised. He introduces a transformative way of thinking, uplifting the marginalized, and empowering them to have a voice (Mombo 2020, loc. 5031–5033). This sets an important trajectory for modern day African believers and challenges us to experience a paradigm shift. The *Ubuntu* philosophy must be reframed in terms of Christ. If we believe, like Desmond Tutu (1999, 31), that "what dehumanizes you inexorably dehumanizes me," then our new identities as believers united by the liberating power of Christ must take precedence. Just as Jesus operates in community with his Father, liberty is experienced not just individually, but within community as well. This is unity in diversity (see John 17:20–23). This liberative aspect of Christ's identity also speaks to our physical realities because he chose to liberate us by entering into our human experience.

6.5.2 Religious: syncretism and spiritual blindness

A second application relates to religious aspects. The inclusion of Samaritans by Jesus is surprising from the context of a Jewish audience but not unexpected given the salvation-historical thrust documented in the entire Bible. However, if Jesus is the fulfilment of the Jewish cultus, and he brings in "outsiders," then it follows that he is the fulfilment of African religions. This does not mean that there is continuity. Rather, Jesus brings in something new. Jesus has both power and authority to liberate and can transform our worldview of dynamism and remove our spiritual blindness.

7. Implications of the Johannine Jesus as Liberator

The first implication of the Johannine Jesus as liberator is that it redefines our African Christian identity. A clearly perceived and articulated identity is important for economic, social, political, and spiritual progression because we operate on the basis of our identities. An understanding of the identity of Christ as liberator confronts us and challenges us to reclaim our rightful identities by interrogating our cultures and worldviews and asking what values and practices we can use and benefit from.

Second, such an understanding raises our awareness of, and response to, the religious spaces we occupy and allows us to have true freedom. An understanding of Christ as liberator of all who believe in him removes the insider/outsider dichotomy and validates our experience of Christ in the wider context of world Christianity.

Third, we must continue in this freedom once we have attained it. True liberty carries with it an ethical imperative to obey God's commands. It is self-evident in the fruit we bear (15:16; 1 John 2:6). Most importantly, it is not just about externals—it is a matter of heart transformation. African Christians need to understand that the Holy Spirit empowers us to live in the liberty won for us by Christ (14:19, 23). He is not merely a means of experiencing power encounters, miracles, signs, and wonders.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper began with the proposal that contextual re-readings can no longer be ignored. The story of the tortoise and the hare showed that we all have blind spots in our approaches to texts. The intercultural approach that was followed uncovered facets of the Johannine Jesus as liberator that confront our cultures and worldviews with regards to our socio-cultural and religious contexts.

True liberty comes only through Jesus Christ. From the issues noted in our socio-cultural and religious systems, it is evident that Christianity in Africa appears to be based on an inadequate understanding of the essence of true liberty. Because the understanding of Christ's identity as liberator is not adequately developed, both the person and the work of Christ are minimized. However, when we understand that Christ is our liberator *par excellence*, this becomes the grid through which we re-define our identities, respond to our socio-cultural and religious spaces, and strive to live in the freedom secured for us. Such a Christology is, therefore, deeply relevant to the lived experiences of ordinary African believers.

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On Understanding and Translating ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν in John's Gospel against the Backdrop of English and a Selection of African Languages

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Abstract

While the Hebrew word אָמֵן and its transliterated borrowing into Greek ἀμήν in the New Testament epistles generally signal agreement at the end of a prayer, doxology, or blessing, the "Amen (Amen), I say to you" formula in the gospels (with the repeated "amen" only in John) occurs *clause-initially* and serves to *introduce certain direct quotes* of our Savior. In the first part of this paper, we seek to confirm Clark's 2004 and 2007 observations on the discourse and pragmatic functions of the "amen" formula signaling the beginning, end, and high points of a literary unit. We go on to complement these findings by noting that in the Gospel of John, the formula can also announce a coming theme, mark a climax, conclude a larger discourse unit, and occur in clusters, moving from neutral to more conflictual contexts. In the second part of the paper, we consider translations in a number of versions in English and a set of African languages, examining translation strategies which include more literal and more dynamic renderings. We ask if it is better to *translate* or *transliterate* the "amen" formula, render it consistently or not, and preserve the repetition of the formula in John's Gospel. In at least some languages, *insistence* on the truth of a statement may indeed raise doubts as to its *credibility*. This study underlines the unending tension in translation between *form* and *meaning*, but also brings to light how John's quotation of this Hebrew and/or Aramaic expression within a Greek text lends *authenticity* to this gospel. Finally, our observations lead us to ask: Is it time for translators to *imitate* the gospel writers' attempts at *preserving the flavor of Jesus's speech* in the gospels by opting for *transliteration* rather than translation?

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1. Introduction

There are two things that can be immediately said about the double “Amen, amen I say to you” formula in the New Testament: first, it is unique to the Gospel of John and second, along with the single “Amen, I say to you” in the Synoptics, this expression is only attested in the *reported speech of Jesus*. In this paper, I briefly examine the origins of the *ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν* formula in the Gospel of John, its context, meaning, tone, and pragmatic or discourse function, followed by a discussion of some selected English and African versions.[1]

2. On the Origins of *ἀμήν*

Linguistically speaking, in the New Testament, *ἀμήν* qualifies as a *loanword*, coming either directly from Aramaic, the language of Jesus’s day, or indirectly from Hebrew, as exhibited in the Old Testament. From a literary viewpoint, in the gospels, this is a *deliberate borrowing* of a Hebrew word inserted into a Greek text, motivated (it would appear) by the desire to preserve a unique feature of Jesus’s speech. As such, it can be seen as lending a certain *authenticity* to this text, especially to these particular sayings of Jesus. Note, however, that gospel writers assume this loanword is *known to the audience*, as it never comes with an explanation, as do other Hebrew words cited in the gospels.[2]

The Hebrew word אָמֵן is possibly related to the OT root, אמת, “truth,” but more likely is derived from אמן, “to be firm.” Oddly enough, the form occurs only rarely (fewer than thirty times) in the OT, far fewer times than *ἀμήν* in the NT. This expression certainly began as an *oral formula* which individuals or groups would pronounce after a statement, wish, prayer, blessing or curse, expressing their adherence to or their agreement with what had just been said. Probably beginning with the meaning “(yes), I/we agree,” it presumably shifted to a performative formula: “so be it.”[3]

Whatever its origins, in the OT, אָמֵן most often occurs in *reported speech* in *sacred* or *ritually-related* settings. In Numbers and Deuteronomy, the word occurs when a curse (of sorts) is pronounced and the people are required to say “amen.”[4] The word is also used in I Kings 1:32–37, when King David gives instructions concerning Solomon’s enthronement ceremony, and Benaiah *answers*, “Amen! (*Yes, I agree!*) May the Lord, the God of my lord the king, so ordain.” In I Chronicles 16:36, at the end of a long thanksgiving song, we read “all the people said ‘amen’.” The Prophet Jeremiah also says “amen” upon hearing a prophecy and a word from the LORD (Jer 11:5; 28:6).

Over time, אָמֵן clearly developed into a *liturgical* and *written discourse device*, marking book divisions in the Psalms (Faro 2016). Books I, II and III of the Psalter end in a doxology, closing with “amen and amen” (Pss 41:13; 72:19; 89:52), while Book IV ends with a single “amen” (Ps 106:48).[5]

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[1] I wish to thank David Clark, Drew Maust, and Jonathan van den Broek for their comments on this article, acknowledging all mistakes as mine. Thanks also to all those who have provided helpful data: Pierrette Ayite (Abouré), Janvier Blewoue (Baoule, Anyin Sanvi), Carol Brinneman (Lama), Koudouta Paul (Hdi), Stanislas Nsifu Nzita (several versions of Lingala, Kingongo, and Munu Kutuba), Ouattara Wilson (Toussian), Sena Komi (Ife), Jonathan van den Broek (Saafi-Saafi). Though just a smattering of languages in Western and Central sub-Saharan Africa, these samples represent numerous linguistic families in Niger-Congo: West Atlantic, Gur, Mande, Kru, Kwa, Chadic, Bantu.

[2] See, for example, John 5:2; 19:13, 17; 20:16.

[3] It seems parallel to the form “let it be done” יֵעָשֶׂה (Ezra 10:3).

[4] Num 5.22; Deut 27:15–26.

[5] Book V ends more triumphantly with “Hallelujah” (150:6).

The word transliterated into Greek occurs in the Deutero-canonicals, for example, in Tobit 8:5¬–8 at the end of a prayer. It also occurs after doxologies, as in 4 Macc 18:24: *ᾧ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· αμην*. This "so be it" use is widespread and carries over into many NT writings, including those of Paul, Peter, Jude, as well as the author of Hebrews and Revelation.[6] However, the "amen, amen" formula examined in this paper represents another type of use which differs from the traditional and more common uses described above. This expression occurs, not at the end, but at the *beginning* of a given clause. It does not seem to have the "so be it" meaning found in the OT, the Deutero-canonicals, and the NT epistles. Rather, it appears to concern the text that *follows*. The prefacing formula occurs twenty-five times in John, twenty-four times in Matthew, thirteen times in Mark, and six times in Luke. The double "amen," a unique feature of the Gospel of John, is in "complementary distribution" with the single ones (Barrett 1978, 186), but surprisingly, there is almost *no overlap* (i.e., parallel passages linking the "amen, amen" passages in John) with those in the Synoptic Gospels. The exceptions are passion-related texts where Jesus announces Judas's betrayal (13:21, cf. Matt 26:20–25; Mark 14:17–21; Luke 22:21–23) and Peter's denial.[7]

We have very little data on everyday speech in Jesus's day, and some claim that initial "amens" are unknown in Jewish literature or that the repetitive "amen, amen" is unattested.[8] However, we do find a double amen discourse finally in ancient Israel. In Numbers 5:22, for example, a woman accused of adultery is required to respond "amen, amen" to the priest's pronouncement of a curse (while other offenders are instructed to use a single "amen"). In Ezra 8:6, as well, after Ezra "blessed the LORD, the great God, all the people answered 'amen, amen'."

Outside Scripture, a double amen has recently been found in some fragments of festival prayers in Qumran (caves 1 and 2, dating between 100 BCE and 100 CE). These begin with "remember the Lord" and end with the response, "Amen, amen." Another more relevant case is noted by Strugnell (1974), offering a possible example of a non-biblical inscription with an *amen preface*: "*Amen*, I am innocent of any guilt" (cited by Faro 2016).

Nevertheless, within Scripture, the prefacing formula in the gospels is unique. One can only wonder if the expression was used widely in Jesus's community or region, or if it represents a true feature of Jesus's *idiolect*.[9] Whatever the case, its attestation in both the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John—the two being widely divergent in content and literary style—may inform us as to how Jesus *really spoke*, lending to the *historicity* of the Johannine text. As Carson (1991, 162–163) remarks, "The term is so characteristic of Jesus that it appears in transliteration even for the Greek-speaking readers of the Gospels."

As to the single/double variation in the four gospels, Morris (2000) notes that, although all formulas mark what follows as important, no satisfactory explanation has been offered as to why there is this variation. Given the many points of divergence between the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel, most scholars doubt whether John depended on or was inspired by the Synoptics.[10] But it is interesting to note that Matthew and John, both considered to be written in a highly Semitic Greek (Kummel 1973; Vermes 1983), together contain the largest numbers of amen formulas.[11]

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[6] Many of these occur after a praise, "blessed be … for ever" (Rom 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 15:27; Gal 1:5; Eph 3:21; Phil 4:20; 1 Tim 1:17; 2 Tim 4:18; I Pet 4:11; 5:11; Jude 1:25; Heb 13:21; Rev 1:6; 5:4; 7:12; 19:4), as well as prayers for the community, "may the grace…" (Rom 15:33; Gal 6:18). "Amen" in Rev 22:20 seems to mean "so be it," while Jesus is called the "Amen" in Rev 3:14 (cf. Isa 65:16).

[7] See also Mark 16:20 which poses textual questions.

[8] Silva (2014, 161, 265) says it has "no analogy" in Jewish literature of that time. In a similar vein, Doriani (1991, 126) claims the "amen" formula to be a "striking innovation."

[9] I argue elsewhere (Zogbo 2000) that Jesus speaking in the third person (e.g., as "Son of Man") may have been a common speech phenomenon during that time period.

3. On the Meaning of the Formula

Almost all commentaries and handbooks point to the amen formula as indicating "a solemn affirmation" by an individual or a group at the *end* of a statement, wish, prayer, blessing, or curse (Faro 2016). At the beginning of statements, Barrett (1978, 186) notes it gives "emphasis to a solemn pronouncement."[12] Morris (2000) says the pre-clause formula marks these statements by Jesus as true, solemn, and important. Carson (1991, 162) also suggests Jesus uses it before an utterance "to confirm and emphasize its trustworthiness and importance … to strengthen his own words" (161).

Newman and Nida (1980) bring a slight nuance to this explanation by stating that not only does the formula (i) "emphasize the words of Jesus" (which follow), but it (ii) "confirms the truth of what Jesus says." From a linguistic point of view, the first refers to a *focusing mechanism* or *attention-getter*,[13] and the second, to an expression which attests to the *truth value* of a statement. As Morley (1997) points out, the formula implies that Jesus is acknowledging the truth and authority of his teachings, and statements as well as his correction of religious laws. Indeed, many languages have a *marker of evidentiality*, signaling whether knowledge is first or second hand, witnessed by the speaker or only "hearsay" (i.e., whether a statement is trustworthy or not).

Some link the high number of repetitive "amens" in John's Gospel as Jesus being *more conscious* of his divine role and mission than in the Synoptics. In this vein, Silva (2014, 161) describes the formula as "an expression of his [Jesus's] own certainty of the divine saying and authentication of his own words." Silva sees Jesus standing by his words, making them "binding on himself and his hearers." Thus, along with thinking about Jesus's *stance vis-à-vis* his own words, we might also consider how he wanted his words to be heard and interpreted by his audience (of course, it is hard to evaluate the conscious attitude of a speaker in a written text two millennia old).

4. On the Tone of the Formula

Many point to the *solemnness* of the "amen (amen)" preface, with some qualifying it as a "majestic introductory formula" (Hendrickson 1954, 198) or as "majestic revelatory language used by God" (Achtemeier et al. 2001, 187). Others describe the tone of John's Gospel as more "elevated" literary style.[14] However, it must be noted that the tone of the formula (inaccessible to readers today) depends entirely on the context:

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[10] Achtemeier et al. (2001) note: "John's gospel distinguishes itself by presenting not a different Jesus but a Jesus from a distinctly Johannine angle. He is the Word, he comes from the Father, finds his authority there … so it seems proper to let Jesus speak differently, to respect this literary difference, whatever the historical interweaving relationship between the synoptics and Johannine."

[11] Some claim that the author of Luke, speaking to a primarily Greek audience (with only six amen statements) may have removed many such transliterations from Q (Kummel 1973).

[12] Barrett (1978, 186), among others, uses the term "asseveration," referring to the emphatic, solemn declaration of a fact.

[13] The latter expression is used by many, including Runge (2010, 88), who only briefly comments on this formula in his Greek discourse grammar.

[14] We would reject the claim that in this gospel, "Jesus speaks in a more elevated, hieratic, even pretentious, style" (Moody Smith 1986, 4), since the last adjective seems unjustified.

- Who is speaking? (always Jesus!)
- Who is being addressed?
- In what context is the speech given?
- What is the primary illocutionary force of the statement?

Indeed, in the Gospel of John, Jesus uses the amen formula to address a wide range of people, all of whom qualify as “Jews,” but who become quickly divided into separate groups:

- his *followers*, i.e., his disciples, such as Nathanael (1:51) and Peter (21:15, 18)
- those we could qualify as *seekers* (Nicodemus, 3:3, 5; the crowd 6:22–25)
- those Jews “believing Jesus” (8:31)
- “the Jews,” who in this gospel designate religious and civil authorities who regularly oppose him (5:18–19; 6:41; 8:48).

As to the context, Jesus’s reaction and tone seem to be dependent on the attitude of those to whom he is speaking. At times, his audience is in awe, at other times, vaguely or keenly interested, slightly or greatly perplexed, openly hostile, or not. Thus, Jesus might be speaking in an excited way (1:51), with sadness (13:21, 38), in a somewhat angry or disappointed (6:26) or defiant tone (8:58). The context might be an intimate meeting (Nathanael, Peter), with or without onlookers, or a rowdy or mixed crowd (chapter 8).[15] Whatever the tone or context, the “amen, amen” marked statements do seem *irrevocable*, whether the statement is accepted or not.

Note that in several passages (e.g., 3:1–11; 6:26, 32, 47, 53), there appear to be “clusters” (numerous occurrences) of amen statements. And here, as we will see below, the tone often *shifts*, going from friendly and/or neutral to more and more confrontational. One way to think about the sayings is to determine whether their content is positive (1:51) or negative (21:18), or somewhere in-between. Identifying the *illocutionary force* or the *type of speech act* is a more difficult task. In John’s Gospel, we encounter many *promises* and/or *predictions*—some positive (1:51; 14:12; 16:20, 23) and some negative (13:21; 38; 21:18), as well as speeches meant to teach or inform (e.g., those expressing *general truths*: 3:3, 5; 5:19, 24; 6:32, 47; 8:34, 58; 10:1, 7; 12:24; 13:16, 20). At least one “amen, amen” formula introduces an *accusation* (3:11), and another a *reprimand* (6:26), and as many have pointed out, statements which *correct* false beliefs (6:32; 8:34).

5. Wider Claims

Some scholars ascribe even more semantic content into this introductory formula, describing Jesus’s use of the word “amen” as “sacred,” bringing us back to the issue of how conscious Jesus is of his own identity. Achtemeier et al. (2001, 177) think Jesus’s encounters with people are meant to push them to decide *who he is*, as he “forces the issue by his bold claims to speak God’s word on God’s behalf and by God’s authority.” Morris (2000, 170), among others, seems to go a step further, claiming the “amen, amen” formula has “Christological implications,” marking words following “as uttered before God, who is thus invited to bring them to pass.” Some even propose that the “amen, amen” formula in the NT is equivalent to the ominous OT, “Thus says the LORD” (Ross 1991, 167; Reiling and Swellengrebel 1971), showing

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[15] Note that twenty out of twenty-five times in John, Jesus uses a plural “you” (in Greek), and only five times a singular “you.”

[16] A surer OT parallel would be the “I am” statements of Isaiah (Achtemeier et al. 2001, 187).

Jesus's *conscious role as prophet*. This seems speculative, especially since, though Jesus could have used the name of the LORD in these instances, he did not![16] Obviously, scholars take various views on these issues. Silva (2014) thinks Jesus is claiming to be *more than* an Old Testament prophet, actually setting himself *alongside* God and his word.

Clearly, in many instances, a hostile audience did consider his words blasphemy, but it may be overstepping to say exactly what Jesus's *motives* were. Though Jesus (or the author of John) meant these words to stand out, there seems to be no justification for thinking the amen-prefaced statements are more *sacred* or *have more theological weight* than Jesus's other teachings in the gospels, for example, "I am the light of the world," "I am the way the truth and the life," "God so loved the world...," and so on. As we will see, in the gospels, and for purposes of this paper, particularly in John's Gospel, the "amen, amen" formula appears rather to play an important literary or discourse role.

6. On the Discourse Function of ἀμήν ἀμήν

Another way to analyze the "amen, amen" formula is to try to determine its pragmatic and discourse functions within the text as a whole. Though several commentators and biblical scholars mention various discourse features associated with the formula, to my knowledge, the fullest linguistic study is carried out both for the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel by David Clark (2007, 26), a seasoned translation consultant and handbook author who rightly claims, "the familiar formula ... does not occur randomly in discourse." In his study of the single "amen" formula in the Synoptics, Clark (2004, 319–321) reports the "amen" formula marks:

- the end of unit or episode
- the opening of a longer speech
- reversal of expectation.

In a later study, Clark (2007) extends his analyses to the Fourth Gospel, where he confirms the above, though noting in the Gospel of John, the largest group of "amen, amen" sayings *introduce* rather than *end* a discourse unit. This "reversal" (2007, 127) in discourse roles is significant and underlines yet another difference between the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel. In John, Clark finds the "amen, amen" formula beginning seventeen units, thus constituting two/thirds of its occurrences, with roughly one third signaling closure (125, 127).

6.1 Discourse openings

According to Clark, introducing a unit is the major discourse role of the ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν formula in John's Gospel. In 13:21, for example, we note the new literary unit is marked as well by several initial verbal clauses and the reintroduction of the full noun phrase *Jesus*.[17] The NRSV presents a subtitle and a new paragraph:[18]

> **Jesus Foretells His Betrayal**
> 21 *After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, "**Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me**."* 22 The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. 23 One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; 24 Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. 25 So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?"

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[17] One can also note the presence of four verbs of saying in Greek: εἶπον (X2), μαρτυρέω, and λέγω.

[18] Unless otherwise noted, examples are from the NRSV.

It is important to note that many of these opening statements in the Fourth Gospel seem disruptive or not quite logical. Often when Jesus uses this formula, he seems to be changing the subject, and quite often does not answer the question being asked![19] A good example of this is 6:25ff which begins with a clear paragraph break (signaled by a change of scene and time). After the miracle of the loaves and fish, the people following Jesus come to him and ask, "when did you come here?" But instead of answering, Jesus begins a new teaching, which is almost a reprimand:

> 25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" 26 Jesus answered them, "*Very truly*, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27 Do not work for the food that perishes, but the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal."

Indeed, as early as the 1800s, various scholars including Wescott (1880, 76) have noted that "The words by their emphasis generally *presuppose some difficulty or misunderstanding to be overcome*."[20] In the above case, Jesus seeks to supplement the crowd's limited knowledge (belief in his physical miracles) and to point them to a better understanding of spiritual realities.[21] While Wescott also suggests the "amen, amen" formula may mark "the introduction of a new thought," others suggest that there is often some tie back to a previous context. Indeed, these statements often signal "an element of surprise" (Clark 2007, 124) or what Carson (1991, 162–163) calls "a reversal of expectation."

In the Nicodemus episode (3:1–21), though Jesus's answer picks up on what has been said, at the same time, it does not quite "connect":

> 2 [Nicodemus says] "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God."
> 3 Jesus answered him (In reply he said, NIV), "*Very truly, I tell you*, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."

Clark (2007, 125) says here that Jesus is trying to *change the subject*. Indeed, we think he is shifting the exchange *away* from a discussion about himself *towards* a discussion focusing more on Nicodemus.

At 10:1, Falconer (2010) identifies the "amen, amen" as beginning a closely-knit literary unit (10:1–18) based on the images of the shepherd and the gate, but he also notes that the formula provides *cohesion* with what precedes, serving as a *transition* from dialogue (with the Pharisees which ends at 9:41) into a monologue (even if the Pharisees are still present in the background, as "them" in 10:6). This passage exhibits a feature of many "amen" formulas in John's Gospel mentioned above, that is, that they tend to occur in "clusters." For reasons difficult to determine, several texts have a number of amen sayings, while others have none. In these cases, one can often sense a *movement* within a given passage from more general

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19 This even when the text clearly says, "Jesus answered them."
20 Italics mine.
21 See Achtemeier et al. (2001, 190) for similar views. Significantly they note "the cumulative effect of the various correctives … [is that] … with each subsequent misunderstanding, the reader learns that to understand Jesus one must recognize him as the one who comes from God."

statements to more specific or pointed ones, moving as well from a more neutral tone to a far more confrontational one.[22] Thus, in 10:1ff, Jesus begins with general teaching, but by the time he gets to the next "amen" formula statement in 10:7, an "uneasiness" has crept in, as those listening "do not understand:"[23]

> 1 "*Very truly*, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers."

Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again, Jesus said to them (v. 7),

> "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

Indeed, by the time Jesus gets to the end of his lengthy speech, we find that "the Jews were divided because of these words. Many of them were saying, 'He has a demon and is out of his mind'" (10:19–20).

Coming back to the Nicodemus episode, the same movement can be seen, as the second "amen, amen" parallels and gives more detail to the first, while the third, linked by a somewhat fuzzy border, shifts from a friendly exchange into a harsh accusation (as the addressees also widen to a plural "you"):[24]

> 3 Jesus answered him (In reply he said, NIV), "*Very truly*, I tell you (singular), no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you (singular), no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6 What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not be astonished.... 9 Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and you do not understand these things? 11 *Very truly*, I tell you (singular), we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you (plural) do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you (plural) about earthly things and you do not believe...."

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[22] This pattern imprints itself over the book as a whole. Achtemeier et al. (2001, 180) see the gospel beginning (chs. 1–4) showing "benign misunderstanding" which eventually gives way to "dangerous misperceptions of Jesus's purpose ... [and] hostile disputes...."

[23] The French Bible *Expliquée* thinks this whole passage is provocative. Of course, already in 10:1, most listeners/readers understand who the thieves are!

[24] The literary links in this passage are also quite remarkable with "God" in v. 2 being picked up in v. 3, "born" in v. 3 being picked up in v. 4, etc. Through its repetition, this exchange is quite poetic.

6.2 *Discourse closure*

By Clark's (2007, 127) count, there are eight cases of discourse final "amen" formulas in the Gospel of John. Two of these involve private exchanges with Peter (NRSV):

> **Jesus Foretells Peter's Denial**
> 36 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterward." 37 Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." 38 Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? *Very truly, I tell you*, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times." (13:36–38; See also 21:15–19)

From our study, it would appear that the "amen, amen" formula not only closes short speeches, but long ones as well. Thus, John 1:51 not only closes a short unit (1:43–51), marked in some Bibles with a subtitle "Philip and Nathanael," but a much longer one as well. The "amen, amen" formula seems to also bring to a close the larger unit, 1:35–51, which might be called, "The first disciples."

Likewise, in what seems to be a very long discourse in chapter 8, with a few changes in location (8:12, 31), there are several "amen, amen" statements or "clusters" (8:31, 34, 51, 58). But the last "amen" formula seems to put "the cherry on the cake," as hostility increases and, immediately after, the unbelieving Jews pick up stones to kill Jesus (8:57–59):

> 57 Then the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to them, "***Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am***." 59 So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

This is clearly more than episode closure. Plot-wise, it looks like the "final blow," a speech which will have enormous consequences throughout the rest of the gospel. In some languages, such pertinent events are marked by what is called, "current relevance markers" (see Marchese 1978. See also 13:1–20, where numerous "amen" statements occur, with 13:20 adding a strong conclusion.)

6.3 *Opening and closure?*

Clark (2007, 125) claims that the "amen, amen" formula can open and close the same literary unit, as in 5:19–24 below. One might posit the following paragraph divisions based on the formula and the introduction of new ideas (see also the way words or themes are introduced in one paragraph and then picked up in what follows):[25]

> 18 For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.
>
> The Authority of the Son
> 19 Jesus said to them, "*Very truly, I tell you*, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. 20 The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. 21 Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes. 22 The Father judges

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[25] The transition from 5:18 to 5:19 looks very much like the one at John 10:1.

> no one but has given all judgment to the Son, 23 so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. *Anyone* who does not honor *the Son* does not honor the Father *who sent him*. 24 *Very truly, I tell you*, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life."
>
> 25 "*Very truly, I tell you*, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; 27 and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man." 28 "Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and will come out—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."

Here the unit opens (5:19) and closes (5:24) with "amen, amen." 5:25 seems to begin a new unit, based on a change in theme, "the hour is coming," which, nevertheless, ties back to 5:24.

6.4 Paragraph marker

Many examples cited and those following show that as a discourse opener, the "amen, amen" formula can be used as an indicator of paragraph division. Though often disputable, *paragraph divisions* are extremely important, since these enable readers/hearers to grasp and digest the meaning and even the logic of a text.[26] While the NRSV casts 13:12–20 into one paragraph, we may propose a better division by taking the "amen" formula at 13:16 as a closure, confirmed by the subordinate conditional clause at 13:17 as an opener. 13:20 then also serves as a closer, confirmed by the temporal clause breaker in 13:21 beginning a new paragraph:[27]

> 12 After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. 14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 16 *Very truly, I tell you*, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them."
>
> 17 "*If you know these things*, you are blessed if you do them. 18 I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfill the scripture, 'The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' 19 I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am he. 20 *Very truly, I tell you*, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me."
>
> **Jesus Foretells His Betrayal**
> 21 *After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, "Very truly, I tell you*, one of you will betray me." 22 The disciples looked

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[26] Whether or not narrative texts are written, they contain discourse markers which signal these primary discourse units.

[27] Many languages use dependent temporal or conditional clauses in this way (Marchese 1977, 1987).

> at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. 23 One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; 24 Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking.

As in the Synoptics, *reversal of expectation* characterizes many of the amen statements in John. Jesus uses the formula to signal some surprising information which is contrary to popular belief. Clark (2007, 124) notes, however, that this nuance is more likely to be associated with introductory amen statements, rather than closing ones.

6.5 Climax

We might add to Clark's "surprise" or "reversal of expectation" the notion of *climax*, that is points in the narrative where the "amen, amen" formula marks a high or pivotal point in a text (be it narrative, poem, dialogue, and so on). A good example occurs as 21:18 signals, not just the end, but the climax of the unit 21:15–19. But again, there is a "disconnect," as Jesus moves from somehow calling out Peter with his repetitive questions ("do you love me?") and imperatives ("feed my sheep"), into a very hard climactic word concerning Peter's shocking death.

Note that many *closing* amen statements tend to exhibit this feature of climax, as we have already seen:

> "You will see greater things than these. *Very truly, I tell you*, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (1:50–51)

In fact, many cluster presentations *lead up to a high point*, as the discourse on the loaves and fish moves from a gentle reprimand first, to astonishing information:

> Jesus answered them, "*Very truly, I tell you*, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27 Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal."

> 32 Then Jesus said to them, "*Very truly, I tell you*, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of heaven is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

And from there, we are led to the climax statement:

> 34 They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." 35 Jesus said to them, "*I am the bread of life*. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Another outstanding example was seen above in 8:58, where Jesus marks as climactic, "Before Abraham was, I am."

Thus, jumping off from Clark's detailed analyses, the role of the "amen, amen" formula can be expanded. Indeed, beyond signaling discourse structure and openings and closings which show surprises and climaxes, the "amen, amen" formula can also be seen to be *announcing important themes* or *marking significant points in the literary development*. This is particularly true concerning the two amen endings occurring early on in the gospel. The ends of two units, 1:51 and 3:11, *point forward* to what is to come. Verse 1:51 ends a long section, but also announces that the *glory of Jesus* will be revealed. Thus, after Nathanael declares, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus says not only to him, but to all the disciples he has just chosen:

> 50 "You (singular) will see greater things than these. 51 *Very truly, I tell you* (plural), you (plural) will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

This somewhat surprising and even disjunctive declaration seems to *clearly prefigure* what is to come in the gospel—namely, the glory of Jesus will be revealed. In the Nicodemus episode, there is a very similar *pointing*, but the third and final "amen" formula presents a theme almost counter to 1:51, as it underlines people's refusal to believe Jesus,[28] which also very concretely prefigures the crucifixion. Interestingly, however, it reiterates the ascending-descending motif of 1:50:

> 11 "*Very truly, I tell you* (singular), we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you (plural) do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you (plural) about earthly things and you (plural) do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you (plural) about heavenly things?"
> 13 "No one has *ascended* into heaven except the one who *descended* from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

Interestingly, both of these "amen, amen" episodes at the beginning of the book of John make an intertextual link to the OT "ascending and descending" and "lifting up" movements, in reference to the patriarchs Jacob and Moses. It is also quite striking to note that both of these episodes involve *opening up the audience from singular to plural*, as can be seen in the examples above.

6.6 Amen, amen in highly marked contexts

John includes much figurative and poetic language, including a great deal of repetition. One interesting phenomenon involving the "amen, amen" formula is that it often occurs in *highly marked* linguistic environments, many of which do not "show through" in translation. The most outstanding of these is the *quote formula* which is consistently *under-rendered* in most versions. Below are literal renderings of several "amen, amen" statements showing multiple cases of verbs of saying:

- 50 Jesus *answered* and *said* (εἶπον) to him, "Do you believe because I *told* (εἶπον) you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." 51 And he *said* (λέγω) to him, "Amen, amen, I *tell* (λέγω) you, you will see heaven opened...." (1:50–51)
- Jesus *answered* him and *said* (εἶπον), "Amen, amen, I *tell* (λέγω) you, no one...." (3:3)
- *Continued* therefore and Jesus *said* (λέγω) to them "Amen, amen, I *tell* (λέγω) you, the Son can do nothing on his own...." (5:19)
- *Responded* to them and Jesus *said* (εἶπεν), "Amen, amen, I *tell* (λέγω) you, you are looking for me...." (6:26)
- *Said* (εἶπον) therefore Jesus, "Amen, amen I tell you (λέγω)...." (6:32)

These phrases are certainly a product of Semitic-influenced Greek, coming from the Hebrew or Aramaic "he said" saying. But despite their origin, these quote formulas add quite a bit of prominence to these passages. The high

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28 Two other amen-marked statements express the rejection theme, predicting or prefiguring the denial of Peter and the betrayal of Judas.

29 See van den Broek (2020) for a discussion of how sound effects play a role in one text in John's gospel.

number of verbs of saying, along with the repetitive "amen" creates what Longacre (1983, xvii) calls a "zone of turbulence," which demands hearer/reader attention.[29] Another "attention-getter" in Greek is the long form ὁ Ἰησοῦς ("the Jesus") which often "weighs down" the text (5:19; 6:26, 32, 53; 8:34; 10:7; 13:21),[30] as well as the οὖν conjunction, "therefore," not rendered in many versions.[31]

One can also note that the "amen, amen" statements are often introduced directly *after* an unsettling rhetorical question:

> 9 Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered him, "*Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things*? 11 "*Very truly, I tell you*, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?"

In 14:12, the "amen, amen" statement comes after a chiasm, repeating the words "believe," "Father," and "works":

> 11 "...Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me (*chiasm*); or else believe me for the sake of the *works* themselves. 12 *Truly, truly, I say to you*, he who believes in me will also do the *works* that I do; and greater *works* than these will he do, because I go to the Father."

Indeed, the frequent "disconnects," repetition, and special stylistic devices within the context of the "amen" statements all combine to make the reader/hearer "sit up" and pay attention.

7. Translation issues

In everyday life, oral translation often takes place spontaneously, without much time for on-the-spot reflection. But translation of sacred texts such as the Bible differs in that a text usually needs to be *exegeted* before it can be rendered, thus our search for context, meaning, and tone in the above discussion. Nevertheless, despite this research, how to render the formula "amen (amen), I say to you," both in the Synoptics and in John's Gospel, remains a challenge for translators worldwide.

Alongside *understanding the source text*, which involves exegetical and linguistic analyses, translators need to find solutions to render its message in a meaningful way in their own languages. What type of translation and what level of language used will of course depend on the *skopos* (goals) of the translation project, usually written down in a *translation brief* drawn up by the translation team in consultation with the host community and the project sponsors.[32]

It is also important to remember that translation is not an automatic exercise and there is never one, and only one, "correct" rendering. Rather,

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[30] This feature is outside the scope of this paper, but I refer the reader to Colwell (1933).

[31] See also 13:38; 16:19, 20. The odd imperative "Feed my sheep" preceding the "amen" formula may also be part of "disconnected" speech at 21:17–18.

[32] Dominated in the past by external partners, today it is expected that this choice, for a literary, a liturgical, or common language translation—one leaning toward a more literal rendering and the other, toward a freer one—is determined at the grassroots level.

translation is an exercise in *identifying and choosing between multiple adequate* and *acceptable* (traditionally called "faithful") *renderings*. The "amen (amen)" formula poses a particular translation problem since the word "amen" is already present in the Greek source text as a *transliterated borrowing*. In this specific case, the translator has two basic options:

(i) maintaining the borrowing (the transliteration) as is, or
(ii) translating the term(s).

Below two charts presenting a sampling of renderings for John 1:51 in a set of English versions and in a selected set of African languages show that in this data set, option (ii) far outweighs (i), in frequency and practice. Indeed, in all our databases, only one version (NAB) opts for transliteration here:

7.1 Amen, amen in Selected English Versions (John 1:51):[33]

KJV	Verily, verily, I say unto you
RSV, ESV	Truly, truly I say to you
NEB	In truth, in very truth I tell you
NAB	Amen amen I say to you/I solemnly assure you
NRSV, NIV[34]	Very truly I tell you
REB	In very truth I tell you all
JB	I tell you most solemnly
NJB	In all truth I tell you
GNB	I am telling you the truth
NET	I tell all of you the solemn truth
CEV	I tell you for certain
Hendrickson (1954)	I most solemnly assure you
Eugene Peterson	I'm telling you the most solemn and sober truth now

7.2 Amen, amen in a Selection of African Languages (John 1:51)

Language	Rendering	Meaning
Saafi-saafi (Senegal)	Ñam na woyee ɗu wa, te ambaat ne wa keeh	I (it's me who) tell it to you (and) know that it's true
Lyélé (BF)	Zhə̀n zhə̀nà, à n'â wə̀l (re) ába	Truth truth, I say (it) to you
Lama (Togo)	Mə siru-mı tʊfələm kən	I tell-you truth EMPHASIS
Ife (Togo)	Ǹ wà wí òtítɔ ́ fú ŋɛ ́ ní fee	I say you the truth that EMPH
Glaro (Côte d'Ivoire)	Bô zıra̋ wȁ ʊ̀n gǎà dhı ̀ ı ́dhɛ̀ɛ ̀ plɔ-ń.	Let me tell you all the real truth
Baoule (CI)	Nanwlɛ kpa, n ́kan kle amun,	Truth true, I say to you

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33 In French, out of seven very popular versions, only one (*Nouvelle Bible Segond*) opts for "Amen, Amen, je te le dis."
34 The NIV renders a double amen in Num 5:22 as "Amen, so be it."

Anyin Sanvi (CI)	Mιun kan yι΄ananhɔlɛ mιun kele ɛmɔ kɛ,	I say in truth to you that
Abure (CI)	Anʋhalɛ, anʋhalɛ ‘klɔ,	In truth, in truth
Hdi (Cameroon, Nigeria)	Kahwathwata ka yu ta mnaghunata	True-true say I am saying to you
Lingala CL-BS Democratic Republic of Congo	Ya solo	It’s true
Lingala Makanza-BS	Sɔlɔ sɔlɔ	True, true
Lingala Courant/Biblica	Ya solo/ Ya solo penza	It’s true/It’s really/ truly true
Catholic Lingala	Ya sôló sôló	It’s true true
Kikongo	Kedika	It’s true
Munu Kutuba Congo-BS	Ya tsyelika	It’s true

Though the word “amen” has penetrated most societies worldwide and is used in various ways, especially as an answer to a prayer or to a simple “God bless you,”[35] the particular use in the gospels, *introducing* statements in the way Jesus does, is far less common. Not surprisingly, then, in the case of John’s double formula, the translation strategy which has dominated both in English and our select set of African languages (as seen above) is *dynamic* or *functional equivalence*, an approach on the scene for the past sixty or seventy years. Thus, almost all translators have attempted to render the *perceived meaning*, sometimes with great, and other times with less, success. Note that while some have retained the repetitive form (“truly, truly,” *Ya sôló sôló*), others have proposed more natural renderings (“I tell you the truth”). Most of these concentrate on the *truth value* of what is to follow. How successful these forms are in *drawing attention* to the statement (in terms of surprise or emphasis) or as a paragraph introducer or closing is hard to determine. Only once in our data sample has the “amen, amen” formula been transliterated (NAB above).

Considering our discussion of meaning, tone, discourse use, and authenticity, it is a surprising that more versions do not opt to maintain the *transliterated* form of “amen, amen,” which offers some advantages. Notably this solution might be attractive because:

- it uses a word that is at the very least familiar in most cultures
- it renders and maintains the flavor of Jesus’s speech
- it preserves ties to the OT
- it lends authenticity to the document (respecting historicity)
- it preserves the uniqueness of Jesus’s speech
- it may even affirm Jesus’s Jewishness (suggesting Jesus might have been speaking Aramaic and not Greek, as some maintain).

As noted, such a choice will be determined by the *skopos* and translation approach chosen by the host community (i.e., whether the translation will show more *domestication* or *foreignization*.) But given our study, maintaining “amen, amen” (as the gospel writers evidently did) should certainly not be excluded from options offered to translators in the twenty-first century, where *authenticity* is seen as pertinent.

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[35] Where I live in Côte d’Ivoire, Muslims, practitioners of Traditional African Religion, as well as Christians all respond to “God bless you” in any language with an “amen.” Another phenomenon has developed in church settings: a pastor yells “amen?” and the congregation answers “amen.” This may even begin a speech or sermon. See Agana-Nsiire Agana (2019) for this use in a Ghanaian congregation.

Examining the data, other important translation issues arise as well:

- How important is it to differentiate John's *double use* of the formula from the synoptic *single* one?
- Should any attempt be made to render the "amen, amen" formula contextually? That is, when there are nuances of surprise or reprimand, should particles be added, as suggested by Clark (2007)? In other words, should "amen, amen" be the same everywhere or should renderings adapt to each context?
- How is repetition interpreted and handled? Should it be preserved?

Regarding the first issue, most versions do reflect the form of the Greek text by proposing *different renderings* for the single and double expressions,[36] though the majority adopt similar expressions to show the two are related. Thus, the NIV uses "*Truly* I tell you" in the Synoptics and "*Very truly* I tell you" in the Gospel of John. The NET distinguishes "I tell you the truth" (Luke 4:24) from "I tell you *the solemn truth*" (John 3:3). Some African languages have harmonized the single and double formulas, perhaps to preserve naturalness, but most would agree it is important to *let the Gospels maintain and reflect their distinctiveness*.

This leads into the second question, that of *consistency*. Is it better to keep the expression stable so that it can be recognized for what it is, or is it better to render the expression according to context? In the Gospel of Matthew, the GNB makes a serious attempt at rendering the single form *naturally*, according to context, but this results in over ten different renderings for the one Greek expression:[37]

- "*Remember* that as long as heaven and earth last…." (Matt 5:18; 24:34)
- "*I tell you*" (5:26; 8:10; 18:13; 21:31; 26:21, 34), with other variants: "*And so I tell all of you*" (18:18), "I tell you indeed" (23:26), "this (24:2), *Indeed I tell*…." (24:47)
- "*I assure you*" (6:2, 5, 16; 10:15; 11:11; 13:17; 16.28; 17:20; 18:3; 19:23; 21:21; 26:13)
- "*I promise you*" (10:23)
- "*You can be sure … (certainly)*" (10:42; 19:28).

These expressions provide smooth and natural renderings but have the clear disadvantage of removing a recognizable expression associated with Jesus. Indeed, no reader would be able to go back and identify the "amen, amen" sayings in this book without referring to the Greek or another version.

In most English and African language versions consulted, the formula in John is rendered consistently with an identical formula (the singular and plural "you" only being distinguished in languages where this is an issue). This consistency helps establish the expression as a feature of John's Gospel and a unique feature of Jesus's speech, but it does lead to some unnatural collocations, as well as some odd and, at times, illogical links between clauses. Thus, common language French *Parole de Vie* varies between a strong *Oui, je vous le dis, c'est la vérité* ("Yes, I tell you, it's the truth," at 1:51 and following) to an almost hedging *Eh bien* ("Well, I tell you, it's the

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36 Clark (2007, 128) likewise advises to "maintain the sight difference if at all possible."

37 Excluding the uses in parables: 25:12, 40, 45.

truth" at 16:20). One version of Lingala (Courant de Biblica) also tends to show variation within the Gospel of John, at times using "It's true" (*Ya solo*) and a more emphatic "It's true true" (*Ya solo penza*) elsewhere (5:19). While consistency is preferred, perhaps minor changes such as those in PDV above can help readers to better understand the intention behind the "amen, amen" statement. Note that in the French rendering, the last part of the expression is left intact.

Finally, we come to the question of repetition, asking should the repetition of "amen, amen" be preserved or changed? Some versions keep the repetition, while others remove it. It is clear that repetition can have a number of functions within a single language: emphasizing, structuring, and even mocking. In some contexts, especially in Africa, truth-asserting particles, words, or expressions may have a positive effect, but repeating them may have the opposite effect (i.e., *calling into doubt* the validity of a claim). Such instances can be seen in Scripture, as in Jer 23:25:

> I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy falsely in My name: "*I had a dream. I had a dream*." How long will there be in the minds of the prophets who prophesy falsehood—the prophets of their own deceitful minds?

A Senegalese merchant comes to mind, who says *wallah* (*wAllah*) "by God" over and over. The more the man insists, the less you believe him! Thus, there is a potential conflict between the *repetitive form* and the *communicative goal of assurance*. Clearly, translators must decide if repetition *lends truth value* or *hinders it*. Sena Komi, a Togolese translation consultant (SIL) says in his language, Ife, it is better to use a particle *fee* which marks insistence and inspires confidence, than to repeat the same expression twice. However, another consultant, Nzita Nsafu Stanislas, from DRC, notes that in Lingala, while repetitive verbs give a derogative meaning (*kolialia* means "to eat in disorder"), repeating a noun or adjective like "truth" or "true" *reinforces* the truth of a statement. Thus, part of the translators' job is to correctly understand the nuances of the source text and the import of words in their own mother tongue. Only then can they carry out the delicate balancing act of juggling various options and making the best choice.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, we need to acknowledge that no one can predict when "amen, amen" statements will surface in the Gospel of John. But we can identify the role of this expression in discourse as it opens or closes a literary unit. We can see that "amens" may come in clusters, going from general to specific, from friendly to pointed and even confrontational. We can recognize that some prefigure and announce important themes, while others seem to signal climactic conclusions. Our best advice would be for translators to keep the formula constant or use a close variant, with a special particle, for example, if this would help the reader understand special nuances in a given text.

Today's translator might also choose to break the pattern of the last half century and transliterate the "amen, amen" formula, to preserve, if only slightly, the *flavor of the original*. We might even decide to highlight or explain this unique feature of Jesus's speech in an introduction to the gospels or in a glossary. In the meantime, we can let this formula continue to prod our thinking as we reflect on the authenticity of the Gospel of John.

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Conspectus

The Use of πιστεύω in the Gospel of John: Some Considerations on Meaning and Issues of Consistency and Ambiguity

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Abstract

John uses the verb πιστεύω (to believe) more often than do the Synoptic Gospels. The action of believing is important and central to John. There are references to people who are said to believe in Jesus and follow him. However, there are others who also believe but then turn away from Jesus. John uses the same verb πιστεύω throughout his gospel to indicate true believers in Jesus, but sometimes this identification appears unclear and/or ambiguous. The verb πιστεύω is also used synonymously within a wider semantic range that encompasses other action words such as knowing, receiving, and believing in Jesus, God, and the Scripture, doing the will and work of God, seeing, hearing, accepting, remaining, coming to, abiding, and so on. πιστεύω is also subsumed under various descriptors such as being born of God, being chosen and drawn by the Father, and given to Jesus, producing fruit, receiving the Spirit, obeying Jesus as his sheep, and worshipping him. The methodology in this work is to *examine various passages in John that employ the verb* πιστεύω and assess how John uses this word and its other word associations and descriptors in the given context of the passage(s) under consideration. John seems to be challenging his readers on the question of what constitutes a true believer in Jesus. John challenges his reader(s) on what it means, and what it looks like, to be a genuine believer in Jesus as opposed to a counterfeit believer.

Keywords
believe, believer, unbeliever, πιστεύω, Jesus, Father

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1. The Use of πιστεύω in John

The concept of believing plays a central role in the Gospel of John. By comparison with the other gospels, John uses the verb πιστεύω (to believe) with a much higher frequency.[1] John uses the verb πιστεύω ninety-eight times, whereas Matthew uses it eleven times, Mark uses it ten times (four times in the longer ending of Mark), and Luke uses it nine times (Bauer et al. 2000, s.v. πιστεύω).[2] John, interestingly, never uses the word πίστις (faith) in his gospel.[3] The word πιστεύω means "to entrust oneself to an entity in complete confidence, *believe (in), trust*, [with] implication of total commitment to the one who is trusted" (Bauer et al. 2000, s.v. πιστεύω). As a verb, πιστεύω implies an action. Believing involves a dynamic commitment to Jesus. The verb πιστεύω semantically signifies action, not mere belief. For John "the implication of believing means that there is a deliberate intention as an action to entrust oneself obediently to Jesus with complete confidence" (Hickey 2021, 69). Several studies have touched on the topic of believing in John (e.g., McNab 2016; Bonney 2002; Moloney 1993; Tenney 1948), but most of these works tend to be general or focus more as a commentary on the Fourth Gospel. This work seeks to examine some Johannine passages containing the verb πιστεύω and extrapolate from their contexts how this word is used and what are the various nuances it conveys.

2. The Ambiguity of the Word "Believer" in John

In the Gospel of John, the identification of what it means to be a believer is not so clear, nor is it immediately obvious. While many are said to "believe" in Jesus, some of these "believers" come to oppose Jesus in very offensive and denunciatory language. This poses a challenge to the reader. What exactly constitutes a true believer in Jesus? By a "true" believer I mean one who has experienced the new birth (John 3:3, 5, 7), who has been born of God (1:13), has been drawn to Jesus by the Father (6:44), and has been given to Jesus by the Father (6:37). Conversely, a "supposed," "superficial," "apparent," or a "mere professing" believer I take to be a pseudo-believer. They may have an outward appearance of being a believer in Jesus, but their actions and works show otherwise; that there has been no real change or conversion, or in the words of the Pastoral Epistles, "having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim 3:5; KJV). To use a modern expression, John does not advocate an "easy believism," that believing is all that is necessary even if it is bereft of any substantial authentication. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1963, 47) spoke of "cheap grace" which was devoid of any true meaning and significance: "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance … grace without discipleship,

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[1] The following chart shows the number of times πιστεύω appears in the NT. John uses the verb πιστεύω far more frequently than any other NT writer. Chart and material provided by Rev. Felix Just, S.J., at https://catholic-resources.org/John/Themes-Believe.htm (used with permission).

Greek	English	Matt	Mark	Luke	John	Acts	Paul	Heb	Cath	1John	2and3 John	Rev	NT Total
πιστεύω	verb: to believe, trust; participle: believer	11	14	9	98	37	54	2	7	9	0	0	241
πίστις	noun: faith, trust	8	5	11	0	15	142	32	25	1	0	4	243
πιστός	adjective: faithful, trusting, pure	5	0	6	1	4	33	5	3	1	1	8	67

[2] In 1 John πιστεύω appears nine times.

[3] The word πίστις ("faith") appears in 1 John 5:4 and is a hapax legomenon in the Johannine literature.

grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate." Contextual indicators will be considered to distinguish mere professing believers from genuine believers. The implications of these indicators tend to present a dichotomy in various passages between those who are "in" and those who are "out" of the circle of those who are faithful Jesus.

The idea of believing can be very broad and can cover a wide range of semantic fields. Rudolf Bultmann (1955, 1–21) addressed this wide semantic range of belief or believing in a 1931 monograph entitled *Krisis des Glauben* ("Crisis in Belief"). Elsewhere, Bultmann (1955, 1) comments that "belief is connected with morality and religion and is always at the same time a human attitude, it is nevertheless differentiated from them by its being a particular belief in something standing over against mankind—a belief in the transcendent." This seems to be the trajectory that John moves in as belief is ultimately directed to the eternal transcendent Word made flesh. Bultmann (1955, 1) continues, "Belief is not religiosity … it sees the world and life in the light of a reality lying beyond them.… It sees them in the light of God." In the Fourth Gospel the parallelism between light and believing is one among many lines of thought that John utilizes (John 1:4, 9; 8:12).

3. The Birthright of True Believers

The second time the verb πιστεύω appears in the Gospel is in John 1:12, "But to all who did receive him [Jesus], who believed [πιστεύουσιν] in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."[4] The section of John 1:1–18 comprises the Prologue of the Gospel (Carson and Moo 2005, 225; Kruse 2004, 58–74). Some scholars have also suggested that it formed part of an early hymn (Costa 2021, 163–171; Brown 1997, 337; Carson and Moo 2005, 225). The appearance of πιστεύω in John 1:12 is significant. John indicates what believing in Jesus involves. Jesus came unto his own (the Jewish people), but he was not received (John 1:11). A contrast is presented in verse 12 with the use of the conjunction particle δέ (but). Those who did not receive Jesus are contrasted with those who did receive him. They are described as those who "believed in his name."

The phrase "believed in his name" appears to be a Johannine stylistic feature. It appears only in John 1:12 and John 2:23.[5] The concept of believing in his name, reflects the idea of "name" as representative of the person, character, reputation, and authority. The idea of "name" functions as a substitute for the person (Bruce 1983, 38; Carson 1991, 125).[6] The language of believing in his name (Jesus), does not appear to be used in Scripture of any mere creature, but appears in reference to God (Pss 9:10; 20:1,7; 33:21; Isa 50:10; Jer 7:14). In the Prologue Jesus is the eternal Word, truly God, who became incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:1–3, 10, 14). The deity of the Word is so central to John that Barrett (1978, 156) remarked, "if this be not true the book is blasphemous."

Those who receive Jesus, are those who believe in his name, and have "the right" to "become children of God." It is *to them* that Jesus gives the right to be children of God. John further expands on this notion by pointing out that those who have believed in Jesus's name are also "born of God." The theme of the new birth is introduced early in the Prologue (Carson 1991, 126). John 1:13 states these children of God are those, "who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."[7] This divine birth was not predicated on any human agency, nor brought about by any human will via sexual relations, but by the will of God himself. As Carson (1991, 126) correctly notes, the new birth is "nothing other than an act of God." In Bultmann's treatment of belief he comments that, "[m]an has no power over the temporal and the eternal. The power which controls them is God," and it is God "giving him [man] the right to believe in the God whom he would fain believe" (Bultmann 1955, 3, 12).

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[4] Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical quotations in English are taken from the English Standard Version (2001). The first time the word πιστεύω appears is in John 1:6 in reference to believing in Jesus through the witness of John the Baptizer.

[5] The phrase "believe in the name of his Son" and "believe in the name of the Son of God" also appears in 1 John 3:23 and 1 John 5:13 respectively.

[6] See Ps 20:1, 7. On the name of Jesus see Jas 2:7; 3 John 7.

The actions described in John 1:12–13, receiving Jesus, believing in his name, being given the right to become children of God, and being born of God, become foundational and definitive for what will follow in the gospel. The ones who have believed in the name of Jesus are born of God. In John this divine birth motif is described variously by synonymous terminology such as "born of God" (John 1:13), "born again" (3:3, 7),[8] "born of water and the Spirit" (3:5), and "born of the Spirit" (3:6, 8).[9] All these descriptors are linked to the verb πιστεύω. It is those who believe (πιστεύω) in the name of Jesus that are born of God and are made children of God.

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[7] There is an interesting variant in the Old Latin manuscripts which is also supported by a few Syriac manuscripts where the plural "who were born" is replaced by the singular "who was born" (qui natus est). Both Irenaeus and Tertullian bear witness to this variant reading. Tertullian accepted it as original and accused the Valentinian Gnostics of changing the singular relative pronoun "who" to the plural "who were" to undermine the virgin birth of Jesus. This variant seems to have been born out of the desire to have explicit Johannine testimony to the virgin birth of Jesus. The complete absence of this variant in the Greek manuscripts argues strongly for the spuriousness of this variant reading. (See Bruce 1983, 39; Barrett 1978, 164; Pryor 1985, 296–318; Brown 1973, 59).

[8] Or "born from above" as seen in NRSV, LEB, NAB, NET, YLT, and CEV. Outside of the Johannine corpus the new birth appears in 1 Pet 1:3 ("he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead") and 1 Pet 1:23 ("since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God").

[9] The new birth motif is also attested in 1 John with the phrase "born of God" (1 John 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18).

4. Believing Jesus and the Scripture

The disciples of Jesus are said to believe in Jesus because of what Jesus said (John 1:50) and by the signs that he had performed, such as his first sign of turning water into wine during the wedding at Cana (2:11). Another way πιστεύω is used in John is in relation to believing the Scripture(s). The disciples are also said to have believed the Scripture because of what Jesus said, especially after he was raised from the dead (2:22). To believe the Scripture is to believe Jesus. A marker of true believing involves following Jesus and believing his words and the Scripture(s) which point to him (5:39).

4.1. They believed in Jesus … but Jesus did not believe in them

In John 2:23–25 a scenario appears where people are said to believe (πιστεύω) in Jesus, but he does not entrust himself to them:

> Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

This passage appears to contain a measure of doubt on the part of Jesus towards the people. Many "believed in his name" because they saw the signs he was doing. Even though many are said to have believed in him in John 2:23, Jesus, nevertheless, did not entrust himself to them. There is a play on words in John 2:24 which is not apparent in English translations. While many are said to have επίστευσαν (believed) in his name, Jesus, on the other hand, οὐκ ἐπίστευεν (did not believe) himself to them. He did not believe or entrust himself to them. Godet (1881, 372) captures this sense when he notes that "[t]here is a sort of play upon words … *He did not believe*, did not trust Himself … He did not have *faith in their faith*."[10] They were "spurious converts" (Carson 1991, 184), who stopped only at the miraculous aspect, but did not, according to Brown (alluding to St Augustine's words), "perceive what was signified," namely Jesus himself (Brown 1997, 341). John adds that Jesus could discern between those who were genuine and false believers because "he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man" (John 2:25). The only one who truly knows what "was in man" and could read his mind and heart is God alone (1 Chr 28:9; Jer 17:10).[11] It appears that many believed in him, but only because "they saw the signs that he was doing." They believed because of external factors; what Jesus did. While they did believe in one sense, John intends the reader to see that such belief was not sufficient nor adequate in and of itself. The signs and works of Jesus are pointers, meant to point people to him (John 10:25, 37–38). The reader is left with an ambiguity here, that while the people believed in Jesus, he did not believe in them. The reader is challenged to read more deeply and probe the nuances of what it means to believe in Jesus. Belief should not merely be predicated on external factors but must involve a wholesome trust and acceptance of Jesus.

John opens a new section where Jesus further explains how true believers are to be distinguished from apparent believers. He addresses the subject of the new birth in John 3:3, 5–8, which recalls John 1:13 where true believers are said to be "born of God." Jesus further defines those who truly believe in him as those who will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). Those who believe will not be condemned, while those who do not believe are condemned already "because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (3:18). True believers have life now, they will not enter into judgment but pass from death to life (5:24), while those who disobey Jesus do not have life, but the wrath of God remains on them (3:36). Jesus is the Light to whom believers come and become "sons of the light" (12:36). Unbelievers hate and reject and prefer the darkness (3:19–21). John thus delineates here between those who are *in* from those who are *out*. Jesus becomes the dividing line for John.[12] As Bultmann (1955, 85) noted, "In Jesus Christ the destiny of every man is decided. He [Christ] is *the eschatological act of God*."

In the healing of the official's son in John 4:46–54, the official is said to have "believed the word that Jesus spoke to him" (v. 50), and as a result, he "believed, and all his household" (v. 53). In this same passage Jesus almost indignantly asks, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe" (John 4:48). It is interesting that while Jesus addressed the official in this passage, the second person aorist subjunctive ἴδητε (you may see) used here is in the plural. Bruce (1983, 118) has suggested that Jesus may have made this statement as a test of the official's faith, but most probably Carson (1991, 236) is correct when he notes that "Jesus's rebuke (v. 48) is in the plural, addressed to the people at large." Believing the word of Jesus is thus a descriptor, for John, of what it means to believe.

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[10] Italics in original.

[11] The theme of Jesus's divine knowledge is also seen at the end of the Gospel, "Lord, you know everything ["all things"; KJV, NKJV, NASB]" (John 21:17; cf. Rev 2:23). Among the seven things that rabbinic literature states are unknown to man except for the day of his death and the restoration of the messianic kingdom, is "what is within another" (Mekhilta Exod 15:32).

[12] The question Paul asks in 2 Cor 13:5–6 also involves a call to examine one's faith, whether it is genuine or not, "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? –unless indeed you fail to meet the test! I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test."

5. The Work and Will of God as Believing in Jesus

Another way in which πιστεύω is used by John is by associating it with the work and will of God. In the story of the feeding of the 5 000 and the Bread of Life discourse, the crowd asks Jesus what sign and work he could do, "that we may see and believe you?" (John 6:30). This recalls John 2:23 where people "believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing" and yet Jesus did not believe or entrust himself to them (2:24). In John 6 Jesus defines and delineates the parameters of what constitutes a true believer. The dependence of these supposed believers in John 6 on merely external signs (like those in Jerusalem), and material needs is heightened when Jesus tells them that they sought him because he met their physical needs with physical food (6:26). Jesus tells them to desire the bread of life that lasts forever that can be found only in him.

While the crowd is focused on material needs such a bread, Jesus points to the reality that eternal life consists of eating and drinking spiritual food which Jesus provides. Jesus defines this eating and drinking as respectively coming to him, and believing in him, "I am the bread of life; *whoever comes to me* shall not *hunger*, and *whoever believes in me* shall never *thirst*" (John 6:35; italics mine). Jesus informs the crowd that they are not, in fact, true believers, "But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe [οὐ πιστεύετε]" (6:36). Jesus can perceive the true condition of the hearts of the people (cf. 2:25). The perception of the crowd on the ability of Jesus to extraordinarily provide for physical and material needs aroused their messianic expectations to a fever pitch, as they wanted to make him king by force (6:15). The crowd pushed and came towards Jesus with a false belief and motive, and in response to their intentions, Jesus withdrew himself from them.

The association of the messianic identity of Jesus is tied to the signs that he performs, and it is on the signs themselves that people tend to be fixated (John 7:31; 10:25, 37–38). Even with the raising of Lazarus from the dead, *many* were said to believe in Jesus (11:45), but *some* went to report Jesus to the Pharisees (11:46). The text delineates those among "the many" who believed in Jesus, and "the some" from among "the many" who reported Jesus. The "latter it is implied," according to Bruce (1983, 249), "did so with no friendly intention (the more so as they are set in contrast with the many who believed)." The ironic relationship of believing in Jesus, and yet later wanting to take his life is a recurring ambiguity in John.

In addition to asking for a "sign" from Jesus, they ask what "work" he can perform for them. The people want to be able to do the "works [plural] of God" (John 6:28), or better still, "to do the works God requires" (NIV; cf. NET). The work of God, which is in the singular, in contrast to the people's description of "works," is defined as believing in Jesus: "This is the work [singular] of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent" (6:29; cf. 20:31). The NET reads, "This is the deed God requires—to believe in the one whom he sent." In this case work/deed equals believing. Doing the work of God is used as a descriptor of πιστεύω. Whoever believes in Jesus has eternal life (6:47). The singular work of God is not based on signs and wonders, or material sustenance, but to believe in Jesus first and foremost. Jesus expands on the theme of what constitutes a true believer by stating that it is the will of the Father that all who look on the Son and believe in him should have eternal life and be raised on the last day (6:40). Both the "work of God" and the "will of the Father" is that people look and believe in his Son and have eternal life. The will of God, like the work of God, is used synonymously with πιστεύω. This is in direct contrast to the demands of the crowds. Even though they saw Jesus, they "yet do not believe" (6:36).

6. The True Children of Abraham and God, and the Impostors: Those Who Hear and do not Hear

Another way πιστεύω is employed by John is in terms of those who are true children of Abraham, who hear the word of God. Conversely, those who are not true children of Abraham, are those who do not hear the word of God. Earlier in the gospel, the Samaritans are said to have believed in Jesus because of the testimony of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:39), and "many more believed because of his word" (4:41). The connection with John 2:22 about believing the word of Jesus as a marker of a true believer is seen here as well. An ironic twist emerges in John at this point. While many Samaritans come to believe in Jesus because of his word, Jesus is later accused of being a "Samaritan" by his fellow Jews (John 8:48). Jesus rejects their claim to being children of Abraham and God (John 8:39–42).[13] The implication of the words of Jesus, is that the *true* children and sons of Abraham, and the *true* children and sons of God would receive him as God's Son, and hear and believe his word. The marker of a true believer in Jesus is not only believing his word, but also having God's word abiding in them: "You do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent" (5:38). Here again πιστεύω is synonymously being used interchangeably with the idea of God's word abiding in the believer's heart and believing in Jesus. This dichotomy is also communicated by Jesus in John 8:47, "Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God." Indeed, those who hear the words of God are also those who are taught by God (6:45). Those who keep the word of Jesus will never see death (8:51). Thus, believing (πιστεύω) involves hearing the word of God so that πιστεύω is equal to hearing God's word.

There is a distinction between those who truly believe and those who are apparent believers. They are defined respectively as those who hear the words of God, and those who do not hear his words. Jesus addresses these words to an audience that gradually became hostile to him but earlier were described as the many who "believed in him" (John 8:30). Those who are of God and hear his word, are also his children (cf. 1:12–13) and are distinguished from those who do not hear his word and are children of the devil (8:37–46).[14]

Jesus addressed the "Jews who had believed him" (John 8:31). A sense of ambiguity is presented here with πιστεύω. These Jews who were said to believe in Jesus, then proceed to oppose him when he declares that if they knew the truth, the truth would set them free— they took this as an insult. The importance of truth is a central theme in John. Jesus claimed to be "the truth" and those who love truth hear the voice of Jesus (14:6; cf. 18:37).

Bruce (1983, 197), sensing this ambiguity, views these Jews who opposed Jesus as different from the ones who were said to believe in him and argues, "At some point early in the exchange the circle of his interlocutors widens; by the time verse 37 is reached it is *unbelieving Jews* who are addressed."[15] The text, however, does not make this supposed distinction clear at all. Jesus is speaking to the *same* people who were said to believe in him. Against Bruce's argument, Kruse (2004, 209, 211) rightly notes, "These people 'who put their faith in him' were not true believers, for straightaway they rejected what Jesus said.... It is surprising that Jesus accused 'believers' of being ready to kill him."[16] Morris (1995, 403–404) also recognizes the tension here, "This section of discourse is addressed to those who believe, and yet do not believe" and this passage has "troubled commentators through the centuries."

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[13] The hearers of Jesus took these questions of their paternal legitimacy to Abraham and God as aspersions on their identity. The nation of Israel was collectively God's son (Exod 4:22–23), and individually they were the sons of Yahweh (Deut 14:1). Yahweh was a father to Israel (Jer 31:9).

[14] This sharp dichotomy between the "children of God" and the "children of the devil" also appears in 1 John 3:10.

[15] Italics are mine.

Jesus says to these Jews who were said to believe in him, that they are seeking to kill him "because my word finds no place in you" (John 8:37; cf. v. 40). Jesus tells them they do not understand him because they cannot bear to hear his word (8:43). Having the word of Jesus in oneself is a description of πιστεύω, a marker of a true believer. Conversely, not having the word of Jesus in oneself implies one is not a genuine believer. Jesus then proceeds to denounce these supposed believers as children of the devil (8:44), who do not have God as their Father (8:42). Jesus's statement here, is "tantamount to a charge of spiritual illegitimacy" (Marsh 1968, 365). If they do not have God as their Father, then it would seem to follow they are not truly "born of God" (John 1:13), and hence are not children of God (1:12). They are not genuine believers, even though earlier they were said to have believed in Jesus.

While the same verb πιστεύω is used here of these supposed believers in Jesus, the context bears out very emphatically that while being superficial believers, they were not genuine or real believers in Jesus. They do not have his word in them, nor can they bear his word. Jesus then directly tells them, "you *do not believe* me" (John 8:45; italics mine). They "believed in him" (8:30), but, in fact, they did not truly believe.

7. Literary Indicators and Descriptors to Distinguish Insiders from Outsiders

True belief, in John's Gospel, involves not only having Jesus as the object of belief, but the Father as well. The Son works in harmony with the Father as he is equal with God (John 5:18–19). The Son does not work as a lone agent but works conjointly and in concert with the Father (10:29–30). All must honor the Son just as they honor the Father (5:23). One must also believe in the Father who sent Jesus (5:24). Belief in the Father and the Son is essential (14:1; 17:3).[17] Several literary indicators appear to distinguish the insiders from the outsiders. The divine acts of giving, drawing, and choosing true believers, are among the other semantic ranges of πιστεύω in John.

7.1. Believers are given by the Father to the Son

Among these literary indicators we find language about a group of people who are *given* by the Father to Jesus (John 6:39; 17:9, 11–12, 24).[18] Those who are given to Jesus by the Father are said to be kept safe by both Jesus and the Father (10:28–29). Jesus says concerning those who are given to him by the Father, whom he calls his sheep, “I give them eternal life, and they will never [οὐ μὴ] perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand” (10:28). Jesus himself is said to *give* “eternal life” to his sheep, a divine attribute which he shares with the Father (5:21). The use of the double negative particles οὐ μή (no/not) communicates the sense that those who are given to Christ will never perish. The verb πιστεύω in this case includes the ones given by the Father to Jesus.

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[16] Also see Carson (1991, 349) who is of the same opinion.

[17] See discussion in Costa (2013, 432–433, n. 127). The close association of the Father and the Son, and the necessity to believe in both to have eternal life is also emphasized in the Johannine epistles (1 John 1:3; 2:22–24; 4:14; 2 John 3, 9). Mere belief that there is only one God is not sufficient for one to have eternal life. James 2:19 states, "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!" While the demons believe that God is one, (cf. Deut 6:4), it does not follow that they are redeemed. The argument in James is that confession (faith) must be followed by action (works). Bultmann (1955, 12) comments that "belief in God simply cannot and must not arise as a general human attitude, but only as a response to God's Word and that is this one Word–found in the New Testament and based on the Christ-event–which is God's Word" (Italics in original).

[18] In John 17:20 Jesus prays for future believers who will believe in him through the preaching message of the apostles.

7.2 *Believers are drawn by the Father and the Son*

Those who are given to Jesus by the Father are also said to be *drawn* to Jesus by the Father. When Jesus addresses the crowd whom he miraculously fed, who were “seeking” him (John 6:24–26), he tells them, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws [ἑλκύσῃ] him. And I will raise him up on the last day” (6:44).

Jesus states that no one can come to him unless the Father draws them. As Carson (1991, 293) notes, “this ‘drawing’ is selective, or else the negative note in v. 44 is meaningless.” The verb ἕλκω (“draw”) means “to move an object from one area to another in a pulling motion, *draw*, with implication that the object being moved is incapable of propelling itself or in the case of [persons] is unwilling to do so voluntarily, in either case with implication of exertion on the part of the mover” (Bauer et al. 2000, s.v. ἕλκω; italics in original). Louw and Nida (1988, s.v. ἕλκω) similarly state that this verb means “to pull or drag, requiring force because of the inertia of the object being dragged … to drag or pull by physical force, often implying resistance.” Believers are drawn by the Father and given to the Son. These are the ones who received and believed Jesus and have been born of God (John 1:12–13). While the statements about the Father drawing people to Jesus according to Carson (1991, 293) has a “strong predestinarian strain” to them, John does emphasize the responsibility of people to come to Jesus. Jesus denounces the refusal of people to come to him in the strongest of terms, “yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life” (John 5:40), and “he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin” (19:11). There is a compatibilist view at play in John between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. While Jesus can say “whoever comes to me I will never cast out” (6:37b), the ones who come to him are at the same time given to Jesus and drawn by the Father (6:37a, 44). Here the verb πιστεύω is connected to those who are drawn by the Father, for they are the ones who truly believe in Jesus.

7.3 *True believers are chosen by the Father and the Son*

True believers are described as chosen by the Father but are also said to be chosen by Jesus (John 15:16; cf. 6:70; 12:32). Believers are chosen and known by Jesus. In John, Jesus not only knows those who are genuine believers, but also those who are superficial or supposed believers:

> “But there are some of you who do not believe [οὐ πιστεύουσιν].” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” (6:64–65; cf. 2:25)

Here the verb πιστεύω is connected to coming to Jesus and being drawn by the Father.

These who “do not believe” are referred to as “many of his disciples,” “[who] turned back and no longer walked with him” (John 6:66). These were disciples of Jesus, and yet, they were not true believers.[19] While Jesus chose the twelve apostles, he knew that one of them, Judas Iscariot, was not truly a believer (6:70–71), and not among those who were given to Jesus by the Father (17:12). While many supposed disciples of Jesus abandoned him, true disciples are described as those who recognize that Jesus alone has "the words of eternal life." John presents "a gradual recognition of who Jesus is" (Brown 1997, 338). They confess and know that he is "the Holy One of God" (John 6:68–69).[20] While it is the Father who draws true believers to Jesus, Jesus is also said to draw people to himself. In speaking of his coming death Jesus states, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw [ἑλκύσω] all people to myself" (John 12:32).[21] The Father and the Son are co-workers in the redemptive plan. The verb πιστεύω is intricately connected to those who are chosen by the Father.

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[19] A similar thought is found in Matt 7:21–23 when many on judgment day will affirm that they called Jesus "Lord" and claimed to have worked many wondrous signs in his name to which he will respond, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness" (7:23). Matthew connects this to the saying of Jesus that those who hear and obey him build their house on a rock, whereas those who hear and do not obey build their house on sand (Matt 7:24–27) and face utter ruin when a storm strikes.

[20] Some commentators have argued that this confession of Peter is the Johannine version of the Petrine confession in the Synoptics (Matt 16:16; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20). This is unnecessary. Could Peter not have made more than one confessional statement regarding Jesus? The two confessions were made in two different locations. In the Synoptics, Peter makes his confession in Caesarea Philippi (Matt 16:13; Mark 8:27), while in John the confession is made in Capernaum (John 6:59).

[21] The reference to Jesus drawing "all people" to himself does not contradict the selective drawing of the Father in John 6:44. Carson (1991, 293) makes the important observation that the "context shows rather clearly, however, that [John] 12:32 refers to 'all men without distinction' (i.e., not just Jews) rather than 'to all men without exception.'" See also Kruse (2004, 272–273) and Barrett (1978, 427). That the death of Jesus will draw "all men without distinction" is further supported by John 11:51–52; 12:20–22.

7.4 *True believers are fruit producers*

Another sign of a true believer is that they will bear fruit. Jesus compares himself to a vine and his followers to the branches. Jesus is "the true vine" (John 15:1), as opposed to the false vine, who will bear fruit. Israel as Yahweh's vine failed to produce fruit for God (see Barclay 1964, 200–202). Jesus as the *true* vine will do what Israel failed to do: bring fruit in abundance to God.[22] The branches that bear fruit become more productive, a description of true believers; branches that bear no fruit are taken away and thrown in the fire, which by contrast is a description of supposed believers (John 15:1–8). Jesus desires that his followers "bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples" (15:8). The disciples who are identified with the healthy branches are also called the "friends" of Jesus (15:14–15).[23] The proof that one is a true believer is that one does, in fact, "bear much fruit."[24] The action of bearing much fruit is connected to πιστεύω, for only true believers can bear such fruit.

7.5 *True believers as recipients of the Holy Spirit*

Those who are drawn and given by the Father to the Son are also said to be given and receive the Spirit (John 7:39). Jesus had spoken about the necessity of being "born of the Spirit" (3:5, 8). The Spirit is only to be given to those who are true believers in Jesus. Jesus spoke of living waters flowing out of the hearts of true believers: "he said [this] about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive" (7:38–39). Here, again, we see the close synonymous association of receiving the Spirit with πιστεύω. After the resurrection, the risen Jesus appeared and breathed on the disciples to receive the Holy Spirit (John 20:22). This imagery echoes Genesis 2:7 (cf. Ezek 37:9) where God created Adam from the dust of the ground and "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became *a living creature*" (italics mine). The risen Jesus creates a new humanity, composed of true believers through the Holy Spirit.[25] True believers are empowered, led, and taught by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will bear witness to Jesus, reminding his disciples of what Jesus said and taught (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13). The world of unbelievers on the other hand, cannot receive the Holy Spirit. The Spirit condemns the world/unbelievers (16:8), because they have not truly believed in Jesus (16:9).

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[22] The allusion to the vine recalls the theme of Israel as the vineyard of Yahweh (Isa 5:1–7). On the imagery of Israel as the vine of Yahweh see Ps 80:7–8, 14–17; Jer 2:21; Ezek 15:1–8; 19:10–14.

[23] In the OT, the only one who is called God's friend is Abraham (Isa 41:8). Jesus calls the disciples his friends because he tells them what the Father has revealed (John 15:15). God also reveals to his friend Abraham what he is going to do in bringing judgment upon Sodom (Gen 18:17–21).

[24] The sign of genuine faith is that it will produce good works. This theme is also addressed elsewhere in the NT (Gal 5:22–23; Eph 2:8–10; Phil 2:12–13; Titus 2:14; Jas 1:22; 2:14–26; 1 John 3:18).

7.6 True believers as sheep of the Good Shepherd

True believers are also marked out as Jesus's sheep. Jesus refers to himself as the "Good Shepherd" (John 10:11, 14) who lays down his life for his sheep. He knows his sheep personally, he calls them by name, and his sheep know him, and they follow him (John 10:3–4). The sheep recognize the voice of their Shepherd (10:27). This shepherd language is also used of Yahweh (Ps 23:1; Ezek 34:12; see discussion in Barclay 1964, 60–66). These words of Jesus cause dissension among his audience causing some to discredit him while others point to the signs Jesus had performed (John 10:20–21). Jesus then makes a poignant statement to those who disbelieve, "you do not believe because you are not among my sheep" (10:26). The sheep of Jesus believe in him. These sheep are the same as those who have been given to Jesus by the Father and drawn by the Father to Jesus. All these action words as we have seen are associated synonymously with πιστεύω.

Jesus speaks of other sheep that he has yet to bring in; they too will hear his voice and will come in (John 10:16). True believers in Jesus will be called from everywhere. His sheep will never be lost and will never perish (10:28–29). They are secure, as Carson (1991, 394) notes, "both the Father and the Son are engaged in the perfect preservation of Jesus's sheep." The voice of Jesus is what raises the spiritually dead to life (5:25). It is the drawing power of the Father (6:44), and the life-giving voice of Jesus, who is "the resurrection and the life" (11:25), which raises the spiritually dead. All these descriptions are all aligned with the meaning of πιστεύω.

7.7 True believers and the worship of Jesus

Another marker of a true believer is the worship of Jesus. The blind man healed by Jesus was asked if he believed in the Son of Man. He answered, "'Lord, I *believe*,' and he *worshiped* him" (John 9:35–38; italics mine). The close association of πιστεύω with the worship of Jesus cannot be missed here. There is a direct connection between believing and worshiping Jesus. The self-designation of Jesus here as the Son of Man is important in relation to the question of the worship of Jesus. This title appears to be a reference to the "one like a son of man" in Daniel 7:13–14. This figure is a divine, heavenly being who comes with "the clouds of heaven," a designation used for Yahweh in the OT (Deut 33:26; Pss 68:33; 104:3; Isa 19:1), and Canaanite deities like Baal (Costa 2021, 215–217; Marshall 1976, 63–82; Marshall 1992, 775–781). This figure receives universal worship from all the nations (Dan 7:14, 27), and is implicitly appointed judge over the nations (Dan 7:10, 22, 26). This is reflected in John 5:27, "And he [the Father] has given him [the Son] authority to execute judgment, *because he is the Son*

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[25] The act of Jesus breathing on his disciples and giving them the Holy Spirit reinforces his deity. The Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of God (Gen 1:2; Rom 8:9), but also the Spirit of Jesus/Christ (Acts 16:7; Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6; Phil 1:19). Jesus as the last Adam became "a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor 15:45; italics mine). Adam received life but Jesus gives life.

of Man" (italics mine). This heavenly Son of Man figure is pre-existent (1 En 37–71). Jesus refers to himself as the pre-existent Son of Man who "descended" or "came down" *from heaven* "where he was before" (John 3:13; 6:62).[26] The "Son of Man" designation in John should thus be understood as a reference to the deity of Jesus against the background of Daniel 7 and an important corollary to the worship of Jesus in the Christian community.[27]

True belief results in the worship of Jesus.[28] This is highlighted in what is believed to be the climax of John, the confession of Thomas, who said to the risen Jesus, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28; cf. Ps 35:23 where Yahweh is also called "Lord" and "God"). As Harris (1992, 110) notes, this confession is generally accepted by grammarians, lexicographers, and commentators as an address *to* the risen Jesus. Bultmann (1955, 276) comments that in John 20:28 Jesus is clearly "addressed as God." Thomas finally believes and recognizes Jesus as Lord and God, bringing the Gospel full circle back to the Prologue where the Word is called "God" (John 1:1c). Bultmann (1955, 11) captures this moment of believing when he notes that "For Christianity belief in God is not belief and trust in God as a general principle, but belief in a definite Word proclaimed to the believer. The event is *Jesus Christ*, in whom … God has spoken, and whom the [NT] itself calls 'the Word'" (italics in original).

Jesus makes belief in his divine identity a necessary requirement for eternal life. To deny the divine identity of Jesus is to die in one's sins. Jesus states, "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he [ἐγὼ εἰμί] you will die in your sins" (John 8:24).[29] In John 8:58 Jesus claims that before Abraham came into existence, "I am" (ἐγὼ εἰμί) which causes his hearers to pick up stones to kill him (8:59) for implicit blasphemy (Brown 1997, 347). The ἐγὼ εἰμί (I am) statements of Jesus in John 8:24, 28, and 58 are understood contextually to refer to the name whereby God revealed himself to Moses—a view that is held by most scholars (Exod 3:14; Morris 1995, 419–420). The same phrase ἐγὼ εἰμί is used in the LXX by Yahweh as a self-designation (Deut 32:39; Isa 41:4, 10, 14; 43:1–3, 10, 13). Jesus uses the same self-designation of himself in John 13:19; 18:5–6, 8 (see discussion in Moloney 1998, 270–271).

Another possible place where Jesus uses the ἐγὼ εἰμί designation of himself is in John 4:26 where, in response to the Samaritan woman's claim that she believes the Messiah will come, Jesus says: ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ λαλῶν σοι ("I am *He*, the One speaking to you"; NASB). This bears a striking resemblance to Isaiah 52:6b$_{\text{LXX}}$, where the Lord says, ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι αὐτὸς ὁ λαλῶν ("for I am he the one speaking"; author's translation). Contextually, Isaiah 52:6a speaks of God's people *knowing his name*, thus connecting ἐγὼ εἰμί with the name of God.[30] It is also within the context of the Samaritan woman pericope that Jesus first speaks of the worship of God. God can only be worshipped in "spirit and truth" (John 4:24), and "the Father is seeking such people to worship him" (4:23). The implication here is that only true believers in Jesus can render such "spirit and truth" worship. The reaction of the crowds in John 8:59 that Jesus had committed blasphemy reinforces the understanding that Jesus was making a claim to deity (10:30–33; cf. Lev

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[26] On the pre-existence of Jesus, see McCready (2005). On the pre-existence of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, see Gathercole (2006).

[27] When Jesus admitted being the Son of Man as well as the Son of God before the Sanhedrin, he was charged with blasphemy (Mark 14:61–64).

[28] On the worship of Jesus and early high Christology see Hurtado (2000; 2001); Bauckham (1998); Costa (2013; 2021).

[29] English translations render John 8:24 as "I am he" (ESV, HCSB, NET, NIV, RSV, NRSV), even though the third person singular pronoun "he" is absent in the Greek text. Other translations will render this text explicitly as "I am" (NASB, Wycliffe) or "I AM" (NABRE), "I AM who I claim to be" (NLT).

[30] See also the theophanic theme in Mark 6:50 where Jesus refers to himself as εγώ ειμι.

24:16). When this same phrase, ἐγὼ εἰμί (I am), is employed by humans as a self-designation, they are denounced in a context of blasphemy as objects of God's wrath (Isa 47:8LXX; Zeph 2:15LXX).[31]

It is interesting that Jesus made these self-claims to deity during the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem (John 7:2, 37). In the Prologue (1:14), the Word is said to have become flesh and to have "tabernacled" or "pitched his tent" among us (Barrett 1978, 143; Bruce 1983, 39; Carson 1991, 127). The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated Yahweh's presence with the Israelites during the wilderness wanderings (Lev 23:33–36, 39–44). This feast was also known as the Feast of Ingathering (Exod 23:16; 34:22). It came to carry eschatological connotations of the nations coming to the knowledge and worship of the God of Israel (Zech 14:16–17) and the affirmation of Yahweh's universal rule (Moloney 1998, 233). This realization seems to be implied in the desire of some Greeks who wish to know Jesus during the Feast of Tabernacles (John 12:20–21). Those who worship Jesus are defined as true believers. With the entry of the Gentiles (10:16) into the sheepfold of Jesus, the realization of Yahweh's universal worship is fulfilled.

8. Unbelief and Divine Blinding and Hardening

While there are many places in John where it is difficult to immediately recognize and distinguish between true and false believers, there are other places in John where he is quite emphatic in identifying those who did not believe. Jesus's brothers did not believe in him (John 7:5).[32] The same sentiment is found in the Synoptics (Mark 3:20–21, 31–35). The unbelief of the brothers of Jesus would also possibly explain why Jesus, near his death, committed his mother to the care of a believer in the beloved disciple (John 19:26–27).[33] The Pharisees also did not believe in him (12:37).

A passage where John sharply contrasts those who believed in Jesus with those who did not is the following,

> When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe [οὐκ ἐπίστευον] in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:
>
> "Lord, who has believed [ἐπίστευσεν] what he heard from us,
> and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"
>
> Therefore, they could not believe [οὐκ ἠδύναντο πιστεύειν]. For again Isaiah said,
>
> "He has blinded their eyes
> and hardened their heart,
> lest they see with their eyes,
> and understand with their heart, and turn,
> and I would heal them."
>
> Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed [ἐπίστευσαν] in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that

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[31] MT also reads אֲנִי ("I am").

[32] John never identifies the mother and brothers of Jesus by name. G. Thiessen referred to this as "protective anonymity" (cf. Bauckham 2006, 184–201).

[33] I take the beloved disciple to be John, the author of the Gospel. On the question of authorship see Guthrie (1970, 241–271); Brown (1997, 368–371); Bauckham (2006, 358–383); Carson and Moo (2005, 239–254); McGrew (2021, 421–478).

> they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. (John 12:37b–43)

Barclay (1964, 152) admits this is a troubling passage. This is the second time that Jesus is said to depart and hide himself from his opponents who first were said to believe in him (cf. John 8:31, 59). The theme of God departing (Gen 18:26; 1 Sam 4:21–22; 16:14; 18:12; Ezek 11:23) and hiding himself from his people (Pss 10:1; 55:1; 89:46), is thematically indicative of divine judgment in the OT. After this section, Jesus ends his ministry to his own people (Marsh 1968, 469). John then directs the reader into the passion narrative beginning with John 13. Jesus, from this point forward, will focus on his forthcoming glorification which will consist of his death and resurrection. Despite all the signs that Jesus performed, many still did not believe in him.

John sees this unbelief as a fulfillment of Scripture and cites two passages from Isaiah. The citation of Isaiah 53:1LXX addresses the unbelief of the people. The second citation from Isaiah 6:10 functions as a purpose clause to explain the reason for the unbelief of the people. The reason for the unbelief of the people seems to be attributed to a divine purpose in the context of judgment. The eyes of the people are blinded, and their heart are hardened, so that they *do not* see or understand and repent which would bring God's healing and forgiveness. A major undercurrent in John is a strong emphasis on divine sovereignty. Marsh (1968, 473) correctly notes that, "John is certainly wanting to indicate that unbelief is within divine providence … God has himself hardened hearts and blinded eyes."[34] Moloney (1998, 364) also argues that "God was responsible for their blindness and hardness of heart, lest they should turn to Jesus for healing." Barclay (1964, 154) concurs that, "Even unbelief somehow fell within God's control and within God's purpose." While many were blinded and hardened, many were not, but came to believe in Jesus. John agrees with the Synoptics (particularly Q) at this point, where Jesus thanks the Father that he has "hidden" things from the wise, but "revealed" them to others (Matt 11:25; Luke 10:21; cf. Mark 4:10–12).[35] Here we see the distinction between those who are *in*—they receive God's revelation—and those who are *out*—those from whom God hides his revelations.

The presentation of Jesus as incarnate deity is heighted in the divine departure and hiding theme. This is further magnified in the fact that the one that Isaiah is said to have seen in his vision (Isa 6:1–8), was the pre-incarnate Jesus (John 12:41). If this is the case, then as Carson (1991, 450) argues it was Jesus himself "who has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts."[36] Notwithstanding the many who did not believe, there were many among the authorities who did believe in Jesus. The ministry of Jesus, like that of Isaiah, was one where he was sent to a rebellious people who would remain obstinate and unrepentant.

9. The Johannine Bookends

The last time the word "believe" appears in the Fourth Gospel is in John 20:31, "but these are written so that you may believe [πιστεύσητε] that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John uses the verb πιστεύω twice here. John reveals the reason why he wrote his gospel: that the reader(s) may believe. The content

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34 See also Carson (1991, 448); Kruse (2005, 275).

35 Isa 6:10 is also quoted in Mark 4:12.

36 See also Bruce (1983, 272).

of this belief is that Jesus is the Messiah—the Son of God. To believe this about Jesus is the equivalent of believing in his name, with the result that they may have eternal life. The gospel most likely ended with John 20:31. John 21 forms part of an epilogue appended later (Marsh 1968, 653–660; Barclay 1964, 324; Brown 1997, 360–361). John 20:31 appears to serve as a bookend with John 1:12, where those who received Jesus are those who are made the children of God and are described as those who "believed in his name." The language of John 20:31 also appears to be creedal and confessional (Costa 2021, 66–69, 81). Those who have life are those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, and the Son of God.[37] John himself asserts that he believed (John 20:8), and that he is telling the truth (19:35). His immediate readership audience knows his testimony is true, and some of John's own disciples or community also added their approval "and *we* know that his testimony is true" (21:24; italics mine). As Messiah, Jesus is also accepted and acknowledged as king by true believers (Costa 2021, 63–69). Conversely, unbelievers reject the kingship of Jesus in their affirmation, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15).[38]

When Martha was asked if she believed the claim of Jesus to be the resurrection and the life (John 11:25–26), she made the same confession, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world" (11:27; cf. Matt 16:16). True πιστεύω involves accepting Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. While others demand that Jesus tell them plainly that he is the Christ (John 10:24), those who truly believe in Jesus acknowledge him as Christ and Son of God.

10. Conclusion

Throughout John many are said to truly believe, and some do not truly believe. John does not always disambiguate between true and false believers as he uses the same word πιστεύω to describe both groups. Several criteria are used throughout the gospel to indicate what constitutes a true believer in Jesus. Among these criteria are the various synonyms John employs to further expand the range of πιστεύω which would include the actions of receiving, believing in Jesus, God, and the Scripture(s), and doing the work and will of God.

True believers have become children of God, birthed by God's sovereign will, born again. They have the right to be called children of God. They hear God's words, and they believe what the Scripture says about Jesus. True believers do the will and work God requires, which is to believe in his Son and have eternal life. They are chosen and given by the Father to the Son. The Father enables and draws them to Jesus. True believers in Jesus are as branches to a vine, they will produce fruit, and show their faith by their actions.

They also receive the Holy Spirit, who guides, teaches, and reminds them of what Jesus said and taught. They are his sheep. They hear the voice of the Shepherd and follow him. He gives them eternal life and they shall never perish. As opposed to superficial believers, true believers will worship Jesus (John 20:28; cf. 9:35–38). In John, true believers are marked out with several qualifying traits that set them apart from counterfeit believers. All these actions and descriptors John subsumes under the word πιστεύω. The implications of John's view of πιστεύω are a challenge to all who claim to believe in Jesus. While the relationship between belief and practice is more pronounced in the Johannine Epistles, the Gospel of John presents a tapestry of various actions that are determinative of what it means to believe. The verb πιστεύω is not a reductionist or univocal word or idea in the Fourth Gospel. It is rather, a rich and multifaceted term which functions synonymously for other actions that describe a real, genuine, and vibrant relationship with Jesus.

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[37] The creedal/confessional language of John 20:31 reflects the Petrine confession in Matt 16:16, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

[38] There is a parallel in the rejection of Jesus as King with Israel's rejection of Yahweh as King. In Israel's desire for a human king Yahweh said, "they have rejected me from being king over them" (1 Sam 8:7).

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Conspectus

The Purpose of σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα in the Gospel of John: A Socio-Rhetorical Reading of John 4:46–54

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Abstract

This article contributes to the critical issue of “signs” in the Gospel of John. It discusses the purpose of the synonym σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα in John 4:46–54 as a factor for soliciting faith from the audience and recipients of the gospel, and presents Jesus being above miracle-workers of his day. Although some scholars have discussed σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα in John 4:46–54, the works were mainly focused on intertextual analysis in the Pentateuch, the prophets, and parallels in Hellenistic religions of the ancient Mediterranean world. This study adapts the inner texture of the socio-rhetorical reading propounded by Vernon K. Robbins to re-interpret John 4:46–54. The narrator engaged σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα to stimulate faith from the audience and recipients of the Gospel of John, and to present Jesus to be above emperor miracle-workers. In this way, the gospel employs deliberative rhetoric to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus in the miracle enterprise.

1. Introduction: σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα

The phrase σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα is typically used in reference to the acts of God through Moses that led to the exit of biblical Israelites from Egypt. Rengstorf stated that,

> [W]hen the OT speaks of God’s signs and wonders its style takes on what is almost a hymnal character. This is connected with the fact that when the phrase is used the reference is almost always to the leading of the people out of Egypt by Moses and to the special circumstances under which the people stood

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> up to the passage of the Red Sea and in all of which God proved Himself to be the Almighty and showed Israel to be His chosen people. (Rengstorf 1982, 253)

The phrase *σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα* (LXX) encompasses the decision and acts of Adonai to send Moses back to Egypt, the acts of Adonai in Egypt, and the eventual departure of ancient biblical Israelites to the "Promised Land" as captured mainly in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. This is a primary use of the phrase. It was later used in the prophets to demonstrate the supremacy of God over other gods, and subsequently to connote the might of God based on the faith of Daniel and his colleagues during the exile (Mundle 1976). The context in which *σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα* was used suggests that it is exclusive to miracles on nature because many of the miracles performed by Moses, Elijah, and Elisha were on nature. Later in the Apocryphal writings, the phrase was used to denote the remembrance of the mighty acts of God for the emancipation of Israel from Egypt (Rengstorf 1982). This usage attempted to limit the miraculous acts of God to ancient biblical Israelites during the time of Moses. The concept was present among some first-century biblical Jews. Mundle (1976) explains the relationship between *σημεῖα* and *τέρατα* to mean that *τέρας* is the miracle/terror/wonder component of *σημεῖα*.

2. Some Interpretations of John 4:46–54

Scholars of John's Gospel have variedly interpreted John 4:46–54. According to F. F. Bruce (2002, 116–120), the miracle of converting water into wine serves as the foundation for the miracle of healing the royal official's servant. The first miracle was to respond to a critical need while the second miracle is to deliver from death to life, in order to continuously manifest the glory of Jesus. He explains that the royal official might be attached to Herold Antipas; consequently, he could be referred to as a "noble person" or a "petty king." Bruce is of the opinion that the healing of the centurion's servant (Matt 8:5–13; Luke 7:2–10) is similar due to the miracle being effected at a distance, but John did not indicate whether the royal official was a Gentile or not. Bruce notes that the author of the gospel uses "signs" independently but in John 4:46–54, "signs and wonders" is jointly used, which demands critical study. He concludes that the royal official was not interested in only the "signs and wonders" of Jesus but whatever would motivate Jesus to heal his child. The royal official expressed faith in Jesus, and the child was healed from a distance.

Craig S. Keener (2010, 630–633) identifies parallel events of miracles performed at a distance in the synoptic tradition, biblical Jewish, and Hellenistic religions. He explains that miracles performed at a distance are a result of an answer to prayer, so glory is given to God; but in the event of the healing of the royal official's servant, glory was given to Jesus. He adds that central to the narrative of the healing of the royal official's son is faith, which he calls "signs faith." It is the faith required to receive a miracle. Keener identifies three kinds of faiths expressed in the narrative: (i) the initial faith that propelled the royal official to invite Jesus; (ii) the faith to believe Jesus's command to go; and (iii) the faith of the household that expresses belief in Jesus as the Messiah.

Ismo Dunderberg (2014, 279–300) traces parallels of healing at a distance in the Synoptic Gospels and Hellenistic contexts. The royal official expressed miraculous faith leading to the healing of the child. The portrayal of Jesus as a miracle-worker is anti-imperial agenda because emperors were depicted as miracle-workers to demonstrate their affiliation to a deity or divine being. This is not to discredit the miracles of Jesus but to demonstrate the propagandist agenda in imperial cults.

Similar to Bruce, Udo Schnelle (2016, 231–244) argues that, although there is no literary relationship between John 4:46–54 and Matthew 8:5–13/Luke 7:2–10, no doubt the narratives portray the idea of healing from a distance. However, he adds that John 4:46–54 is closely parallel to *Berakhot* 34b where Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa was reported to have healed the servant of Gamaliel II from a distance through prayer. The idea is also present in the works of Apollonius of Tyana as captured by Philostratus. In a nutshell, Schnelle argues that there are parallels of healing at a distance in the socio-religious context of the ancient Mediterranean society.

Christopher Seglenieks (2019, 23–40) asserts that the rebuke of Jesus, Ἐὰν μὴ σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα ἴδητε, οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε', to the royal official seems to be out of place because he believed that Jesus could heal the child; that is why he came to invite him. Hence, it should be understood as the demand for genuine faith, not faith to receive miracles. Seglenieks argues in intertextual parlance that the use of σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα is unique to John 4:46–54 and reflects miracles in the Old Testament.

Bruce, Keener, and Seglenieks identifies the uniqueness of σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα in John 4:46–54. However, the synonym σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα was not critically considered in the interpretive framework of John 4:46–54. It was mainly considered in an intertextual relationship with the acts of God through Moses in Exodus and Deuteronomy. Keener, Dunderberg, and Schnelle discusses the parallels of healing at a distance in Greco-Roman and Hellenistic religions that reflect John 4:46–54 with some variations in literary context. The competitive issue of presenting a religious leader as having had the power to perform miracles has been noted, including the faith to receive miracles. However, the discussion of σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα, πιστεύω, and Jesus as a miracle-worker above his peers in the context of John 4:46–54 requires analysis.

There are cases where the author of the gospel condemned the request for a "sign" (6:30; 19:35); and some had seen "signs," but they did not believe (12:37). The narrative under interpretation belongs to "signs" that lead to faith. It is a narrative that supposedly can also be found in "Q" where Matthew and Luke have their variants (Matt 8:5–13; Luke 7:110). The uniqueness of John's version is that it combines σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα as a factor to motivate faith and project the miracle power of Jesus. A peculiar Johannine synonym dualism, which is not in opposition such as "light and darkness," "heaven and earth," and so on, but is a complementary synonym to "signs." These, in addition to the mode of healing by Jesus, are often left out by many interpreters of the narrative. The over-emphasis on the theological use of "signs" by the author to draw faith has over-shadowed the medium Jesus used—healing from a distance, and the synonym of "signs and wonders" to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus above other miracle-workers. Fortna (1970, 151–166) was very scanty on the narrative when he said that "signs and wonders" was to indicate "signs" that are wonders or miracles. He did not see it in the context of John's synonym and the efficacy of the power of Jesus to heal the sick from a distance (without geographical limitation), but in the context that some of the signs might not necessarily be miracles. This has limited the use of "signs" in John to redactional studies and its effect on the audiences/recipients (Labahn 1999; Koester 1989; John and Miller 1994; Robinson 1971). The desire to closely associate "signs" to redactional discussions in the entire Gospel of John in lieu of exegetical studies of a narrative that uses "signs" before linking it to the overall objective of "signs" in the Gospel of John is still being perpetuated.

This article engages the inner texture of socio-rhetorical reading to re-interpret John 4:46–54 considering σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα and the mode of the healing of the child as critical factors for understanding the narrative and how it induces faith and promotes Jesus above others. The study uses "signs" as miraculous acts by Jesus. My procedure is to discuss socio-rhetorical criticism and its appropriateness for the study, undertake inner texture analysis of John 4:46–54, synthesize the findings, and draw a conclusion.

3. Socio-Rhetorical Criticism/Interpretation

Socio-rhetorical interpretation has since the early 1970s begun to receive critical attention in biblical interpretation. The methodology is characteristically adaptable and multi-disciplinary. Multiple methods are brought together to interpret a text in its socio-linguistic background to deduce its existential meaning (Aryeh 2020). Vernon K. Robbins (1996a, 2–4; 1996b, 24; see also van Eck 2001, 593–611; Gowler 2010, 191–206) posits that socio-rhetorical interpretation is composed of five textures: (i) inner texture, (ii) intertexture, (iii) social and cultural texture, (iv) ideological texture, and (v) sacred texture. This study employs inner texture, which consists of (i) repetition, (ii) progression, (iii) narrational, (iv) open-middle-ending (plot), (v) argumentation, and (vi) sensory-aesthetic sub-textures. The rationale for choosing inner texture is that Robbins has cogently argued that it is not feasible for all the textures to be used to explore a narrative in a single study (Robbins 2004, 2). That notwithstanding, the sensory-aesthetic element of the inner texture will not be discussed in this study because the miracle narrative of John 4:46–54 was performed at a distance. Hence, the use of hands to touch the sick child and other sensory-aesthetic elements were not present. This will not mar the re-interpretation of the narrative but give a distinct feature that previous interpreters have not observed. Since socio-rhetorical interpretation is adaptive, in the narrational texture I engage the approach of N. Clayton Croy (2011, 62). This approach is preferred for its detail and procedural nature. Croy's (2011) proposition of narrative emphasizes the urgency and narrative *point of view*, which allows readers to have ideas concerning the predispositions of the author of the narrative.

The justification for the rhetorical interpretation of John 4:46–54 is due to the purpose of rhetoric to persuade the audience and the theological adaptations by the author of the Gospel of John from the SG in order to deduce faith from the readers of the gospel. In other words, religion and rhetoric seem to have a similar purpose: to influence their readers/audiences to accept their proposition (Henderson 1989, 20–39). In classical Greek thought, the term πειθω (persuade) is regarded as a goddess in charge of persuasion, and persons who were considered to do well in persuading others were regarded as having magical powers (Pernot 2006, 235–254). Lucian's and Polemo's audience were usually glued to their speeches and could not leave until they were persuaded by the speakers (Pernot 2006). Stamps (2000, 953–959) clearly observes that the form of Christian rhetoric is based on the authority of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

4. Inner Texture Analysis of John 4:46–54

4.1 Repetition texture

Before embarking on the analysis of repetitive texture of John 4:46–54, it is imperative to make some comments regarding similar narratives in the other canonical gospels that may sound repetitive. A similar narrative concerning Jesus's distance healing of a slave/servant of a Centurion who was at the point of death can be found in Matthew 8:5–13 and Luke 7:1–10. The main points of convergence between John's version of the narrative and that of Matthew's and Luke's is the healing from a distance; the beneficiary was a slave/servant; and the issue of faith as the precursor of the healing event. The main points of divergence include that John describes the man as a royal official while Matthew and Luke call him a Centurion. John did not indicate the analogy of the authority of the royal official to command slave/servants. Matthew and Luke did not include the response of the household of the royal official concerning their faith in Jesus after the healing event. Historically, John reported that the event took place at Cana while Matthew and Luke reported that Capernaum was the venue for the event. Milne (1993, 90–91) observes that, although there is some degree of similarities between John 4:46–54 and Matthew 8:5–13 and Luke 7:1–10, it is superficial and that “the differences are marked and clearly relate to a different occasion and miracle.” Marshall (1978, 277) explains that the parallel version of the narrative in Matthew and Luke is a mixture of differences and similarities difficult to fathom. Subsequently, in the context of synoptic argumentations it can be posited that the narrative is a *Quelle* (Q) material that was adapted by Matthew and Luke for theological emphasis. Although there may be some similarities in words, concepts, and phrases, the differences cannot be ignored. John 4:46–54 is a unique narrative that also emphasizes the concept of σημεῖα that runs through the gospel.

Repetition of key terms, concepts, and phrases seeks to indicate the main emphasis or building blocks of the narrative. Repetition texture exists in John 4:46–54, which may be regarded as an affirmation of a particular idea and concept in the context of the SG and that of John. The noun Γαλιλαία (Galilee) occurred three times in verses 46, 47, and 54 of the narrative. The opening phrase in verse 46 suggests that it is the second occasion that Jesus visited Cana in Galilee. The first occasion was at the wedding when Jesus converted water into wine (John 2:1). Cana in Galilee is the setting that facilitated the encounter between Jesus and the royal official. Rhetorically, the repetition of Cana in Galilee in the narrative reaffirms the fact that it is the venue that hosted the event (Goodwin 1992). However, all the references to Cana in Galilee in the narrative might have been interpolations by the narrator of the Gospel of John. It is not likely to be part of the SG source. Nonetheless, that does not mean that the incident did not take place at Cana in Galilee.

The question whether the encounter took place on the second visit of Jesus to Cana in Galilee has been keenly disputed by some scholars arguing that the event might have taken place during the first visit when Jesus converted water into wine at the wedding ceremony (John 2:1–11). According to James M. Robinson (1971, 341),

> In the text as it now stands in Chap. 4 the trip to Galilee is a repetition of an earlier movement (cf. 4:3: ‘again into Galilee’). Yet one can sense that this repetition is motivated in part by the Evangelist’s desire to return to an interrupted narration and is not unambiguously thought of as a distinct second trip.

Robinson (1971) believes that the miracle of converting water into wine at the wedding (John 2:1–11) and the miracle of the healing of the official’s child took place on one visit of Jesus to Cana in Galilee because of the author’s claim that the healing of the official’s child is the second sign. He added that it could not be the second miracle at the second visit to Cana in Galilee, but the second miracle at the first visit or the first miracle at the second visit is a better rendition. He further argues that the removal of John 2:13–4:46 offers a smooth connection between John 2:12 and John 4:47. However, Robinson explains that the redactional policy of the narrator made him to interpolate John 2:13–4:46 from another source to separate the two miracle events. And when the narrator returned to the initial event, then emerged the need to engage in repetition. In other words, Robinson’s explanation for the repetition is not to affirm that Jesus visited Cana in Galilee a second time but a redactional policy that allows the narrator to interpolate and resume the initial source by repetition. Robinson's assertion supports the view of Fuller (1963, 88–92) that the materials between the first miracle and the second miracle were interpolated by the narrator and that both miracles were most likely to have occurred in succession during the first visit to Cana by Jesus. Clearly, Robinson engages the literary tool of interpolation and chronology of miracles in John to make his argument. This is to build a cogent argument for the SG containing only the miracles of Jesus. This was emphasized by Fuller that the "Book of Signs," as he calls it, contained only selected miracles of Jesus (Fuller 1963, 88).

In determining the narrative cohesiveness, Joost Smit Sibinga (2003, 224–225) argues that John 4:43–45 should be considered as an introduction to the healing of the royal official's servant (John 4:46–54) because it describes the second coming of Jesus to Cana of Galilee. By this assertion, Sibinga argues that the miracle of the healing of the official's son took place when Jesus entered Cana in Galilee the second time.

Arguing from a rhetorical point of occurrence of words as a determinant of the emphasis of the narrator, I argue that the repetition of Cana in Galilee indicates that the event took place in that setting. However, considering the argument by Sibinga that John 4:43–45 better serves as *an exordium* to the narrative of the healing of the royal official's servant, it is most likely that the event took place when Jesus entered Cana in Galilee the second time when his family was not present with him as was the case in the miracle of converting water into wine (John 2:1–12). The narratives between John 2:13 and 4:45 can hardly be considered as a direct interpolation by the narrator of John. There is a rhetorical concept of "signs" and "belief" that link them. For example, in the narrative of the cleansing of the temple (John 2:13–25), the narrator commented that the Jews believed in him because of the "signs" they saw (2:23). In the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus (John 3:1–21), Nicodemus was said to have confirmed the "signs" that Jesus performed as being evidence that he hails from God (3:2); hence, Jesus must be believed/accepted (3:22–36). The narrative of the Samaritan woman and Jesus indicates that the Samaritans believed in Jesus due to the miraculous revelation to the woman by Jesus of her past life history (4:39–42). Although the events between the miracle of converting water into wine and the encounter between Jesus and the royal official are not miracle narratives in their strictest character, I argue that there is a rhetorical flow through the repetition of key terms, concepts, and ideas from the first miracle of changing water into wine and the second miracle of the healing of the royal official's servant. Hence, the latter occurred when Jesus visited Cana in Galilee the second time. The theme of "signs" that should lead to "faith," which is a critical issue in the first part of the gospel to which John 4:46–54 belongs, can be smoothly deduced from John 2–4:43–54 (Dunderberg 2014).

The servant of the royal official who directly benefited from the miracle of Jesus was referred to as υἱός (son) by the narrator. The appellation occurs five times in the narrative, indicating a non-biological relationship (Verbrusse 2000) between the royal official and the victim of the sickness (fever), who is a male. The narrator later uses παῖς (children) twice in place of υἱός to indicate the widening of the blessing of healing not limited to males or persons related to high officials. The redactional and theological intent of the author was likely at play when he replaced υἱός with παῖς, which may imply that they are addressing the audiences/readers of the gospel through deductive argumentation. If the royal official's servant benefited from the miracle power of Jesus, then the Galileans could also do the same (Fortna 1970). It is a polyptoton repetition intended to secure the attention of the audiences/readers on the initial term/concept and its privileges.

The term πιστεύω (believe) occurs in two sentences in the narrative. In the first instance, it is used by Jesus to the royal official: "you will never believe" (John 4:48b) if you do not see signs and wonders. The second occurrence is the comment by the narrator that the royal official believed together with his household after they witnessed the recovery of the sick servant (John 4:53c). It is significant to mention that some audiences demanded signs, but they were not given or condemned (John 6:30; 19:35), while others saw signs but did not believe (John 12:37). In the case of the healing of the royal official's servant, the author claims that Jesus diagnosed the condition of the man to show that without "signs and wonders" he would not believe. However, the royal official's acceptance of the instruction of Jesus to depart is an act of faith/belief (John 4:50b). Although the term πιστεύω was not specifically mentioned, the concept of πιστεύω underpins the action of the royal official in departing without hearing of the healing of the servant but with the anticipation that the servant would be healed. It agrees with the condemnation of the demand for a sign before belief (John 6:30). "…not seeing and yet believing, by far the most important for John…, belief on the basis of concrete evidence is satisfactory, but belief without seeing is commendable" (Fortna 1970, 162). Hence, in the use of πιστεύω, explicitly and implicitly, the concepts of *not seeing and yet believing* and seeing and believing were engaged. There is no direct condemnation for either "not seeing and yet believing" and "seeing and believing."

The term σημεῖα (signs) occurs twice in the narrative—once in the plural and once in the singular. In the first instance, σημεῖα is accompanied by τέρατα (wonders). It is an unprovoked opening statement of Jesus to the royal official. Since no incident necessitated it, Fortna (1970) argued that it was directed to the church (audiences/recipients) rather than the royal official. This is the only miracle narrative in John where σημεῖα was accompanied by τέρατα. The phrase σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα (signs and wonders) implies that there could be signs that are not necessarily miraculous but an indication to identify a person or thing (Aryeh 2020). The occurrence of σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα implies "signs" that are miraculous. Hence, there is no primary distinctive mark between the terms σημεῖα and τέρατα in the context of John 4:46–54 (Verbrusse 2000).

The occurrence of σημεῖα and τέρατα can be considered as dualism that is not opposite but affirmative. The Gospel of John "contains strong contrasts between light and darkness, heaven and earth, the Father and the world, as well as bold propositions about insiders and outsiders, truth and falsehood, life and death" (Estes 2020, 1–29). That notwithstanding, the topics or key terms and concepts that underpin the interpretation of John 4:46–54 are the setting, the beneficiary of the miracles, belief/faith, and signs and wonders.

According to Gail R. O'Day (2012, 175–188), σημεῖα and ἔργα works are key miracle terms in the Gospel of John. This is obvious in many miracle narratives in the gospel. However, the miracle narrative of John 4:46–54 is unique in combining a popular miracle term, σημεῖα, with an unpopular miracle term, τέρατα, in a complementary dualism. It indicates that in John's dualism concerning miracles, terms and concepts used are not opposite in general dualistic phenomenon; τέρατα seeks to emphasize and consolidate σημεῖα in the context of John 4:46–54. It alludes to not limiting cross-referencing and self-referentiality of miracle terms in the Gospel of John to σημεῖα and ἔργα (2012) but also to σημεῖα and τέρατα. σημεῖα and τέρατα serve a one-way positive role in John 4:46–54 (John and Miller 1994).

4.2 Progression texture

The repetitive terms proceeded progressively. Cana in Galilee was portrayed as a place where Jesus performed the "second" miracle ("signs and wonders"), marking a progression from first to second. There is progression in the appellation used for the servant (υἱός, then παιδίον—the latter being wider and more inclusive). It is the redactional strategy of the narrator not to limit the event to selected individuals but give indications of including others. It is "as a matter of rhetorical spatiality or conceptual framework where people may go and reason for possible clues to understand a phenomenon" (Aryeh 2020, 120).

The use of πιστεύω (belief) involves positive and affirmative progression. It was used by Jesus to show that the reason why he would heal the servant is that he wanted the royal official to believe in him. After witnessing the healing of the servant, the royal official believed together with his household. Hence, not only did the royal official believe but his household. Another progression can be seen here: first, one person believed and then many followed. Another progression in the narrative is βασιλικός that progressed from a political position and relationship to a more intimate relationship between a father and a servant. The progression in the narrative largely reflects the pattern of miracle narratives in Jewish and Greco-Roman literature: "(1) a description of the disease or situation to be remedied; (2) a statement of the cure or solution achieved by Jesus; [and] (3) a statement of the results of the miracle—either the effect on the person healed or the reaction of the onlookers" (Travis 1977, 153–166).

The illness was not described at the beginning of the narrative. However, it was later described as "fever" (v. 52). Since it was stated at the beginning of the narrative that the child was at the point of death, it was likely to be one of the ancient fatal fevers that paralyze the victim. This kind of fever is usually referred to as πυρετός μέγας (high/great fever) where πυρετός primarily connotes a high temperature (Aryeh 2020). The narrator of John decided to mention the possible outcome of the fever if not attended to. This is aimed at presenting the exigency of the situation first. In the component of the description of the disease, often, an appeal is made to the miracle-worker—healer (Aryeh 2020). In John 4:46–54, an appeal was made to Jesus after the exigency was mentioned and the disease was later described. There was not a direct statement for cure/healing that rebukes the illness or addresses the situation directly. The royal official would have to leave with hope in the words of Jesus that the child would live.

That notwithstanding, the progression and pattern/structure of John 4:46–54 closely reflects a general miracle pattern in the ancient Mediterranean religiosity, which Werner Kahl (2018, 47–76) calls narrative schema and description of healing miracle stories. He argues for four schema progression of miracle narratives: (i) need; (ii) preparedness; (iii) performance; (iv) sanction. The "need" is where a person or situation is subjected to unwanted/undesirable circumstances. "Preparedness" is where the victim of an unwanted/undesired situation is willing and accepts conditions for remedy. "Performance" succeeds "preparedness," and it is active by the power of the miracle-worker and the subject. "Sanction" is the recognition of the desired result or failure and the instructions that follow (Kahl 2018). In John 4:46–54, there was a need expressed on behalf of the subject of disease—the royal official informed Jesus concerning the near-death condition of his servant (vv. 46–47). The victim was not prepared directly, but the heart of the royal official was prepared to believe that the child would recover (v. 50). The performance took place (vv. 51–52). The sanction was the belief of the royal official because Jesus said he would believe if he saw "signs and wonders," and he did believe after the servant was healed (v. 53). It is significant to note that the narrator did not indicate that the servant had any contact or interaction with Jesus. Hence, in a narrative schema of progression of miracle narratives, actions can be performed on behalf of the victim and miracles performed from a distance.

Considering the progression pattern propounded by Travis and Kahl, it is obvious that John 4:46–54 largely aligns with their propositions. However, the narrative shows a unique progression of the miracle pattern.

Thus: (i) the royal official invited Jesus to heal a dying servant; (ii) Jesus identified the challenge of the royal official; (iii) the royal official believed; (iv) the illness mentioned and the dying servant was healed at a distance; (v) the witnesses believed in Jesus. The variation in pattern and structure suggests that the primary attention of the narrator was focused on the faith of the royal official, thereby making the description of the illness a secondary issue. It is related to the concept of "preparedness" prior to the performance of miracles argued by Kahl (2018). The concept also reflects the proposition by Vernon K. Robbins (2012, 17–84) that in some miracle narratives in the gospels, the faith of the victim of disease or his/her representative is needed before attempting to pronounce healing. However, the demand for miracle-faith or "preparedness" came by rebuke, a section of the narrative which Fuller (1973) argues was an addition by the narrator. He queries what wrong the royal official had done to deserve such a comment, claiming that the rebuke was probably meant for the readers, not the royal official, because it did not have any negative effect on him due to his unflinching desire for help.

That notwithstanding, it can be argued that the progression texture in John 4:46–54 is generally logical/syllogistic progression where the narrator outlines premises that include pieces of evidence that put forward or create inspired ideas for the implied readers/audiences to conclude (Leroux 1995). Nonetheless, it is significant to add that the rebuke of the royal official by Jesus is a qualitative progression which is an unanticipated development in the line of argument by an author/narrator, which compels readers/audiences to consider discovering rationales for the advancement of a new idea or concept (Leroux 1995). The logical/syllogistic progression of the narrative is spatial where the form of progression is the movement from one step/principle to the other; while the qualitative progression is temporal where the form of progression does not follow a sequence (Croy 2011). The qualitative progression component of the narrative can be deleted, and still, the syllogistic progression will not be affected in any way.

4.3 Narrational texture

The nature of narrative texture can either be "narrative" elaboration or "*chreia*" elaboration (Robbins 1996, 376). Narrative elaboration is a fully developed story with a clearly identifiable beginning, middle, and ending. John 4:46–54 is a fully developed narrative elaboration that began, developed, and concluded. Robbins (1996, 376) distinguishes between two narratives: (i) "πρατκὸν πρᾶγμα (event narrative), which is an account of an occurrence that has political and historical significance," and (ii) "μυθικὸν πρᾶγμα (*muthikos pragma*) (mythical narrative), which is a story that includes gods, heroes, and other mythical figures." John 4:46–54 is a μυθικὸν πρᾶγμα (*muthkon pragma*) (mythical narrative), which is about the power of Jesus to heal from a distance.

The opening statement of the narrative, Ἦλθεν οὖν πάλιν εἰς τὴν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας … (He then came again to Cana in Galilee …) suggests that the narrator is familiar with an earlier work of Jesus in Cana of Galilee. Hence, the narrator was drawing the attention of his readers/audiences to an earlier activity of Jesus; or the readers/audiences are aware of the earlier work by Jesus of which the narrative under interpretation might be an extension/continuation. It is a reflection that Jesus assumed a very important position in the social and religious life of the people in Cana after the first miracle. It gives an interpretative clue to any critical reader of the narrative to consider in the interpretative process. Simply put, the interpretation of John 4:46–54 ought to be partly understood by using the immediate previous miracle event "as a rhetorical conceptual location for ideas for possible reasoning" (Aryeh 2020). The narrator attempts to show a close relationship between John 4:46–54 and an earlier miracle narrative of John 2:1–11.

The narrative is very active and occupied with movements from one location to the other. Jesus moved from Judea to Galilee where he once visited; the royal official went to invite Jesus to come; the royal official was instructed to go; the servants of the royal official met him on the way. These movements suggest various inputs in constructing the narrative. However, the use of Judea, Galilee, Capernaum, and Cana at the beginning and end of the narrative show that the narrator was using a biblical Jewish "point of view" to compose the narrative. These locations are predominantly populated by Jews and their culture during the period of Jesus's ministry and the writing of the gospel (Lawrence 2006). Rhetorically, the narrator is pointing the readers/audiences to the conceptual reasoning of Jewish towns and cities where Jesus had been to and what took place, particularly, the narrative world—Cana.

Although the narrator intended to be as detailed as possible, they left out some details that they thought were known by the readers/audiences; or where it would be easier for the readers/audiences to search for such details. For example, the name of the royal official and the sick child were not mentioned, an indication that the narrator is not interested in the names of the persons in the narrative but their character. It confirms the referential nature of the New Testament narrative where the goal is to influence the readers/audiences to act in a particular manner (Croy 2011).

The passage of John 4:46–54 is a rhetorical unit that follows order, duration, and frequency in four to six parts rhetorical composition (Philips 2008; Witherington III 1995):

Rhetorical Unit	Corresponding reference in John 4:46–54
Exordium Introduction to the composition	Verses 46–47
Narratio It explains the nature of the narrative/discourse	Verses 48–51
Propositio The thesis of the narrative with supportive arguments	Verses 52–53
Peroratio The recapitulation of the main thoughts in the narrative in the conclusion	Verse 54

The narrative texture may express any one or more of the branches of rhetoric—epideictic, judicial/forensic, and deliberative (Robbins 1996, 368–385). The rhetorical unit indicates that John 4:46–54 is a deliberative rhetorical composition with an intended effect on the readers/audiences. In other words, it is a religious (faith) composition to convince readers/audiences to accept the view of the narrator concerning Jesus and his power to perform miracles at a distance. It is meant primarily to exert an intellectual effect that may have cultural adaptation demands on the audiences/readers.

This leads to the identification of characters in John 4:46–54. Jesus is a character that is critical in the *narratio*. He has portrayed a character that possesses divine power, who is asked to remedy a situation at a distance—fever. Jesus is a character that gravitates towards the wealthy/elite and their socially marginalized/poor servants (royal official and the servant) to remedy the illness of his servant and restore him to work. The character of Jesus depicts a person that is a Bearer of Numinous Power (BNP), a religious intermediary who possesses divine power to be dispensed at will (Kahl 2018).

The character of Jesus and the royal official are both flat characters; Jesus distinguishes himself as possessing divine power to heal, and the royal official distinguishes himself as a person having faith in Jesus to heal his dying servant from fever. It is a character that portrays a single and consistent trait (Croy 2011). The other character in the narrative is the servant of the royal official. This is a round character (Croy 2011) that keeps changing due to the changing condition of the sick servant.

4.4 Open-middle-ending (plot)

John 4:46–54 has an opening—verses 46–47; a middle—verses 48–51; and an ending—verses 52–54. It demonstrates the narrative skills of the narrator to compose an elaborative narrative for impressive effect on the readers/audiences (Robbins 1996). It shows that John 4:46–54 is not simply a listing of actions or vocabularies but a coherent and consistent composition that flows from beginning to the end to form a literary unit. The narrator embarks upon a plot of disclosure, an epistemic plot to show that the power of Jesus to heal from a distance is beyond emperors who also performed miracles. The challenge of the readers/audiences is to understand why a royal official who might have a working relationship with an emperor may not find any miracle-worker as a result of his position or availability of miracle-performing emperors, but came instead to Jesus to heal the dying servant.

The kernels of the plot are: (i) Jesus returned to Cana in Galilee; (ii) the royal official came to invite Jesus to heal the dying servant; (iii) Jesus instructed the royal official to go and the servant will be healed; (iv) the servant was healed from a distance. The satellites that filled or embellished the kernels to form a complete plot are: (i) the query and faith of the royal official; (ii) and the belief in Jesus by the household of the royal official. The kernels are the skeletal frame around which the satellites were formed to have a coherent literary plot (Matera 1989).

4.5 Argumentative texture

The narrator presents the narrative in deductive argumentation reasoning by attempting to show that Jesus had performed a miracle earlier and that he performed a second one. The premise here is similar to the earlier miracle of John 2:1–11. The premise is that the royal official believes the command of Jesus to go and that the servant will live (v. 50). The evidence in the premise may lie in the background of the royal official who understands how to obey instruction from a superior, and the fact that the narrative indicates that the royal official might have information concerning the first miracle in which the servants obeyed the command of Jesus to fill the jars with water (John 2:7). Labahn succinctly states:

> The Fourth Gospel is in some ways a masterpiece in its use of internal references that lead the reader to the meaning of its narrated world. The Fourth Evangelist also makes great play with semantic fields and semantic lines. By the term 'semantic lines' I mean intratextual references that function as hermeneutical links. Semantic lines work by taking up slightly revised wordings or by taking up pictures and situations already mentioned by the use of analogous words or word families. The use of this technique in binding together different parts of the gospel is an indication that the Fourth Gospel is not only composed so that some parts of

> it were read in the Christian worship, but also so that it could be read as a written document, like a book. (Labahn 1999, 187)

It engages the *logos* of the readers/audiences in rhetoric. However, it is not obvious in the narrative that the servants of the royal official and the sick servant were aware of the miracle credentials of Jesus. Therefore, to the servants and the sick servant, the narrative would present a *pathos* reasoning that mainly appeals to their emotions without having a point of reference.

7. Synthesis

Due to the numerous occurrences of *σημεῖα* and *ἔργα* in the Gospel of John (Fortna 1963), many studies of miracle vocabulary in John have been largely concentrated on these two to the neglect of *τέρατα*. It has been firmly established that the purpose of *σημεῖα* in miracle narratives in John is to attract belief (faith) in Jesus as the Messiah and to witness (evangelize) to others to come to the faith (John and Miller 1971)—even in situations where *σημεῖα* was used in a miracle context. The question that arises is that what does the combined use of the synonym *σημεῖα* and *τέρατα* mean in a miracle performed at a distance?

The combined use of *σημεῖα* and *τέρατα* in John 4:46–54 is aimed at presenting Jesus as being superior to other miracle-workers of his day. Labahn (1999) has argued that the main concern of miracle narratives in John is to portray Jesus as the mediator and giver of true life. My thesis in this study is that John 4:46–54 was narrated within the context of deliberative rhetoric to show that Jesus is above his contemporary miracle-workers in giving true life. In that regard, he is a Bearer of Numinous Power (BNP) not a Mediator of Numinous Power (MNP). Individuals (Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Daniel) through whom the acts of God were considered as *σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα* were MNP; hence, the glory goes to God Almighty. But in the case of the *σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα* in John 4:46–54, the glory was given to Jesus. In addition, the miracle of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa concerning the healing of the son of Gamaliel II (Schnelle 2016), performed at a distance, was the result of an answer to prayer. In John 4:46–54, Jesus did not pray.

The royal official (βασιλικός) depicts someone related to an emperor either through work or biological relationship (Dunderberg 2014). The term βασιλικός occurred twice and was later substituted by *πατὴρ* (father), probably to indicate that the relationship between him and the sick servant is close to a biological one. However, it could be argued that the narrator of John seeks to move the attention of his audiences/readers from a narrow view of the event to a wider perspective for them to consider being a character in the miracle event. The βασιλικός (royal official) is related to an emperor who also was believed to have had the power to perform miracles. One of the best known was Vespasian (ruling 69–79 CE). The βασιλικός should easily have had access to miracle-workers to heal the dying child through any of the emperors rather than Jesus. Although Glachau Gerhard Delling (1981, 591) has argued that the use of βασιλικός in John 4:46–54 is highly debatable, he explains that the term denotes unhindered access to resources and personnel, and having proximity to a βασιλεύς (King) and thereby making him a mini-King. Subsequently, in an inductive argumentation, it can be inferred that the βασιλικός might have exhausted all avenues at his disposal to contact a miracle-worker and to heal the dying servant but could not get the expected result.

In the ancient Mediterranean world, miracle-workers and cults competed among themselves for patronage by attempting to perform miracles that would be deemed superior. This is evident in the challenge between Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18:20–40). Consequently, Bultmann (1963) argued that the disciples and close relatives of Hellenistic and Jewish miracle-workers concocted miracles for their masters in order to make them look superior. Usually, it was the most powerful and superior miracle-workers that were invited to homes to heal sick relatives. For example, when two disciples of Rabbi Gamaliel II were sick to the point of death, he sent for Hanina ben Dosa, a Jewish miracle-worker, who came and prayed for the two disciples, and they were healed instantly of a fever (Guttmann 1947). Hence, the invitation by the royal official is not strange. The healing of the sick servant from a distance and the complementary dualistic use of *σημεῖα* and *τέρατα* is the attempt by the narrator to show the superiority of Jesus over other miracle-workers of his day. This is deliberative rhetoric by the narrator in *logos* deductive reasoning by indicating that this miracle is the second in Cana in Galilee. In other words, the first miracle serves as the premise and evidence for the second miracle. It depicts the flat character of Jesus as a BNP.

8. Conclusion

This study contributes to the discussion on the purpose of *σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα* in John 4:46–54. It sought to highlight a neglected purpose of the miracles as deliberative rhetoric to show that Jesus is superior to his contemporary miracle-workers by the conjoined use of the synonym *σημεῖα* and *τέρατα* and to move the analysis of *σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα* beyond intertextual discussions in Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Kings. The deliberative rhetoric is also obvious in the use of βασιλικός who was supposed to have had access to miracle-workers in his kingdom to heal the dying servant; yet, he had to come and invite Jesus. It is an indication of a failed attempt to either acquire a miracle-worker to heal the sick servant or a failed attempt by the miracle-workers to heal the sick servant. Hence, the purpose of miracles in John cannot be limited to proving the Messiahship of Jesus, attracting faith, and witnessing to others; but it also includes proving Jesus as being superior to the miracle-workers of his day.

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Conspectus

Denial Versus Betrayal: A Case Study Analysis of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot in the Fourth Gospel

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Abstract

This journal article undertakes a case study analysis of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot in the Fourth Gospel. A review of the extant academic literature indicates this is a relevant lacuna, one meriting further consideration. Methodologically, the article situates the endeavor within the context of the Synoptic Gospels. This is followed by a descriptive analysis of the Fourth Gospel's portrait of Peter and Judas, respectively. The wrap-up to the essay undertakes a theological and pastoral assessment of Peter's denial versus Judas's betrayal of Jesus. The major claim is that Peter experienced a restoration and reinstatement as the Savior's disciple, whereas Judas endured despair, remorse, and suicide. While the underlying premise might appear to be self-evident, the *reason* for these two radically different outcomes is far from obvious. Seminal to this study is a consideration of 2 Corinthians 7:10–11, which provides theological insight concerning the divergent ends experienced by two of Jesus's most iconic disciples.

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1. Introduction: Situating the Study Within the Context of the Synoptic Gospels

When compared with the three Synoptic Gospels, the Fourth Gospel provides its own unique portrait of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot, respectively. One option is to regard these differences as evidence of clashing oral and contradictory literary Jesus traditions (a view often arising from a hermeneutic of suspicion). In contrast, a more constructive approach (the one adopted in this essay) is to consider the distinctions as being complementary and nuanced variations about two pivotal disciples among the original cohort of twelve whom Jesus chose.

Keywords
Simon Peter, Judas Iscariot, Synoptic Gospels, Fourth Gospel, denial, betrayal, suicide, repentance, restoration

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Even within the Fourth Gospel, the portraits the Evangelist sketches of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot, respectively, contain areas of overlap and differentiation. For instance, on the upside, both disciples, along with the rest of the Twelve, remained with Jesus throughout the entirety of his three-year public ministry. Likewise, both shouldered responsibilities that suited each of their aptitudes and personalities. For example, Peter's more spontaneous temperament resulted in him often functioning as the spokesperson for the group. In the case of Judas, his more calculating disposition led him to assume responsibility for the oversight of the moneybag belonging to Jesus and his cadre of followers.

In contrast to the preceding upsides, the Fourth Gospel's depictions of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot indicate that both had contrastive downsides. Indeed, Valente (2008, 969) refers to Judas as the "negative twin of Peter."[1] For instance, Peter's impetuous disposition led him, during the final hours leading up to Jesus's arrest, to deny having any association with the Savior. With respect to Judas Iscariot, his more deliberative temperament eventually resulted in him sizing up the best way to betray the itinerant rabbi from Nazareth.

Likewise, the Fourth Gospel records vastly different reactions and outcomes for Peter and Judas. Specifically, on the one hand, Peter was filled with shame and sorrow, which led to his repentance and eventual restoration as a disciple of Jesus. On the other hand, Judas was overcome with despair and remorse. In turn, his intense feelings of regret led him to the self-destructive end of terminating his life.

The preceding overview is intended to motivate a focused case study analysis of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot in the Fourth Gospel. Vyhmeister and Robertson (2020, 22) state that this approach includes the presentation of a "case" involving human subjects, an analysis of the "factors affecting" those individuals, and an exegetical and theological interpretation of what "happened." There is also the option of proposing a "pastoral" response to the situation being explored.[2]

With the above synopsis in mind, the methodological approach used in this essay first entails offering a concise introduction about Peter and Judas, respectively. The preceding is drawn mainly from the Synoptic Gospels. The aim is to provide sufficient contextual background information germane to the study, along with enhancing the acumen of the essay's upcoming disquisition.

Next, the article undertakes a descriptive analysis of the Fourth Gospel's portrait of Peter, followed by the Evangelist's depiction of Judas. The objective is to engage key biblical passages and offer an informed, sound interpretation of them. Finally, the article provides an assessment of Peter's denial versus Judas's betrayal of Jesus. The goal is to explore the underlying theological reason and pastoral implications for these two divergent outcomes.

The methodological approach also includes engaging pertinent scholarly sources in a sufficient and appropriate manner. As the bibliography indicates, there are other more extensive treatments of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot, respectively, from various perspectives. The essay makes no pretense of either replacing or eclipsing these academic works.[3]

Two noteworthy treatises merit comment. First, Kim (2004, 19) uses the "rhetorical strategy of comparison" to explore the literary ways in which

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[1] The French original says, "comme un jumeau en négatif de Pierre."

[2] For more detailed information about the case study approach to biblical research, see Vyhmeister and Robertson (2020, 72–80).

[3] While it might have made sense to include insights from some of the historical and contemporary interpretive luminaries of the Fourth Gospel, the limited space of this essay necessitated giving pride of place to more specialized works dealing specifically with Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot.

Peter and Judas function as divergent "symbolic representatives" of those experiencing "persecution" (18). Kim views Peter as a "representative of faithful believers who accept Jesus's testimony" (24). In contrast, Judas is seen as a "representative of disciples who apostatize from the Jesus movement."

Second, Greene (2016, 1) explores the "roles" of "Peter and Judas" in all "four canonical gospels." Greene gives particular attention to the way in which the two are depicted in the "Passion narratives." Greene's objective is to obtain "insight" (7) into the "thought processes and literary techniques" used by the four Evangelists (particularly through the interpretive lens of Greco-Roman biography).

The preceding two treatises differ from the stated aim of the present essay.[4] As described above, it is to present a fresh treatment of the topic by utilizing a case study analysis. Admittedly, on one level, this involves engaging the Synoptic Gospels, along with a representative set of published works. Yet, on another level, the article seeks to present its own distinctive treatment of the topic at hand. The essay makes its mark by addressing a relevant lacuna in the academic literature, namely, a paucity of studies providing a focused, *case study analysis* of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot in the Fourth Gospel.[5]

In keeping with what was briefly noted earlier, the major claim of the article is as follows: Whereas Peter's denial of Jesus was followed by Peter's eventual restoration as the Savior's disciple, Judas's betrayal of Jesus resulted in Judas's demise. It is only the Fourth Gospel that explains Peter's reinstatement in the aftermath of his disavowal. Concerning the fallout of Judas's betrayal, one must turn to Matthew 27:3–5 and Acts 1:16–19, respectively, for elucidation.

Admittedly, while the underlying premise might appear to be self-evident, the *reason* for these two radically different outcomes is far from obvious. This is where the closing section of the essay comes into view and seeks to make a worthwhile contribution to the scholarly discourse. Specifically, the article deliberates a possible underlying theological rationale for why two of Jesus's most iconic disciples, Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot, experienced such divergent ends, despite acting in seemingly comparable ways.

2. A Concise Introduction to Simon Peter's Life and Legacy

What follows is a concise introduction of Simon Peter's life and legacy.[6] To begin, Simon Peter (Πέτρος; which literally means "stone," "rock," or "boulder"; Matt 16:18; John 1:42) was the son of a man named either Jonah (Matt 16:17) or John (John 1:42; 21:15–17). While Bethsaida was the hometown of Peter's family (John 1:44), he and his brother, Andrew, later relocated to Capernaum, on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee (Mark 1:21, 29; Luke 4:31, 38). There the two established a business catching fish

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[4] See fns. 55 and 56 for additional ways in which this essay differs from the concluding assessments proffered by Kim (2003) and Greene (2016), respectively.

[5] See similar observations made by the following: Counet (2011, 3); Worthing (2018, 158).

[6] For a detailed examination of the information in the NT pertaining to Simon Peter, see Blaine (2007, 23–26); Bockmuehl (2012, 20–28, 67–85, 115–124, 131–141); Brown, Donfried, and Reumann (2002, 58–64, 76–79, 110–114); Cassidy (2007, 33–35, 55, 83, 126–127); Cullman (2011, 17–27); Foakes-Jackson (2003, 123–125); Greene (2016, 58–68); Helyer (2012, 19–30, 32–46, 48–60); Markley (2013, 151–157, 209–215, 238–239); Perkins (1994, 18–41). The abbreviated synthesis in this section has been informed by these respective works. Even so, the discourse operates under the premise that Peter was an actual person (rather than a fictional literary character) who lived in space-time history and that the NT provides reliable and accurate (rather than incoherent and contradictory) information about him, albeit motivated by theological concerns.

(John 21:1–6), possibly in partnership with James and John, the sons of Zebedee (Luke 5:1–11), that is, before Jesus summoned these trawlers to become his disciples.

Peter was one of the most prominent of Jesus's twelve disciples (Matt 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20; John 1:35–61), and perhaps the first among them.[7] For instance, Peter was one of the first disciples whom Jesus summoned (Matt 4:18–19; Mark 1:16–18; John 1:40–42), and Peter's name heads every list of the Twelve in the NT (Matt 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:14–16; Acts 1:13). Also, an inner circle of three apostles existed among the twelve, and Peter was the leader of this smaller group (Matt 17:1; Mark 5:37; 9:2; 14:33; Luke 8:51; 9:28).

Moreover, additional firsts belong to Peter. For example, he was the first apostle to recognize that Jesus is the Messiah (Greek, χριστός; Hebrew, מָשִׁיחַ; Anointed One; Matt 16:16; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20; John 6:67–71).[8] Later, Peter was the first apostle to see the resurrected Lord (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5). Then, after the day of Pentecost, Peter was the first to proclaim salvation to non-Jews (Acts 10–11).

With Peter's triumphant firsts, however, come an extensive list of personal flaws. For instance, the only apostle to walk on water also nearly drowned in the process (Matt 14:28–31). Also, when Jesus needed his friends the most, Peter hid in the shadows and asserted three times that he did not even know the itinerant rabbi from Nazareth (Matt 26:69–75; Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:55–62; John 18:25–27). Though Peter tried to deny he was one of Jesus's disciples, the accent of Peter's speech signaled to attentive listeners that he was from Galilee, not Judea (Matt 26:73; Mark 14:70; Luke 22:59).[9]

As with other devout Jews of the day, Peter held fast to God's promise of a descendant of David who would sit on his throne (2 Sam 7:11–13; 1 Chr 17:10–12). Despite the false assertions made by some religious elitists (John 8:33), for much of their history, the Jews had languished under the dominion of one Gentile empire after another (including Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Syria, and Rome). Yet, the promise of a future anointed ruler never faded from Jewish hope. Their messianic vision anticipated a political and military leader who would free them from foreign control and restore their nation as a world-class power.[10]

To someone such as Peter, Jesus of Nazareth, a miracle worker who exercised divine authority, looked like the Messiah. Both during Jesus's earthly ministry and for a short while after his resurrection, Peter was among Jesus's followers who resolutely interpreted the itinerant rabbi in light of what they expected Israel's anointed one to be (Luke 24:21; John 6:15; 18:36; Acts 1:6). Though Jesus told his disciples that his redemptive mission involved rejection, humiliation, and death (Pss 16:10; 22:1–2, 6–8, 12–18; Isa 53:10–12), it was not until after his resurrection that they—including Peter—understood what Jesus explicitly meant (Luke 24:25–27, 32, 44–46; John 2:19–22; 20:9; Acts 2:24, 31–32; 3:15).

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[7] Cullman (2011, 26) surmised from examining "all three Synoptic Gospels" that Peter "indubitably played the role of the spokesman among the twelve disciples."

[8] Maynard (1984, 533) describes the Johannine pericope as being the literary, functional "equivalent of the Synoptic confession at Caesarea Philippi." Similarly, Lapham (2003, 8) regards the Fourth Gospel's rendition of Peter's confession to be the "equivalent" of the account that appears in the three Synoptic Gospels of "Peter's celebrated acclamation" of the Messiah. Bruce (1983, 165–166) goes even further by highlighting the "remarkable point of contact between the Synoptic and Johannine" accounts, especially that the "turning-point in both" was linked to Peter's "momentous confession."

[9] Bockmuehl (2012, 170) explains that in "Judea and elsewhere, Galileans were notorious and mocked for their careless pronunciation, especially of gutturals."

[10] For an overview and explanation of Jewish messianic expectations in the first century AD, see the following: Aune, Geddert, and Evans (2000); Bird (2013); Collins (2000); Evans (2000); Heard and Yamazaki-Ransom (2013); Pitre (2013).

Prior to that triumphant event, Jesus repeatedly warned the Twelve about his upcoming suffering and execution on the cross. One noteworthy episode involved the Savior and his disciples traveling to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. There he questioned them about his identity and (as observed above) commended Peter's assertion that Jesus is the Messiah (Matt 16:13–20; Mark 8:27–30; Luke 9:18–21; John 6:67–71).[11]

Next, Jesus told the Twelve that the religious leaders would plot his death in Jerusalem, as well as that on the third day the Father would raise the Son from the dead (Matt 16:21–23; Mark 8:31–33; Luke 9:22). Peter, in response, took Jesus aside and began to chastise him (Matt 16:22; Mark 8:32; ἐπιτιμάω, to rebuke, censure, or reprove). Evidently, Peter could not accept that it was the Father's will for the Son to be executed, likely because Peter imagined a glorious, earthly reign for the Messiah.

Jesus countered by rebuking Peter for trying to persuade his Lord to abandon his true redemptive mission. Indeed, Peter's words echoed the same kind of temptation Satan previously used in the wilderness to get Jesus to stumble (Matt 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13). In the present episode, Peter behaved as Jesus's principal adversary, which is why the Redeemer harshly referred to Peter as "Satan" (σατανᾶς; the archenemy of God; Matt 16:23; Mark 8:33).[12]

According to Clement, an early bishop of Rome (AD 88–99), Peter, along with Paul, was martyred in the capital of the empire during Nero's persecution (around AD 64; *1 Clem* 5; John 21:18–19). Centuries later, the patristic church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea (AD 265– 339), reiterated that Peter and Paul died as martyrs for the Christian faith (*Eccl His* 2:25; 3:1).[13]

3. A Concise Introduction to Judas Iscariot's Life and Legacy

As with the preceding section, what follows is a concise introduction to Judas Iscariot's life and legacy.[14] To begin, as alluded to earlier, the four Gospels contain far less information about Judas Iscariot than Simon Peter.[15] "Judas" (Ἰούδας, which literally means "praise" or "God is thanked") is identified as the son of Simon (John 6:71; 13:2, 36). The Synoptics list Judas among the twelve apostles whom Jesus chose early in his public ministry. Judas is also identified as the disciple who "betrayed" (παραδίδωμι; to hand over or deliver up)[16] the Savior (Matt 10:4; Mark 3:19).[17]

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[11] See fn. 8 about the possible correlation between Peter's confession recorded in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Fourth Gospel.

[12] Kruse (2003) stresses that "opposition to Jesus" is "satanic as well as human."

[13] For a critical and analytical disquisition of apocryphal early Petrine writings, see Lapham (2003), especially the concluding observations (237–253). For a more abbreviated survey, see Bockmuehl (2012, 11–17, 41–57); Cullman (2011, 89–123); Foakes-Jackson (2003, 165–191); Helyer (2012, 271–281, 285–301); Hengel (2010, 123–133); Perkins (1994, 131–147).

[14] For a detailed examination of the information in the NT pertaining to Judas Iscariot, see Cane (2017, 13–58); Greene (2016, 47–57); Gubar (2009, 57–82); Klassen (1996, 77–136); Maccoby (1992, 34–60); Oropeza (2011, 36–47, 75–77, 143–151); Ryan (2019, 225–232); Uraguchi (1918, 345–360); Worthing (2018, 152–164). The abbreviated synthesis in this section has been informed by these respective works. Even so, the discourse operates under the premise that Judas was an actual person (rather than a fictional literary character) who lived in space-time history and that the NT provides reliable and accurate (rather than incoherent and contradictory) information about him, albeit motivated by theological concerns.

[15] It is beyond the scope of this essay to substantively engage the apocryphal Gospel of Judas. This is a late-second-century AD, Gnostic papyrus manuscript (written in Coptic script from an original Greek text) that provides a sympathetic portrait of Judas Iscariot as Jesus's closest friend and favorite disciple. The codex purports to record the "true mysteries of the kingdom," including the following: Jesus originated from the "immortal realm of Barbelo" as the "angelic Self-Generated"; only Judas, among the Twelve, learned and understood the true gospel that Jesus taught; Jesus never intended to inaugurate an earthly kingdom; Judas obeyed Jesus's directive to betray him; Jesus felt no pain while dying on the cross; and, Jesus's death liberated him from the prison of his temporal, physical soul so that he could ascend to heaven and attain immortality. For a public domain translation of the tractate, Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst (2007); Mattison (2019). For an overview and analysis of the text from differing perspectives, see Evans (2010); Frankfurter (2007); Gathercole (2007); Heath and Porter (2007); Krosney (2006); Mattison (2014); Min (2017); Wright (2006).

Regarding the etymology of "Iscariot" (Ἰσκαριώθ), only the following three (of various) options are noted.[18] One hypothesis is that "Iscariot" represents an Aramaic slur, אשקריא, which means "liar" or "false one." A second theory is that "Iscariot" signifies a corruption of the Latin word, *sicarii* (Aramaic, סיקריים). This is the plural form of *sicarius* (Greek, σικάριος), meaning "dagger-man" or "assassin." Allegedly, then, Judas was once part of a group who took it upon themselves to kill Jews accused of collaborating with the Romans. The most widely held view is that "Iscariot" signifies a Hellenized form of the Hebrew phrase, איש־קריות, which means, "man from Kerioth." In this case, the reference would be to the village of Kerioth, which was located near Hebron in southern Judah (Josh 15:25).

Perhaps because of Judas's ability as a businessperson, he shouldered the responsibility of being the treasurer for Jesus and his followers. Judas not only routinely carried the moneybox, but also pilfered the donations placed in the container (John 12:6; 13:29).[19] Evidently, then, his fiduciary inclination helped lead to his downfall. Expressed differently, greed played a part in the fateful decision Judas made to collude with the leading priests in breaking faith with Jesus. The cabal enthusiastically agreed to pay Judas thirty silver coins for his efforts to find a favorable "opportunity" (εὐκαιρία; or the "right moment"; Matt 26:16) to betray the Nazarene (Matt 26:14–16; Mark 14:10–11).

The payment Judas received for his traitorous action[20] was approximately the amount a rural worker would earn over a two- or three-month period. It was also the price someone was required by the Mosaic Law to pay for a slave who had been accidentally killed (Exod 21:32). During the postexilic period, Zechariah 11:12–13 recorded the prophecy that the Good Shepherd would be rejected for this sum.

Perhaps at the beginning of Jesus's public ministry, Judas imagined Jesus to be a politicized, messianic figure, who would liberate the Jewish nation from Roman domination. If so, that hope was dashed in the week prior to Jesus's crucifixion, during a meal hosted at the home of Simon the leper in Bethany. Jesus chastised Judas for censuring Mary after she anointed Jesus's feet with expensive perfume (Matt 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; John 12:1–8).[21] The terse exchange could have left Judas feeling so disaffected and frustrated that he decided to double-cross the Nazarene.

Another factor involved the diabolical intentions of the devil. Following the episode in which Jesus fed over 5 000 men (not counting the thousands of women and children who were likely present) and walked on water (Matt 14:13–33; Mark 32–52; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–21), the Savior declared that one among the Twelve was a "devil" (John 6:70; διάβολος; a menacing adversary). The Evangelist explained that Jesus was referring to Judas Iscariot (v. 71), whose treachery contradicted whatever pretense he maintained about being Jesus's trusted colleague and confidant (Pss 41:9; 55:12–14).

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[16] The notional sense articulated here, which is the consensus scholarly view (cf. Arndt et al. 2000; Büchsel, 1964; Silva, 2014), is contra Cane (2017, 19–24) and Klassen (1996, 47–58), who each maintain that the standard lexica have an overly theologized understanding of παραδίδωμι, as influenced by the canonical gospels.

[17] An indirect reference to this traitorous act might also be preserved in 1 Cor 11:23 (i.e., "the night [Jesus] was betrayed").

[18] Cf. Gathercole (2007, 25); Greene (2016, 155–156); Ryan (2019, 229–230); Taylor (2010, 368–370); Worthing (2018, 153).

[19] Contra Sloyan (2009), who conjectures that the Evangelist merely invented "greed" as "Judas's motive," the details of which are allegedly "lost to history."

[20] Noteworthy is the use of προδότης ("traitor") in Luke 6:16 to refer to Judas Iscariot.

[21] In this essay, the episode recorded in the first two Synoptic Gospels is regarded as being a parallel account to what appears in the Fourth Gospel.

Luke 22:3 clarifies that "Satan entered Judas" prior to his collaboration with the religious leaders, among whom were the "officers of the temple guard" (v. 4). Though the evil one prompted and prodded Judas, he remained responsible for his perfidy. John 13:2 and 27 add that later, during the Last Supper, Jesus's chief adversary[22] planted the idea in Judas's "heart" (*καρδία*; the locus of a person's thoughts) to become a rogue operative. Then, during his negotiations with the Jewish authorities, the entire group concurred that Judas should wait until Jesus was out of sight from the "crowd" (Luke 22:6; ὄχλος; an unruly throng) before handing him over to be arrested. Indeed, that would prove to be the ideal moment, when there would be no interference from the tumultuous masses.

In the events that followed, Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss (Matt 26:47–49; Mark 14:43–45; Luke 22:47–48). This gesture expressing affection, which was reminiscent of Proverbs 27:6,[23] led to the authorities arresting Jesus and his disciples abandoning him (Matt 26:56; Mark 14:50). Sometime later, Judas tried in vain to return his thirty silver coins. Then, Judas, after impulsively throwing down the money somewhere in the Jerusalem temple, exited the precincts and hanged himself (Zech 11:12–13; Matt 27:3–5; Acts 1:16–19).[24]

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[22] Of particular note is the parallel use of διάβολος ("devil") and σατανᾶς ("Satan") in John 13:2 and 27, respectively, to refer to Jesus's archenemy.

[23] Particularly, the Hebrew phrase, ונעתרות נשׁיקות שׂונֵא, rendered, "excessive/deceitful are the kisses of an enemy" (author's translation).

[24] In this essay, the episode recorded in the first Synoptic Gospel is regarded as being a parallel and complementary (rather than contradictory) account to what appears in Acts.

4. A Descriptive Analysis of the Fourth Gospel's Portrait of Simon Peter

What follows in this section is a descriptive analysis of the Fourth Gospel's portrait of Simon Peter.[25] Blaine (2007, 2) avers that this depiction is largely "positive," and that Peter comes across as an "exemplary disciple," albeit one who at times succumbed to "misdirected zeal." Even then, readers encounter a disciple who was characterized by such virtues as "courage, zeal, loyalty, love, resourcefulness, and determination."

According to the Evangelist's treatise, Peter was one of Jesus's earliest followers (1:40–42). Also, Peter, as the spokesperson for the Twelve, affirmed Jesus's messiahship by referring him as the "Holy One of God" (6:69).[26] Domeris (1993, 165, 167), based on his assessment of the relevant biblical and extrabiblical data, concludes that the phrase emphasizes Jesus's role as the Father's supreme "agent" (or emissary) and revelatory "representative." Jesus also is affirmed to be the "divine judge" and source of "eternal life."

Even so, as Wiarda (2011, 508) observes, despite Peter's insinuation of being personally loyal to Jesus (v. 68), an inexorable series of events would result in Peter denying his allegiance to the Savior. The Last Supper, as narrated in chapter 13, formed the backdrop of Peter's moral failure. Most of Jesus's final moments with his disciples took place in a large, furnished upper room somewhere in Jerusalem (Mark 14:13–15; Luke 17:10–12).

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[25] What appears in this section has been informed by the following secondary sources: Blaine (2007, 183–195); Bockmuehl (2012, 57–67); Brown, Donfried, and Reumann (2002, 129–141); Cassidy (2007, 85–107); Cullman (2011, 27–30); Farelly (2010, 89–106); Greene (2016, 249–287); Helyer (2012,56–61, 64–67); Kim (2004, 29–150); Maynard (1984, 532–545); Perkins (1994 95–101); Sturdevant (2015, 109–129); Thatcher (1996, 439–448); Wiarda (2011, 508–514).

[26] Other variant readings include the following: "you are the Christ"; "you are the Son of God"; "you are the Christ, the Holy One of God"; "you are the Christ, the Son of God"; and, "you are the Christ, the Son of the living God"; cf. Loken and Brannan (2014); Omanson (2006). For a detailed exegetical and theological analysis of the title found in John 6:69, see Domeris (1993). He states that "the holy one of God" (ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ) is "well attested by the manuscript evidence" and represents the consensus view of the "accepted reading" among text critical scholars.

After Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and foretold what his betrayer was about to do (John 13:1–32), Jesus warned Peter that he, too, would prove unfaithful to the Savior (vv. 33–38). Yet, Peter was self-assured that he, perhaps in contrast to the rest of the Twelve (including Judas Iscariot), was ready to die for Jesus. The Savior countered with the solemn assertion (ἀμὴν ἀμὴν; "Amen, Amen") that by the following morning, after Peter had denied Jesus three times, a rooster would crow.

The fateful event is recounted in chapter 18. Perhaps a portion of Jesus's closing remarks were delivered after the group left the upper room, crossed the Kidron Valley, and made their way to an orchard called "Gethsemane" (Γεθσημανί; from the Hebrew, גת שמני, meaning "oil press"; Matt 26:36; Mark 14:32).[27] The valley itself was situated on the eastern slope of Jerusalem. The privately-owned olive grove mentioned in John 18:1 was located slightly east of Jerusalem on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. Jesus and his followers would customarily travel through and on occasion meet in the orchard (Luke 22:39).

The Fourth Gospel provides a distinctive rendition of Jesus's arrest,[28] including Judas standing openly with the throng and Peter's botched attempt to prevent the Savior from being tied up and led away to a pretrial hearing in the presence of Annas (18:1–14).[29] He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest at that time. That said, Annas, though previously deposed as high priest by the Roman procurator, Valerius Gratus, in AD 15 (Josephus, *Ant* 18.2.2 [18.34]), maintained control over the high priestly office behind the scenes.[30]

Meanwhile, as the authorities escorted Jesus to Annas, Simon Peter and another unnamed "disciple" (John 18:15) of Jesus followed at a safe distance in the darkness. This essay affirms the traditional view of the early church that it was John, the son of Zebedee,[31] who accompanied Peter and obtained entrance into the "courtyard" (αὐλή; or private atrium)[32] of the "high priest."[33] John was able to do so because he was personally acquainted with the family and household servants of Annas.[34]

At first, Peter had to remain outside the gate. It was only after John vouched for Peter to a servant girl watching the entrance (v. 16; θυρωρός; a gate- or doorkeeper) that she allowed Peter to enter the enclosed, accessible area with John. Then, as Peter walked through the gate, the "female slave" (v. 17; παιδίσκη) questioned Peter about his affiliation with Jesus. When the servant girl openly wondered whether Peter might be one of the Nazarene's "disciples," Peter replied curtly that he was not a follower (οὐκ εἰμί; literally, "I am not"; rhetorically, "No, indeed!"). According to Mark 14:68, a "rooster crowed" for the first (of two) times.

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[27] By "oil press" is meant a locale where laborers squeezed the oil out of harvested olives.

[28] Contra Sloyan (2009), this essay regards the Fourth Gospel's rendition of Jesus's arrest to be historically credible.

[29] Sturdevant (2015, 116) remarks that while Peter attempted to "defend Jesus through violence," the Redeemer sought to "defend Peter," as well as the "rest of the Twelve," by yielding to "violence" at Calvary (cf. John 10:11, 15).

[30] Cf. Beasley-Murray (1999); Borchert (1996); Bruce (1983, 250–251); Carson (1991, 421); Lindars (1986, 405–406); Morris (1995, 502–503); Ridderbos (1997, 408–409).

[31] For a detailed analysis of differing views concerning the identity of the author/narrator of the Fourth Gospel, see McGrew (2021, 132–147), who concludes, contra Newman and Nida (1980), that, after examining the biblical and extrabiblical evidence, the "Beloved Disciple" was most likely "John the son of Zebedee."

[32] Ridderbos (1997, 581) describes the courtyard as an "uncovered enclosed space adjoining a building."

[33] Contra Counet (2011, 2), who argues unconvincingly that Judas Iscariot was the anonymous "disciple" known to the "high priest."

[34] John 18:15 uses the Greek adjective, γνωστός, which literally means, "known" (Arndt et al. 2000). In this verse, the term carries the notional sense of a "friend" or "acquaintance" (Louw and Nida 1989).

With that awkward exchange resolved, Peter joined Annas's household "slaves" (John 18:18; δοῦλος) and the chief priest's "guards" (ὑπηρέτης; or "officials"). Because the temperature that evening was "cold,"[35] the cadre stood around and warmed themselves at a "charcoal fire" (ἀνθρακιά) they had previously made.[36] Meanwhile, Annas cross-examined Jesus about the number and ardor of his followers. Bruce (1983, 348) finds "considerable literary skill" in the Evangelist's account, especially as he interlaced the "stages of Peter's denial" with the "narrative of Jesus's interrogation." Along the same lines, Blaine (2007, 99) highlights the stark difference between "Jesus's honesty and physical discomfort with Peter's dishonesty and physical comfort."

Next, a contingent of officials escorted Jesus from one end of the high priestly compound to the other, where Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin had assembled to question Jesus further (Matt 26:57–68; Mark 14:53–65; Luke 22:54, 66–71; John 18:19–24). Because Peter was curious to learn what would happen to Jesus, Peter remained in the courtyard and furtively warmed himself in the dim light of the charcoal fire, all the while trying to remain incognito.

Perhaps Peter was caught off-guard when some bystanders once more asked him whether he is one of Jesus's "disciples" (John 18:25). In response, Peter disavowed any affiliation with the Nazarene. Then, as with the previous exchange, Peter again stated curtly that he was not one of Jesus's followers (οὐκ εἰμί; "I am not"). Blaine (2007, 97) points out that the "language" Peter used in his repeated denials is the "antithesis" of the words Jesus used previously to affirm his identity (ἐγώ εἰμι; "I am he"; vv. 5–8).

As noted above, earlier in the evening, Peter made an impulsive attempt to prevent Jesus's arrest by cutting off the right ear of Malchus, one of the high priest's slaves (Matt 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50; John 18:10). About an hour after Peter's second denial (Luke 22:59), another of the high priest's slaves, who was related by blood or marriage to Malchus, wondered aloud whether he had seen Peter with Jesus in Gethsemane (John 18:26). For a third time, in response, Peter repudiated having any knowledge of the Nazarene (v. 27; ἀρνέομαι; to disown).[37]

Kruse (2003) relates that Peter not only invoked a curse on himself, but also swore an oath to affirm his assertion (Matt 26:71; Mark 14:71). In essence, Peter was asserting, "May God eternally judge me in hell if I know Jesus." Right at that moment, just as Jesus had foretold (Matt 26:34; Mark 14:30), a "rooster crowed" (John 18:27). Mark 14:72 further clarifies that this was the "second time" the "rooster crowed." Hendriksen (1953) suggests that the other gospels focus only on the second incident, while Mark's treatise accounts for both of them.

Luke 22:61 adds that Jesus turned and focused his gaze directly at Peter. As adjudicated by Whitacre (1999), one option is that Jesus looked through an open window or door into the courtyard while still in the presence of Caiaphas (v. 54). A second possibility is that Jesus was being escorted through the courtyard from the high priest to an undisclosed place of detention (vv. 63–65). In either case, Peter suddenly remembered what

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[35] Bernard (2000) points out that, due to Jerusalem being about "2,400 feet above sea level," the nighttime air, even during spring, would have been "chilly."

[36] Cf. the usage of the same Greek noun in 21:9, along with the implied literary connection between the two passages.

[37] Contra Kim (2004, 41–42), who is unconvincing in arguing that the Evangelist "seems to minimize the gravity of Peter's denial as much as possible," even to the point of "reducing it to no more than a fulfillment of Jesus's prophecy" (John 13:38).

Jesus prophesied. Peter became so overwhelmed with shame and grief that he quickly left the courtyard and “wept bitterly” (v. 62).

It is not until Resurrection Sunday that Simon Peter is mentioned once more in the Fourth Gospel. While it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb where Jesus’s body had been placed (20:1). She went to Jesus’s sepulcher after the Sabbath to pour spices over his body, which was a cultural expression of love for the dead person (Mark 16:1). Such devotion on Mary’s part was not unusual. After all, Jesus had exorcised seven demons from her (Luke 8:2).

Mary noticed that the large circular stone that previously covered the entrance to the “tomb” (John 20:1) had been rolled away from the entrance. Matthew 28:2 states that previously an “angel of the Lord” removed the “stone.” When Mary and some other women with her (according to Mark 16:1, “Mary the mother of James, and Salome”) looked inside the sepulcher, they discovered that Jesus’s body was no longer lying there (Luke 24:3).[38]

At this point, Mary Magdalene hurried to Peter and the “other disciple” (John 20:2), who most likely was John, the son of Zebedee. Mary frantically told them that people had transferred Jesus’s body to a place she and the other women did not know. Mary probably thought that Jesus’s enemies had stolen his body and had not considered the possibility that the Father had raised the Son from the dead. Understandably, Peter and John were alarmed by Mary’s news. This prompted the two disciples to run to Jesus’s “tomb” (John 20:3) to see for themselves whether the body was missing.

Westcott (1981, 289) advances a common supposition that because John was “younger” than Peter, John outran his peer and so arrived first at the empty sepulcher (John 20:4). More to the point, Hendriksen (1953) explains that it was customary for the entrance to private burial chambers to be less than three feet high. So, an adult would have to stoop down to look inside. John did this and saw the strips of linen that had been used to cover Jesus’s body. Yet, perhaps as Barton (2000) suggests, either due to fear or being “overcome with emotion,” John did not immediately go into the tomb, but waited for Peter to arrive (John 20:5).

Peter, without hesitation, entered the sepulcher, but struggled to decipher what had taken place (Luke 24:12). The apostle saw both the strips of linen and the face cloth that had been placed around Jesus’s head (John 20:6). The cloth was rolled up in a separate spot by itself (v. 7). These precise details indicate that thieves could not have stolen Jesus’s body, for it is unlikely that anyone who had come to remove the corpse would have bothered to unwrap it before removing it.

Shortly thereafter, when John went inside the tomb, he saw the evidence and “believed” (John 20:8). Borchert (1996) comments that the full extent of John’s faith is not explicitly stated. Beasley-Murray (1999) adds that, at this time, neither Peter nor John had a full understanding of Scripture’s teaching about Jesus’s resurrection (v. 9).[39] Newman and Nida (1980) delineate that, once Peter and John were done checking out the scene, they returned to their place of lodging in Jerusalem (v. 10).

The Fourth Gospel relates Jesus’s appearance to Mary Magdalene, Jesus’s appearance to ten of his disciples on Easter Sunday evening (with Thomas not being present at that time), and Jesus’s appearance to all eleven disciples a week later (20:11–29). Though Peter was present, he is not directly mentioned by name in the Evangelist's narration. Instead, it is in the final chapter (or epilogue) of John's treatise that the spotlight again focuses on Peter.

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[38] John 20:1, in isolation, might convey the incorrect impression that Mary Magdalene went alone to the empty tomb. Yet, in v. 2, Mary’s use of the first person plural form of the Greek verb, οἶδα (i.e., οἴδαμεν; “we know”), clearly indicates that, in agreement with the parallel accounts in the Synoptic Gospels, other women were with her at that time.

[39] In the disputed ending to Mark’s Gospel, it is reported that Jesus’s disciples, including Peter, initially did not believe Mary Magdalene’s eyewitness testimony that she had seen the risen Lord (16:10–11). Likewise, it is recounted that Peter and the rest of the Eleven did not believe the statements offered by the Emmaus disciples about having encountered the resurrected Messiah (vv. 12–13).

In 21:1, the Greek phrase, *μετὰ ταῦτα* ("after this"), is an indefinite time reference for when Jesus's third post-resurrection appearance took place.[40] As Blaine (2007, 132) clarifies, it is difficult to "know where, exactly, to place" the event on the "post-Easter timeline." The physical location was the "Sea of Tiberius" (or Galilee), while some of Jesus's "disciples" were fishing, including "Simon Peter" (John 20:2).[41] It is easy to imagine that during the episode recounted in vv. 3–13, Peter thought deeply about how he had acted when the authorities arrested Jesus. The memory of disavowing the Lord must have haunted Peter.

Jesus's reinstatement of Peter to a position of leadership in the church (which took place around a "charcoal fire"; *ἀνθρακιά*; v. 9) is the focal point of vv. 15–17.[42] Previously, Peter had openly denied Jesus three times.[43] Now, as Farelly (2010, 103) sets forth, Jesus reinstated Peter in the "presence of the other disciples." There is some debate about the significance of the use of two different Greek words for "love"— *ἀγαπάω* and *φιλέω*—in these verses. One option is that a distinction in meaning is intended, while a second option is that the variations in wording are only for stylistic reasons. Regardless of which view is preferred, it is clear that Jesus had a place of service in the church for Peter (as well as for all believers). There are also two Greek words rendered "know" in these verses. In Peter's first two responses, he only used the term, *οἶδα*, which denotes an intellectual understanding of a fact. Then, in the apostle's third response, he also used the term, *γινώσκω*, which signifies awareness obtained from experience. In this way, Peter seemed to strengthen his affirmation of his devotion to Jesus.

Peter's reinstatement took place after the group had finished eating breakfast. Verse 15 says that Jesus asked Peter about the true nature of his love for the Lord, a question that can be understood in at least three ways: (1) "Do you love me more than these other disciples love me?" (2) "Do you love me more than you love these other disciples?" (3) "Do you love me more than these physical objects (namely, the boats, nets, and fishing gear nearby connected with Peter's fishing business)?" Regardless of which option is preferred, it is clear that Peter had denied the Lord three times and that Jesus asked him three times whether he truly loved the Savior. On each occasion, Peter affirmed his love for and commitment to Jesus. Yet, by the third round of questioning, Peter became distressed and grieved. Nonetheless, Peter affirmed the Messiah's knowledge of everything, including his love for Jesus (v. 17).

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[40] Sloyan (2009) regards John 21 as a later, heavily redacted addition to an earlier version of the Fourth Gospel. Yet, as Greene (2016, 250) notes, the "chapter is consistent with rather than divergent from the general thrust of Peter's portrayal throughout the Gospel." Furthermore, Burge (2000) interjects that "today most scholars" think the "present chapter" was "fully integrated" with the Fourth Gospel at its "earliest stage" of development.

[41] Borchert (1996), while acknowledging various literary parallels between Luke 5:1–11 and John 21:1–14, regards these two passages as recounting separate, distinct incidents (the first at the start and the second at the end of Jesus's earthly ministry) involving Jesus, Peter, and various other disciples. Likewise, Bockmuehl (2012, 116) indicates that, even though there are some "verbal agreements," there are also "major differences in the narrative setting and details of the two stories." For this reason, Bockmuehl cautions against overstating the "similarities at the expense of the differences" (e.g., concluding that John 21 is either a "transposed resurrection experience" or a "recycled fishing story").

[42] The discussion that follows is informed by the following sources: Barton (2000); Blaine (2007, 163–164); Bruce (1983, 404–405); Carson (1991, 675–679); Keener (2003, 1235–1237); Lindars (1986, 632–635); Morris (1995, 767–772); Newman and Nida (1980); Ridderbos (1997, 665–667); Westcott (1981, 302–304).

[43] Contra Kim (2004, 60), who claims that the Evangelist, "by omitting the account of Peter's repentance, signals that Peter has not committed a sin that is serious enough to require such deep repentance."

The risen Lord, in turn, took Peter at his word. Because the disciple was wholeheartedly committed to the Savior, Peter was now ready to follow Jesus. In this way, the risen Lord renewed the apostle's commission to serve as Jesus's witness to the lost. Jesus also directed Peter to minister to the needs of his fellow believers. In particular, the apostle was to ensure that they were spiritually fed, guided, and protected from harm.

The Savior's commands to Peter contain additional subtle distinctions worth mentioning. For instance, in John 20:15 and 17, Jesus directed Peter to feed or pasture (βόσκω) the flock, while in v. 16, Jesus told Peter to take care of or shepherd (ποιμαίνω) the herd. Moreover, in v. 15, Jesus used the Greek noun for "lambs" (ἀρνίον), whereas in vv. 16 and 17, he made reference to "sheep" (πρόβατον). Alongside the possibility of stylistic variation, these linguistic differences likely emphasize that Peter was to do more than spiritually feed God's people. The apostle was also to watch over them, just as a shepherd would stand guard over the vulnerable domesticated animals.

5. A Descriptive Analysis of the Fourth Gospel's Portrait of Judas Iscariot

In keeping with what was noted earlier, the Fourth Gospel, like the Synoptic Gospels, contains far less information about Judas Iscariot than Simon Peter.[44] Nonetheless, there is enough biblical data in the Evangelist's treatise to arrive at a salient portrait of Jesus's betrayer. Intriguingly, in several places within John's Gospel, the depiction the Evangelist conveys for Judas Iscariot is interspersed among correlative information involving Simon Peter. This observation further incentivizes the value of undertaking a case study analysis of these two individuals as they are depicted in the Fourth Gospel.

The Evangelist first mentions Judas Iscariot in John 6:71. The broader literary context is Jesus's feeding of over 5 000 people and his walking on water. These episodes recorded in chapter 6 are followed by Jesus's presentation of himself as the living bread who came down from heaven to offer eternal life to all who believed in him. Jesus defined that heavenly bread as his body and foretold that he would sacrifice it on the cross. Indeed, anyone who, by faith, partook of him and his words would live forever (vv. 50–51). What the Savior declared deeply offended his ethnic Jewish peers (v. 52). Jesus did not make it any easier for his aggrieved detractors, for he explicitly stated that it was necessary for them to consume his "flesh" (v. 53; σάρξ) and ingest his "blood" (αἷμα). What Jesus taught at the "synagogue in Capernaum" (v. 59) was loathsome to his interlocutors (vv. 54–60), because the Law of Moses forbade them from ingesting any "blood" (Deut 12:23) when they ate. The penalty for breaking this ordinance was to be treated as an outcast from the covenant community (Lev 17:10–14).

The strong, negative reaction Jesus experienced did not catch him by surprise. After all, he was cognizant from the start of his public ministry who would genuinely trust in him, along with who would eventually hand him over to the authorities (John 6:61–64). The Evangelist's indirect, parenthetical reference to Judas Iscariot is made more explicit in vv. 70 and 71. Keener (2003, 697) opines that the mention of Judas, when juxtaposed with Peter's affirmation (recorded in vv. 68–69), "presents apostasy and confession of faith as alternatives."

The Fourth Gospel preserves Jesus's statement of sovereignly choosing the Twelve, even though he knew in advance that one of them would prove to be disloyal (v. 70). Jesus equated the fiendish action of Judas Iscariot with that of the “devil” (διάβολος), which Hendriksen (1953) clarifies can mean either “slanderer” or “false accuser.” As the BBE translation conveys (using a Hebraic idiomatic expression), Jesus’s statement has the exegetical force of Judas essentially being a “son of the Evil One” (namely, Satan).[45]

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[44] What appears in this section has been informed by the following secondary sources: Cane (2017, 24–30, 33–39); Farelly (2010, 106–117); Greene (2016, 249–287); Gubar (2009, 82–91); Kim (2004, 151–214); Klassen (1996, 137–159); Maccoby (1992, 61–78); Oropeza (2011, 182–185); Thatcher (1996, 439–448); Xavier (1995, 250–258).

The Evangelist next mentions Judas Iscariot in chapter 12. Six days before the Passover began,[46] Jesus and his disciples went to Bethany (v. 1), where the Savior visited Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. While the group ate dinner together, Mary anointed Jesus’s feet with expensive perfume. Verses 4–7 highlight a terse exchange between Jesus and Judas Iscariot. In keeping with what was noted earlier, Judas protested that the money spent on the “perfume” could have been given to the indigent. In agreement with Borchert (1996), the Fourth Gospel reveals that Judas was not a “tragic hero.” Moreover, far from caring about the destitute, Judas sought numerous opportunities to poach from a small, box-shaped container filled with donated silver coins, over which he was in charge. Carson (1991, 429) posits that Judas used the pretense of “altruism” to conceal his “personal greed.” Jesus, in response, rebuked Judas and declared that Mary’s act was special, because it honored the Son’s upcoming sacrificial death at Calvary. Perhaps the above incident convinced Judas that Jesus was not the politically motivated, sword-wielding Messiah so many of his ethnic peers longed to appear. If so, it provides one reason (of several mentioned earlier in the essay) for Judas’s premeditated decision to break faith with Jesus (Matt 24:14–16; Mark 14:10–11). John 13 deals pointedly with this act of betrayal, which occurred during a farewell meal Jesus ate with his disciples before the annual “Passover Festival” (v. 1). The Crucifixion would fulfill the Passover’s symbolism (John 1:35; Acts 8:32; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:19).

Prior to the start of the Last Supper, the “devil” (John 13:2; διάβολος) placed into the mind (καρδία) of Judas Iscariot to “betray” his loyalty to the Savior.[47] Newman and Nida (1980) paraphrase the exegetical force of βάλλω (to put or place) as the “Devil caused Judas to think.” It is unlikely that Jesus felt any personal sense of defeat about this, for he was aware that the Father had given him authority over everything. Jesus also knew that nothing could happen to him apart from the will of God, from whom Jesus had come and to whom He was returning (v. 3).

As Jesus washed his disciples’ feet, he adjudicated Peter’s objections and emphasized the importance of humble, sacrificial service (vv. 4–17). Amid this exchange, it remains unclear how Judas felt about what he heard. Perhaps Judas reacted with callous indifference, especially as Satan took control of him (v. 27). In any case, Jesus explained that his statements were not directed to all of those present at the Last Supper (v. 18). He also clarified that the decision Judas made to betray his Lord was foretold in Scripture. Specifically, Jesus quoted from the Hebrew version of Psalm 41:9. In this prayer for mercy, David noted that a trusted associate, who served in the king’s royal court and ate at his table, had lifted up his heel against the monarch. There are differing views concerning the meaning of this idiom.[48] Most likely, the idea is that one of David’s closest friends had acted treacherously by taking cruel advantage of him. What Israel’s ruler lamented found its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus, the Son of David, when

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[45] Borchert (1996) argues against any attempt to blame the Father for the “evil of Judas,” whose “rebellious heart” led him to betray the Savior.

[46] Passover (or Pesach) was annually observed in the spring between March and April.

[47] Contra Barrett (1955, 365), who maintains that καρδίαν (“heart”) in John 13:2 refers to τοῦ διαβόλου (“the devil”), not Ἰούδας Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτης (“Judas [son of] Simon Iscariot”); cf. v. 27, and the discussion in the following paragraph.

[48] Cf. Bernard (2000); Bruce (1983, 287–288); Carson (1991, 470–471); Lindars (1986, 454); Morris (1995, 552–553); Ridderbos (1997, 467); Westcott (1981, 193).

Judas Iscariot became the Nazarene's enemy by turning against him. The Savior was predicting this traitorous act before it ever happened so that when it occurred, his disciples would believe that he is the Messiah (John 13:19). The Greek is literally rendered "that I am" (ἐγώ εἰμι). One interpretive option, as put forward by Morris (1995, 553), is that Jesus made explicit reference to Exodus 3:14 and in so doing, declared himself to be the all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-living God.[49]

In John 13:21, Jesus once more emphatically stated (ἀμὴν ἀμὴν; "Amen, Amen") that one of the Twelve would "betray" him. Aside from Judas Iscariot, the rest of the "disciples" failed to comprehend whom Jesus meant (v. 22). Because John was "reclining" (v. 23) at the table close beside Jesus, Peter made a nonverbal gesture to John to learn whom Jesus had in mind (v. 24).[50] Accordingly, John leaned over to the Savior and asked him to identify the culprit (v. 25). Jesus did so by "dipping" (v. 26) a "piece" of unleavened "bread" in a "dish" filled with sauce and handing it to Judas Iscariot.[51] After Judas took and ate the morsel, he fell under Satan's control and heeded Jesus's prompting to hurry in executing the villainous deed (v. 27). Even then, the rest of the Twelve remained oblivious concerning the turn of events that was about to unfold (v. 28). Bernard (2000) elucidates that Jesus's gesture was a common "courtesy" of the day, which clarifies why it easily "escaped the notice" of Judas's peers. They theorized that Jesus either urged Judas to purchase additional supplies to ensure a proper observance of Passover or that he make a charitable donation to the "poor" (v. 29).

However, none of the above mattered to Judas. He promptly left the cohort under the cover of darkness to carry out his nefarious plan (v. 30). Cane (2017, 39) stresses that, for the Evangelist, "night" was filled with "symbolic import."[52] Indeed, Judas's cold and calculating deed fitted Jesus's description of the renegade disciple as the "son of destruction" (17:12).[53] Xavier (1995, 256) refers to Judas as departing from Jesus, the "light of the world." Yet, for Jesus, a divinely-foreordained chain of events was now set in motion that would result in the glorification of the Father and the Son (13:31–32).

At some point during the evening, Jesus and the disciples moved to Gethsemane (Matt 26:36; Mark 14:32; John 18:1). Suddenly, the rattle of weapons disturbed the quiet of the garden, for Judas escorted a gaggle of priests, temple guards, and elders to the olive grove (John 18:2–3). Next, Judas greeted Jesus with a kiss on the cheek. Despite this customary gesture signaling amity between friends and family, treachery filled Judas's heart. Moreover, though his behavior seemed appropriate, Jesus saw the evil Judas's actions were meant to conceal (Luke 22:47–48). The dire turn of events did not fluster Jesus, including Judas's crass decision to stand with the arresting squad (John 18:5). The reason is that Jesus fully knew everything that was about to happen to him (v. 4).

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[49] Cf. Isa 41:4; 43:10, 13; in which the Hebrew, אני־הוא, "I (am) he," is rendered ἐγώ εἰμι in the Septuagint.

[50] Kruse (2003) refers to the "low U-shaped table" as a "triclinium," around which the attendees leaned on their "elbows," with their "heads" positioned toward and their "feet away from the table."

[51] Carson (1991, 474) indicates that the "bowl" was filled with a "fruit purée" consisting of "dates, raisins, and sour wine." Bruce (1983, 290) adds that Jesus, as the "host" of the meal, showed "special favor" to Judas by offering him the "appetizing morsel."

[52] Cf. John 3:2; 9:4; 11:10.

[53] Jesus used a Semitic idiom (ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας), which referred to someone who was destined for loss and perdition; cf. 2 Thess 2:3; Beasley-Murray (1999); Bernard (2000); Lindars (1986, 525–526); Morris (1995, 644–645); Ridderbos (1997, 553); Uraguchi (1918, 358). That said, as Ryan (2019, 223) observes, an analysis of the biblical data does not warrant vilifying Judas as the "embodiment of evil and the prototypical betrayer," along with using that caricature as a pretext for antisemitism. For an exploration of how Judas-legends were used to foster antisemitism, see Gubar (2009, 6–13, 114–117, 259–285, 389–393); Maccoby (1992, 101–40).

6. Conclusion: A Theological Assessment of Peter's Denial Versus Judas's Betrayal of Jesus

The preceding sections of the essay have undertaken a case study analysis of Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot. In terms of their similarities, Jesus chose both as members of the original Twelve. Also, both Peter and Judas remained followers of Jesus throughout his three-year public ministry. Furthermore, both Peter and Judas took lead roles among the Twelve, such as Peter acting as the group's spokesperson and Judas overseeing the cohort's moneybag. Additionally, they both tried to undermine Jesus's redemptive mission, albeit in completely dissimilar ways and for entirely different reasons.[54]

In terms of dissimilarities, Peter tended to be more spontaneous and impetuous in his disposition, whereas Judas operated in a more calculating and deliberative manner. On one level, both Peter and Judas failed Jesus in his moment of greatest challenge and need. Yet, on another level, the nature of their respective offenses resulted in vastly different ends. For Peter, though he denied Jesus three times, he repented of his transgression and was restored as a disciple of the Savior. For Judas, his betrayal of Jesus led to the renegade's despair, remorse, and suicide.

Moreover, though Judas Iscariot was associated with the Messiah, heard his teaching, and witnessed his works, he did not have an abiding spiritual union with the Son. Rather than bearing fruit, the life of Judas ended in ruin. Jesus taught Simon Peter the same truths and gave him the same sorts of opportunities to witness that Jesus had given Judas. Peter did not begin his life as a disciple with enormous success, but after some pruning (such as his denial of the Son and later reinstatement), Peter bore much fruit. He found the key to a productive life in a living relationship with the Savior.

Having synthesized the broad contours of the information presented in the preceding sections of the essay, the final task in this concluding section is to explore the underlying theological reason for these two divergent outcomes.[55] To be specific, why did Peter's denial of Jesus result in life for Peter, whereas Judas's betrayal of the Savior bring about Judas's demise?[56] Insight arises by placing the Fourth Gospel's portrayal of these two iconic disciples in conversation with 2 Corinthians 7:10–11.[57]

The above passage states that "godly sorrow brings about repentance" (*κατὰ θεὸν λύπη μετάνοιαν … ἐργάζεται*).[58] The emphasis here is on a grief-stricken conscience (*λύπη*) that accords with God's will (or, as the REB translates κατὰ θεόν, “borne in God’s way”). Not only do the penitent renounce their sinful behavior (μετάνοια, or a turnabout in one’s thinking and behavior), but they also experience the fulness of the temporal and eternal “salvation” (σωτηρία) that Jesus freely offers. Amid the entire process there is no “regret” (ἀμεταμέλητος) or lingering feelings of remorse for the emotional affliction they experienced. In contrast (signaled by the adversative use of δέ), “worldly” forms of “grief” (τοῦ κόσμου λύπη; that is, permeated by heathen ideations) lack genuine repentance. It is a self-centered and self-destructive type of guilt and paralyzing kind of shame. Those affected in this way are left feeling resentful, despondent, and tormented. The presence of indignation and animosity, whether directed at oneself or others (or both), inevitably “produces” (compare the previous use of ἐργάζεται with κατεργάζεται here)[59] physical and spiritual “death” (θάνατος).

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[54] In a comparable manner, Farelly (2010, 97) submits that Peter and Judas "both desire to divert Jesus from the way leading to his Passion."

[55] Kim (2004, 25) charts a different course than this essay by considering Peter and Judas, respectively, through the interpretive lens of an "anti-apostasy polemic." Kim reasons that the Evangelist's "narrative presentation" of "Peter and Judas" functions as a "warning against apostasy." Moreover, Kim surmises that this approach serves to "protect the confessional kerygma" of the early Johannine "believing community."

[56] Greene (2016, 291–294) also deliberates the disparate outcomes experienced by Peter and Judas. Yet, in contrast to this essay, Greene mainly treats these two disciples as fictional literary characters, whose respective predispositions explain the reason for their differing fates. Specifically, on the one hand, Greene describes Judas as being "completely cynical, self-serving, and hypocritical." On the other hand, while Greene regards Peter as "sincere in his love for Jesus," Peter is said to be "initially too enthralled by ideas of worldly authority and personal status." Just as significant, Greene considers these dissimilar portraits found in the four Gospels as indicators of each Evangelist's "values and ideals," as well as a window into the "entire worldview" each of them held.

[57] Admittedly, the idea of 2 Cor 7:10–11 being illustrated by the experiences of Peter and Judas is not original to this essay; yet, the detailed usage of the passage as an interpretive lens in the discourse that follows is quite distinctive; cf. the brief observations made by the following: Barker (1999); Barton (1999); Belleville (1996); Garland (1999); Kim (2004, 212–213); Kistemaker (1997, 255); Kruse (2015); Martin (2014, 399); Plummer (1999); Seifrid (2014).

[58] The exegetical analysis of 2 Cor 7:10–11 has been informed by the following secondary sources: Barnett (1997); Best (1987); Garland (1999); Harris (2005); Hughes (1962); Kistemaker (1997); Kruse (2015); Omanson and Ellington (1993); Martin (2014); Plummer (1999); Pratt (2000); Seifrid (2014); Thrall (1994).

Verse 10 provides a salient theological explanation for the divergent outcomes experienced by Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot. Succinctly put, Peter’s grief was heartfelt and Spirit-induced, so much so that it turned him away from his iniquity and back to the Redeemer for pardon and cleansing. In contrast, Judas’s remorse was from below, not from above, so much so that it drove him further away from the Savior, inundated Judas with bitterness, and brought about his demise. Verse 11 takes the analysis further. When applied to Simon Peter, it is reasonable to surmise that his “godly sorrow,” though at first emotionally painful, created within him an earnest desire to draw closer to God and become once again a useful, productive bondservant in his kingdom. The closing two chapters of the Fourth Gospel, along with the opening chapters of Acts, bear witness to this remarkable turnaround in Peter’s life.

Oppositely, nothing of the sort could be said of Judas Iscariot. Evidently, his ruefulness was not so much over his transgression, as it was over the unwelcomed consequences that his iniquity spawned (especially Jesus’s death). Also, Judas’s anguish diminished his relationship with the Savior, along with the rest of his followers. The consistent witness of the gospels and Acts is that Judas’s ill-fated choices led to his undoing.

From a pastoral perspective, the way in which believers respond to challenging life circumstances can become more important than the circumstances themselves. For instance, as with Simon Peter, when the Spirit convicts Jesus’s followers of sin in their lives, the proper response is for them to repent and receive God’s forgiveness. Dissimilarly, as with Judas Iscariot, the inappropriate response is to wallow in self-pity and plunge down a path leading to temporal and eternal destruction.

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[59] Huges (1962, 272) surmises that κατεργάζεται signifies an “intensive compound” of ἐργάζεται, which Paul used to “emphasize the inevitability” of θάνατος.

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Spiritual Birth, Living Water, and New Creation: Mapping Life-Giving Metaphors in the Fourth Gospel

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Abstract

The Gospel of John contains various memorable metaphors, drawing on the lived realities of its audience to encapsulate the depths of its Christology and central message. Seamlessly interwoven into the fabric of the gospel is the metaphor of (life-giving) water, offered by Jesus and ultimately provided by him. A related metaphor is that of new birth, signifying the changed allegiance and ethos of those who come to believe. Finally, the new creation imagery with its Edenic setting and Jesus breathing Spirit-life into his disciples illustrates something of the *effect* of an encounter with the life-giving God. Drawing on Cognitive Metaphor Theory, this paper demonstrates that imagery of birth, water, and new life can work together to create a metanarrative. The analysis follows the ramifications of this imagery in its literary context, its rhetorical function in the narrative, and the way in which the metaphors of birth, water, and life potentially work together to produce a larger picture that ministers to those who carry the realities of giving, nurturing, and sustaining life in their bodies. From the prologue and its birth-giving God, through the birth from above promised to Nicodemus, the living water promised to a Samaritan woman, and the Holy Spirit as living water flowing from the innermost being, the narrative flows seamlessly to the cross where the life-giving blood and water flow from the side of Jesus and into the resurrection dimension of a new creation.

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SATS
Bible-based. Christ-centred. Spirit-led.

1. Methodological Approach

From the traditional approach which distinguishes metaphor from the embodied/real world (see Baldick 2001, 153),[1] through Derrida's (1974) argument that even the description of the "real" world is couched in metaphorical terms, the complex philosophical and literary history of metaphors and their analysis is apparent. Taking seriously Derrida's objections against the classical definition of metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT) (and its various expressions and expansions) provides a popular alternative to the classical definition. This approach works from an understanding of common human experiences, like "the body as a container," and so demonstrates that metaphors are part-and-parcel of our constructed reality. While not without valid critiques (see Bal 1993; Code 1991; Landy 1993; Kövecses 2008),[2] CMT offers an integrated analysis of metaphors and their functions throughout a body of material, which has been well-used in the field of Biblical Studies (Jindo 2010; Brown 2003; Brettler 1998; Kotze 2004).

The utility of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) methodology for the Johannine text and its rich variety of metaphors is evident. Stovell (2012, 19) laments the tendency in the study of Johannine metaphor to either totalize (force all Johannine imagery under one metaphor) or atomize (deconstruct metaphorical structures to their smallest parts). She proposes that Johannine metaphors rather be examined for how they "work as a mutually informing conceptual network." Cognitive analysts speak of conceptual domains, systems of understanding in which various metaphors are tied up into one (Lakoff 1990). An important question to ask is, *how* does a metaphor hang together with other figures of speech and themes (see Jindo 2010, 19–20)? Additionally, a cognitive approach to metaphor holds that the unit of a metaphor often exceeds its syntactical reference and immediate literary context or unit (43, 48). Such an analysis, therefore, looks beyond the explicit instance of the metaphor (whether in one word, phrase, or sentence) and seeks to map it in its entire conceptual domain.

Building on the above, we draw from CMT to analyze the metaphors of birth and water in the Fourth Gospel. Such an approach is marked by two objectives—(1) reading metaphors in terms of their wider conceptual domains, and (2) underlining the reorienting work of the metaphor in the world of its audience(s). Such a reading guards against the dangers of atomizing imagery and seeks to comment on the unfolding, holistic mosaic plotted by a variety of images (cf. Lee 2016, 160).[3] Moreover, it guards against totalizing metaphors and images by acknowledging fluidity of meanings in different contexts and highlighting the possibility of integrative meaning (see Kristeva 1987, 268; Landy 1993, 221). In this article, we approach our topic in terms of a three-act drama: namely, act one, the birth from above (John 1, 3, 16); act two, the living water (John 4, 7); act three, a fusion of birth, water, and creation centered in the cross and the resurrection narratives (John 19–20).

2. Act One—[Spiritual] Birth

The Johannine prologue introduces a life-giving God—first by referring to divine creation (with ὁ λόγος as agent) in vv. 1–4, followed by the metaphor of divine birthing in vv. 12–13. Verse 12 clearly creates the connection between language of belief (ὅσοι ἔλαβον αὐτόν; τοῖς πιστεύουσιν) and language of birth.[4] All who receive ὁ λόγος and believe in his name, have been given ἐξουσίαν to become τέκνα θεοῦ (v. 12). The Fourth Gospel's offer of kinship is curious. Unlike Paul's familiar language, where believers become sons (υἱοὶ) through the process of adoption by God as father, the evangelist implies that believers will become part of God's family through a *birth* with God as maternal figure (ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν—1:13). The nature of this birth is expounded in three parallel phrases that are antithetical to ἐκ θεοῦ: ἐξ αἱμάτων (from/out of bloods), ἐκ θελήματος σαρκὸς (from/out of the will of [the] flesh), and ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς (from/out of [a] man).

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[1] The classical definition of a metaphor (see Baldick 2001, 153) proposes a clear distinction between the real subject, also called the tenor (e.g., God), and the metaphorical vehicle (e.g., our Rock).

[2] In the main, issues raised by scholars are "the deceptiveness of universality" and the introduction of "relativism" (Bal 1993, 189). Such a generic approach to human experience diminishes differences like gender and age, so creating epistemological problems (Bal 1993, 185, 189; see Code 1991).

[3] Lee (2016, 153) notes that a specific image can become "a network, shifting in unexpected ways." Using the metaphor of water as an example, she argues that it is used in various ways throughout the gospel, including to quench thirst (4:13–14; 7:37–38), ceremonially cleanse (2:6), and wash (13:5–10), to name a few.

Of significance is that the evangelist refers to αἷμα (blood) in the plural (αἱμάτων—v. 13). Weissenrieder (2014, 78) identifies this use as reminiscent of typical embryotic language as the bloods in the plural could refer to the embryo which is nourished by "different forms of maternal blood." Greek thought commonly assumed that the embryo was a product of the seed of the father and the blood of the mother (Aristotle De Partibus Animalium, 11 2.649620-65082; 11 9.65462-11). ἐκ θελήματος σαρκὸς brings to mind two realities: one is the ancient understanding that children were conceived "in parental passion" (Keener 2010, 761), and the other, the backdrop of Israel being God's children according to the flesh (cf. Deut 32:6, 18). Finally, ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς (masculine singular) probably evokes the shared understanding of the role of the father in the birthing process. Whilst women gave birth in the first-century Mediterranean world, the father ultimately decided whether the child would be raised or abandoned (Keener 2010, 761; see Malina et al. 1995, 7; Wordelman, 1998, 486–487). We can thus refer to the distinction between giving birth and giving life, as these are part of one process with the mother and father both serving a distinct role (Nortje-Meyer 2009, 131). Whilst v. 12 hints at the fatherly life-giving role (God giving the believers ἐξουσία to become his children), v. 13 introduces God as the one to give birth (γεννάω)—an image not unique to the Fourth Gospel (see, e.g., Isa 42:14; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:3, 23; 1 John 2:29; 3:9;[5] 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). The Johannine prologue thus introduces God metaphorically as fulfilling both a life-giving paternal and a birth-giving maternal role to those who believe.

In terms of the prologue's literary layout, the location of this phraseology speaks volumes about the importance of the metaphor. Culpepper (1981, 14) convincingly argues that 1:12b emerges as the pivot of the chiastic prologue and that ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι thus serves as the point of the most heightened emphasis—the "bottom line" of the prologue (15), flagging τέκνα θεοῦ as one of the salient themes of the Fourth Gospel (31). Additionally, the absence of a physical birth narrative for Jesus underscores his divine sonship—an essential truth for the implied audience (see 20:31).[6] Jesus, the one at the bosom (κόλπος) of the Father (1:18), will be the one to demonstrate divine kinship and lineage throughout the Fourth Gospel.[7]

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4 Furthermore, the fact that vv. 12–13 appear as one sentence in the Greek highlights the connection between belief and the type of birth described in v. 13.

5 The coupling of σπέρμα and γεννάω is curious here. To remedy this, the NET opts to translate the latter as "fathered" in the first Johannine letter. Whilst the attempt to reconcile the paternal and maternal can be commended, this translation dissolves the maternal into the paternal and potentially mutes the Johannine emphasis on birth.

6 Jesus loosening himself from his earthly mother in John 19:26–27 further strengthens this point.

7 The lexical evidence indicates that the use of κόλπος here cannot be reduced to meaning "womb" (Arndt et al. 2000, 556; contra Kitzberger 2003, 206 and Nortje-Meyer 2009, 132). However, the intimacy of the Son and Father is highlighted in this verse. We hear echoes of this language of kinship and lineage throughout the FG (e.g., 12:36; 14:18; 21:5).

The theme of birth recurs in chapter three in the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. In response to Nicodemus's honorable affirmation of Jesus's divine mission, Jesus asserts that unless someone (*τις*) is born (*γεννάω*) from above (or, "again"; *ἄνωθεν*), they will not be able to see the Kingdom of God.[8] To the implied audience, familiar with the prologue, Jesus's comment connects seamlessly with 1:12–13. As Jesus is the "from above" son of God, those born of God will also be birthed from above—in other words, they will be birthed (or begotten, see Carson 1991, 194) by God.[9] The agency of God in this process is yet again stressed by the combination of a passive action (*γεννηθῇ*) and Jesus's assertion that spirit gives birth to spirit (3:6; cf. 6:63). OT references to God as the one placing his Spirit inside his people (Ezek 36:26; 37:5, 14) portray this notion of God (who is spirit; 4:24) birthing his Spirit inside of those who believe (Köstenberger 2004, 124). Nicodemus will not re-enter the womb of his mother, but will, in continuity with the metaphorical language of the prologue, be conceived in the womb "from above" and given new life and lineage as a child of God.[10] As with the prologue, birth language and language of belief bleed into one another (3:12, 15, 16, 18, 36). Additionally, in similar fashion to the prologue, reproductive undertones can be identified in Jesus's use of *γεννηθῇ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος*—language typically used to describe physical birth in ancient medical treatises, which included both *πνεῦμα*—that which nourishes and solidifies the embryo—and *ὕδωρ*—the amniotic fluid in which the child leaves the mother's womb (see Weissenreider 2014, 77).[11]

Not only does the life-giving and reproductive metaphor used here hearken back to the prologue, but it echoes into the rest of the Fourth Gospel. For example, the connection between John 3 and John 8 is evident (Culpepper 1981, 28–29; Sandnes 2005, 168). In both events, the lineage of Jesus's interlocutors is deemed insufficient—Nicodemus must be born from above (or, as he understands it, "again") and in John 8, the Judeans are called illegitimate children (8:41).[12] Language of life and reproduction takes on a different dimension in 16:21–22 as the sorrow and joy of the disciples are described by it. This imagery is nothing new. It is found in the OT (Isa 26:17–21; 66:7–14; Jer 13:21; Mic 4:9–10) and Mark 13:8 to describe the sufferings and subsequent deliverance of God's people. Whilst the reference seems to focus on the disciples' progress through grief to joy, the same progression is visible in Jesus's death and resurrection, as well as his departure and return (Lee 2016, 165). This imagery not only acknowledges the pain ahead for both Jesus and his community of followers, but hints at new life found beyond emblems of pain (the cross, departure, persecution), essentially, according to Lee, reshaping pain and distress into something that holds the promise of life at the other end—a metaphor uniquely displayed in and by the female body (ἡ γυνὴ).[13]

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[8] While ἄνωθεν can mean "from above" or "again," the implied audience (contra to Nicodemus) would probably understand it to mean the former, considering the evangelist's other uses of the word (3:31; 19:11; cf. 8:23). Nevertheless, as double entendre is part of the evangelist's literary style (see, e.g., ὑψωθῆναι in 3:14) the latter is not ruled out. The metaphor of being born again was used in Rabbinic Judaism to refer to conversion (proselytism) (Brant 2011, 75; Keener 2003, 542–543; Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998, 82). While it could not be said with certainty that this metaphor had gained any traction in Second Temple Judaism, perhaps this is the tradition that Nicodemus draws on when hearing the metaphor.

[9] It was not uncommon for both Greeks and Jews to speak of God as the one from above (Keener 2010, 957), meaning that being born from above is nothing other than being birthed by God as in 1:13—a process that transforms the believer into a child with heavenly origin, just like Jesus (Sandnes 2005, 156).

[10] While water is only mentioned once in this discussion (3:5), Koester (2003, 183) holds that it is assumed in the ensuing discussion but not mentioned because the emphasis falls on the Spirit—the new dimension that Jesus introduces.

[11] Witherington (1989, 155–160), in a similar vein, has demonstrated a connection between John 3:5 and 1 John 5:6–8, arguing that τὸ πνεῦμα, τὸ ὕδωρ, and τὸ αἷμα refer to a physical birth. Weissenrieder (2014, 77) identifies γεννηθῇ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος as a hendiadys, evoking the image of a physical birth. Others, like Keener (2010, 969) and Carson (1991, 191–192) have called this interpretation into question, arguing that "from blood" would have been a far clearer way of speaking of natural birth (cf. 1:12; Keener 2010, 970). Keener, however, concedes that this could be "because midwives were women and rabbis were men." O'Day (1988, 59) argues that the conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus brings to the fore the encounter between YHWH and Sarah (Gen 18:12), who laughs at the idea of giving birth because of her age and barrenness. Similarly, Nicodemus asks the question, "How is it possible?" O'Day therefore equates the offer of new life made out of barrenness to Abraham and Sarah to the one made to Nicodemus.

[12] In both of these instances, the interchangeability of language of birth and belief ought to be kept in mind. Both Nicodemus and the Judeans are essentially criticized for unbelief.

3. Act Two—Living Water

Three times in the Gospel of John (4:10, 11; 7:38),[14] we encounter the phrase "living water" ([τὸ] ὕδωρ [τὸ] ζῶν).[15] The first time this metaphor is used is in Jesus's conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well (4:1–41). The detour on the way to Jerusalem for a festival provides the occasion for the recounting of an extended conversation—one of the longest in the gospel. Jesus initiates the conversation by asking the woman for a drink (v. 7). The writer fills this *tête-à-tête* with the most delicate of nuances, remarkable and complex irony, and not least robust debate.

Ashton (2020, 191) laments that most interpreters miss the double entendre at play in the expression ὕδωρ ζῶν. Whilst the woman could have heard "living water," chances are that she interpreted Jesus's offer in v. 10 as "running water," which explains her response in v. 11.[16] The Latin term, *aqua viva*, was a Roman expression for water flowing from a stream, as opposed to still-standing water in a well or cistern (Aune 2017, 479; Beasley-Murray 1999; Koester 2003, 188), which was metaphorically associated with "divine powers and the Muses who inspired art, music, and poetry" (Koester 2003, 199) as well as the spirit of prophecy. The well in question would have been regarded as one containing such living or running water, as its source was an underground spring below Samaria (Brant 2011, 84). The woman thus sees the quenching utility in Jesus's offer (v. 12, 15), which he affirms (v. 14).

Both Jews and Samaritans would also recognize living water as something to be used in purification from the uncleanness brought about by skin disease and bodily discharge (Lev 14:5–6, 50–52; Num 19:17).[17] As some Jews regarded Samaritans, and especially Samaritan women, to be in a continual state of uncleanness (cf. v. 9; Carson 1991, 218), Jesus's breaking of ethnic and religious boundaries (vv. 21–24) affirms the cleansing function of this living water.[18] The discourse manipulates the normally straightforward notions of insider-outsider, allowing Jesus to cross the boundaries of gender and race, until the woman is admitted to the status of an insider (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998, 100).

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[13] In her discussion of Jesus's mother as Eve or the new Eve in the FG, Nortje-Meyer (2009, 128, 134), in what appears to be a stretch of the imagination, identifies the woman mentioned in John 16:21 with Jesus's mother as both are described by the use of γυνή (cf. 2:4), arguing that the imagery of ἡ ὥρα connects the woman in the parable to Jesus, and the use of ἄνθρωπος reminds of other instances in the FG where Jesus is labelled as such (e.g., 18:37). Such an interpretation merits some critique. γυνή is used multiple times for other women in the FG (4:7, 9, 11, 15, 17, 19, 25, 27, 28, 39, 42; 8:3, 4, 9, 10; 20:13, 15). Additionally, Nortje-Meyer's argument disregards the genre of the parable and its clear referent as explained by Jesus in 16:22.

[14] Also alluded to in 4:13, 14, 15.

[15] Living water is also found in Song 4:15, Jer 2:13, 17:13, Zech 14:8, and Rev 7:17. In Revelation, we find the genitive noun, ζωῆς, as opposed to the adjectival participle as used in John. It can therefore be translated as "living water," "water of life" (with ζωῆς as a descriptive genitive), or "water, namely life" (ζωῆς as appositional genitive).

[16] Ashton (2020, 221) thus labels "living water" as a Johannine riddle.

[17] The Samaritans, whose descendants continue to live in Samaria, were probably a strict Jewish group, like the Pharisees and Essenes at least from the Hasmonean period onwards (Bourgel 2019; Pummer 2010). Assertions about their racial and religious purity have not been substantiated by a critical reading of the prevailing sources (see Hjelm 2000, who argues on the basis of existing documentation that the theory of the questionable ethnicity and religious purity of the Samaritans should be abandoned). The name the Samaritans (Heb. *Shamerim*) embodies the meaning of those who keep (the Jewish Law), hence, The Keepers (Anderson 1992).

[18] The living waters offered to the woman of Samaria could be both the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah and the Holy Spirit. Water imagery is commonly used in the OT to illustrate an outpouring of the Spirit on Israel. Moreover, the Spirit is often referred to as the gift from God, language

On the surface, both drinking and washing are thus appropriate interpretive frameworks for the metaphor here. However, the possibility of "life-giving water" also requires some consideration.[19] When the effects of this woman's evangelism are considered, the interpretive frame of life-giving and reproductive language becomes a probability. Jesus promises (v. 14) that the ingested living water will become a spring or well (πηγὴ), leaping up (ἁλλομένου) to eternal life. As the townspeople believe in Jesus, they become born from above, as Jesus's exhortation to Nicodemus describes it. Moreover, the water in this pericope removes ethnic divides between people (Mligo 2014, 45). It does not function to merely *cleanse* the Samaritan woman, but it serves to *re-identify* her—to birth her anew into a family who worships one Father, neither here nor there. The correlation to 1:13 is clear here. The living water transforms those who believe into children of the divine, not on the basis of natural descent. Whilst not explicit, a dimension of Jesus's interaction with the Samaritan woman thus ties into the conceptual domain of birth and new life.

In John 7 the evangelist tells of Jesus's attendance of the feast of Tabernacles, in which he uses two significant metaphors, namely light and water. In 7:38 Jesus speaks of streams of living water (ὕδατος ζῶντος) that will flow ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ (7:38). John's Gospel uses the term κοιλία twice—in the Nicodemian discourse and here. While translators and interpreters have no difficulty rendering Nicodemus's use of the word as womb (3:4), such agreement is not found in John 7:38, with translations ranging from heart, to belly, to innermost being (see Carson 1991, 324). This reluctance departs from standard exegetical practice of exploring a word's other uses in the same text. Nicodemus does not ask whether a grown man can enter a second time into his mother's heart, belly, or innermost being. One possible reason for the reluctance to opt for womb is the use of the masculine pronoun αὐτοῦ, since clearly men do not have wombs. However, it needs to be stressed that such logical confines do not apply to metaphor. The birthing God in 1:12 has no physical womb either (nor does the presence of a maternal metaphor suddenly re-identify God as "she"). Accordingly, we suggest that John 7:38 can serve as a double entendre, containing—but not limited to—the meaning, "Out of his womb will flow streams of living water."

The pronoun αὐτοῦ is particularly curious. It can be seen to point back to the antecedent, ὁ πιστεύων (the one who believes) with Jesus promising that streams of living water (ποταμοὶ ... ὕδατος ζῶντος) will flow from the womb of such a person (cf. 4:14). Yet, the evangelist identifies the Spirit as living water, to be received upon Jesus's glorification in v. 39. From the witness of the Fourth Gospel, it is clear that the giver of the Spirit is Jesus (e.g., 4:10; 15:26; 20:22). If read this way, the connection to the prologue is yet again seamless, as Jesus, the "born-from-above" Son is pre-empting the coming of the "born-from-above" Spirit, again affirming God as the one who gives life. While the weight of the imagery could be said to fall primarily

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used here by Jesus (v. 10). The welling up of water to eternal life is emblematic of OT language expressing the Spirit's outpouring on a person (Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam 10:10; cf. Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17; Heb 6:4; Koester 2003, 191). Aune (2017, 480) notes that the term was used metaphorically by the early church to refer to "prophetic inspiration (Ignatius Rom. 7:2), baptism (Justin *Dial*. 14.1), Christ (Justin *Dial*. 69.6), the teaching of Christ (Clement of Alex. *Strom*. 7.16), and the Holy Spirit (Didymus *Trin*. 2.22; PGL, 1425)."

[19] Barrett (1978, 233) speaks in terms of living water as fresh flowing water but also of water creating and maintaining life (cf. Jer 2:13; Zech 14:8). Noteworthy is that the discussion of living water is broader in commentaries on the Book of Revelation—the possible reason being that studies on John 4 are guided by the setting of the well, which drives the interpretive frame for the metaphor and disqualifies alternative interpretational possibilities.

on Jesus as the source of the living water (Brant 2011, 140), both Jesus and the believer can be in view here (see Koester 2003, 14).[20]

When the context of the feast of Tabernacles is taken into consideration, Jesus's divine agency is further reinforced.[21] During the festival, pilgrims came to Jerusalem for seven days of celebration and prayer. The timing of the festival would be at the completion of the harvest: a time when rain would be important for the preparation of fruitful soil and the water rites associated with the festival were symbolic of provision and fruitfulness brought about by rain (Carson 1991, 324). The pilgrims would thus pray for "life-nurturing water" (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998, 154). Jesus's proclamation comes to fulfil the prophetic visions which describe the time of God's abundance (Zech 14:8; Ezek 47:1–11).[22] The fallen world is metaphorically barren and cursed—a reality that Jesus comes to reverse as he inaugurates the eschatological new age (Menn 2013, 440). The "living waters," therefore, represent not only a quenching and cleansing, but also a life-giving fruitfulness.

This imagery points both backward and forward. It takes the reader back to the transformation and mission of the Samaritan woman (cf. 4:14) and to the Nicodemian discourse as the narrator's note in v. 39 evokes the image of spirit giving birth to spirit (3:6). Finally, the imagery points forward to the crucifixion, particularly the flowing of water and blood from Jesus's side.

4. Act Three—From the Cross to the new creation

Only in the Fourth Gospel is the audience introduced to the account of the water and blood flowing from Jesus's pierced side (19:34). The evangelist interrupts the narrative with an aside and affirms its purpose, which is to convince the audience to become believers (v. 35a). The event is witnessed by one described as the one who has seen (ὁ ἑωρακὼς) and whose testimony is to be trusted (v. 35b). The editorial note does more than highlight the historical value of the event—it emphasizes its theological gravitas (Brown 1972, 947; see Barrett 1978, 556; Keener 2003, 1981–1984).

An interesting observation is that the evangelist finds it necessary to explicitly mention both water and blood.[23] Brown (1972, 946) aptly remarked that, whatever liquid were to flow from Jesus's side, it would have been a mixed cocktail of various bodily emissions from the wound of someone who had just died. It is for this reason that it can be assumed that the evangelist purposefully singles out the two elements in his description. Both blood and water have made prior appearances in the Fourth Gospel (e.g., 4:14; 6:55; 7:38f),[24] but their coupling in this scene is curious and has plagued interpreters for centuries.

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[20] Although some (Carson 1991, 326–328; Sandnes 2005, 165) would contest this view and argue that Jesus solely speaks of the believer here, our approach holds that metaphor is multidimensional. Similar to the symbol of bread, where Jesus is both the bread and its giver (6:51), the bringing together of the bread and water in 6:35 places water symbolism in a similar category. The living water can stream both from Jesus and the believer.

[21] The notion of life-giving water resonates with the calendar setting of the Feast of Tabernacles. The feast was a week-long memorial of Israel's forty years in the wilderness (see Lev 23:42–43). Living in temporary shelters for a week, those who celebrated this festival did it in memory of their forefathers' temporary shelters in the desert. Just like Moses, who provided water for the Israelites, Jesus comes and offers water to the crowd and fulfils God's promise to send another prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15–18). Davidic undertones are also present here. Jesus's claim alludes to Zech 14:8, a passage promising living waters which would flow out of Jerusalem. When water and blood flow from Jesus's side (John 19:34), the evangelist recalls Zech 12:10. Lodged between these two allusions is Zech 13:1, a related passage speaking of a fountain to be opened for the house of David. The image of flowing water could have, therefore, brought connections to the Davidic messiah to the fore (see Koester 2003, 196).

[22] On each day of the festival, the priest would fill a golden pitcher with water from the pool of Siloam and pour the water into a smaller vessel which caused it to drain into the altar (Carson 1991, 321–322; Koester 2003, 197). This was done to proclaim that, as God had provided water in the past, he will be faithful in sending rain in the approaching year. Jesus's invitation is made on the last day of the feast, which would include a special tradition of water pouring and a ceremony of lights (*m. Sukkah* 4.1, 9-10). Not only was the last day the climax of the festival, but Jesus is essentially communicating that he is the fulfilment of Israel's hope as expressed throughout the festival (Koester 2003, 197). Scholars are, however, divided on whether the "last day" of the feast actually referred to the seventh day (Brown 1972, 320; Bultmann 1971, 302; Schnackenburg 1990, 2.152; Ridderbos 1997, 272; Burge 2000, 227), or to the day thereafter, where the pilgrims would assemble for joyful celebration (Carson 1991, 321; Barrett 1978, 326; Moloney 1998, 256; Morris 1995, 373).

[23] While the water flowing from Jesus's side could easily be associated with *ichōr*, a clear liquid that was believed to flow "from the wounds of the blessed immortals" (Plutarch, *Mor*. 180E; see Koester 2003, 203), the addition of the blood potentially points to something far more significant.

Interpretations of the water and blood include the water as baptism and the blood as eucharist (Chrysostom; see Carson 1991, 624), signs of cleansing (Grigsby 1995, 91) and the life-giving work accomplished on the cross (Dodd 1953, 428; Schnackenburg 1980, 294), emblems for Jesus's sacrificial death and cleansing of the Spirit (Osborne 2018, 390), and temple imagery (Coloe 2001, 208).[25] Whilst ritualistic interpretations hold their merit, the possibility of life-giving and reproductive imagery also needs to be considered here. Jacob of Sarug (450–520) and Augustine both recognized something of the undercurrent of maternal language in this scene (see Elowsky 2007). Other voices to explore this link include Bynum (1982, 113–135) and Witherington (1989, 156)—the latter identifying αἷμα as a technical term and well-known circumlocution "for matters involving procreation, child-bearing, child-bearing capacity, or the act of giving birth itself" in Ancient Near Eastern literature.

Some recent interpreters have highlighted the birthing metaphor in this passage. Lee (2002, 152–159) refers to the cosmic significance of Jesus's flesh in the Fourth Gospel. Jesus reveals God (1:18) in his ironically life-giving death (which she identifies as his "labor"), which paves the way for children of God to be born (1:12). Feribach (2003, 119–120) and Brant (2004, 212) also argue that the water and blood bring to mind the emissions from a female body in birth. Similarly, Coloe (2011, 7) has argued that Jesus gives birth to the new humanity, birthed from God, through his death as the water and blood symbolize the birthing moment—a new beginning (Jones 1997, 212)—adding to it a proleptic function.

Tying into the bittersweet metaphor of labor used in John 16:20–21, the event thus becomes a sign of both death and life. While it confirms that the crucified Jesus is, in fact, dead,[26] and while possible sacramental overtones are not to be disregarded, it also plays into the birth language employed by the evangelist (1:12–13; 3:3–8), especially Jesus's proclamation in 7:38 (see Barrett 1978, 556;[27] Jones 1997, 212; Koester 2003, 197).[28] Oddly, connecting this climatic event to the Johannine prologue and its promise of divine birth remains a fringe interpretation.[29] This is curious, as the Johannine prologue serves to function as the interpreting grid for the gospel. While it is true that cleansing waters ironically flow from the desecrated body of Jesus, it is equally profound that life-giving (i.e., birthing) waters flow from the dead (and yet soon to be glorified) body of our Lord.[30]

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[24] Jones (1997, 210) argues that these three references anticipate the scene in 19:34 and find partial fulfilment here.

[25] Coloe (2001, 208) identifies the blood from Jesus's side as resembling the blood of the Passover lamb flowing from the temple at the time of Jesus's death, and the water as resembling the flowing of the Spirit and life from Jesus, the eschatological temple.

[26] Carson (1991, 623) regards this as the main purpose of this eyewitness account.

[27] Barrett (1978, 556) linked this episode back to 7:38, arguing that this scene identified Jesus as the αὐτοῦ from whom the living streams flow. This event identifies Jesus as the original source of the waters of life (Jones 1997, 216).

[28] Myers (2015, 211) convincingly connects 1:12–13, 3:3–8, 7:38, and 19:34.

[29] Speculations that the blood and water refer to the baptism and eucharist are more common than interpretations linking these images to the overarching theme of birth. It is curious, however, that interpreters rather opt to engage extra-biblical theories regarding the sacramental overtones of the FG (baptism and the eucharist) in their interpretation of this passage than to engage that which the text gives them (1:12). Moreover, the inclusion of ὕδωρ would be non-sensical if the text were referring to the eucharist (see Borchert 2002).

The water flowing from the side of Jesus thus cleanses, quenches thirst, *and* also facilitates new life into the family of God—the birth from above. Moreover, in light of the language of 7:39 and 16:20–21, the lifeless body of Jesus is on the verge of birthing the life-giving Holy Spirit.

Finally, our analysis brings us to Jesus and Mary in the garden. Preceding this scene, the evangelist uniquely emphasizes that Jesus was arrested (18:1) and crucified (19:41) in a garden. This reference immediately suggests a connection to the most famous garden in Jewish literature, namely the Garden of Eden. Coloe (2011, 5) taps into this imagery, identifying an echo of Genesis 2:9 (*τὸ ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ παραδείσου*) in John 19:18's description of Jesus being crucified in the middle (*μέσον δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν*) of the two others. From this and other features,[31] she posits that the Johannine passion "suggests a deliberate evocation of the primordial Garden of Eden, and a theology of creation." The interaction between Jesus and Mary Magdalene seems to further evoke Genesis imagery as Mary ironically misidentifies Jesus as the gardener (20:15; God being the original gardener—Gen 2:8).[32] In terms of the larger picture, Mary acts out her birth into faith as she becomes the first disciple to carry the message of the resurrection to her wider world.

The kinship language used by Jesus is telling. He instructs Mary, "Go to my brothers and sisters and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (20:17). The formulaic language[33] used here indicates that the promise in the prologue (1:12–13) has been fulfilled as Mary and the other disciples have indeed been given the right to be children of God. When the risen Jesus appears to his disciples after this, he greets them with his familiar greeting of peace and assures the disciples that they need not be afraid, followed by his bestowal of the Holy Spirit in 20:22. Not only is creation imagery echoed as Jesus breathes on his disciples (cf. 2:7), but the metaphor of birthing is subtly reintroduced. The evangelist explains that Jesus "breathed [onto] them" (*ἐνεφύσησεν … αὐτοῖς*—20:22). Weissenrieder (2014) argues for birthing undertones by referring to the semantic range of the word *ἐμφυσάω*. She notes a frequent occurrence of the word in the medical sphere, specifically in the area of embryology.[34] She explains:

> *ἐμφυσάω* most often appears in embryological texts, where it encompasses the differentiation and origin of the living being, its

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30 Stibbe (1992, 118–119) refers to the potential new life flowing from Jesus in this scene. Jones (1997, 211) argues that the emission of blood and water symbolizes the gift of the Holy Spirit and thus functions as the culmination or climax (see Keener 2003, 1980) of the theme of living water.

31 Coloe (2011, 5) links Jesus's assertion "it is finished" (*tetelestai*; 19:30) with the claim that the work was finished at the end of the six-day creation ("thus the heavens and the earth were finished [*sunetelesthesan*]…. And on the seventh day God finished [*sunetelesen*] the work."—Gen 2:1–2). Jesus thus brings the work of God to completion. She (2011, 5–6) comments, "Throughout the Gospel Jesus had claimed that God in fact was still working (5:17), that the creative work of God had not yet been completed, and that he has been sent to complete (*telea*) this work (4:34; 5:36; 17:4)." Only with Jesus's words of completion on the cross is the "great Sabbath" ushered in. Perhaps latching onto creation imagery is the birthing from the side of Jesus in 19:34. Just as Eve is birthed from the side of Adam in Gen 2:21, the church is birthed by Christ through the water and the blood. This is an interpretation dating back to the fourth century, which was affirmed at the Council of Vienne (1312) to counter the interpretation of the spiritualists who argued that the church only came into being in the Middle Ages (Brown 1972, 949). The unusual use of the singular τὴν πλευρὰν is probably intentional as it mimics the use of the singular in the LXX (see Brown 1972, 935).

32 The command not to touch appears in both (ἅψησθε in Gen 3:3; ἅπτου in John 20:17).

33 Bruce (1983) connects the language here to the words of Ruth 1:16.

34 By situating the discourse in the Aristotelian embryological theory of epigenesis, Reinhartz (1999, 97) argues that, as the male seed is believed to carry the life-giving πνεῦμα, Jesus's giving of πνεῦμα ἅγιον in v. 22 is birth imagery, implying that Jesus is "begetting" his disciples. While Reinhartz's position has been criticized for atomizing embryology to epigenesis and for mainly focusing on the procreational role of the male by erroneously deeming ὕδωρ as sperm (see Weissenrieder 2014, 76), the presence of birth language in this pericope ought to be acknowledged and the connection between this scene and the wider conceptual domain of birthing language should be considered.

> care and feeding, and the inducing of labor with a push or puff of air.

Coloe (2011, 10) goes on to argue that this moment of giving the Spirit connects to the moment of birth on the cross (19:30). At the first, a new identity is given to the children of God, and at the second, a missional mandate is given to the gathered disciples. In this engagement with his disciples (now his brothers), the imagery of birth comes full circle, as the disciples emerge as those born from above and from the Spirit.

5. A Metanarrative of Life-Giving Johannine Metaphors

The analysis employed in this article holds that metaphors serve as a mode of orientation—creating a metanarrative—not simply a mode of ornamentation (see Jindo 2010, 250; Lee 2016, 151, 161). These metaphors possess the capacity to transform the realities of the audience, reshaping what they regard as familiar into alternative, life-giving symbols (Lee 2016, 160; Brown 2002, 11–12). The aims of our cognitive approach to metaphor are to avoid the pitfalls of either absolutizing or atomizing metaphorical language, and to demonstrate how images can work together to shape meaning and move the audience.

Absolutization is avoided by acknowledging the multi-dimensionality of life-giving Johannine language. In his discussion of Johannine water imagery, Attridge (2006, 47–60) remarks its "cubist" nature, arguing that it can be viewed from various angles to reveal the referent (see also Brown 2015, 291, who identifies the Johannine water metaphor as multi-dimensional and "ever-expanding."). The same can be said of the metaphors discussed in the three acts above. A cognitive mapping of these various images illustrates that birth functions as a feasible meaning-making lens in our reading of the Fourth Gospel. This is strengthened by the fact that language of belief and birth are explicitly married twice in the gospel (1:12–13; ch. 3). In light of John's purpose statement (20:31), life-giving and procreational language is thus used to express a central theological concern of the Fourth Gospel.

Secondly, a cognitive approach to metaphor steers the reader away from an atomized view of Johannine imagery. We have demonstrated that birthing imagery runs deeper and wider than the prologue and the Nicodemian discourse. Whilst language of water, life, kinship, and creation evoke context-specific connotations and meanings that should not be muted for the sake of a metaphorical undercurrent like birth, it needs to be acknowledged that these images play into this undercurrent or metanarrative, strengthening the portrayal of a life-giving, birthing work promised to those who believe. These various images are thus woven together to create a rhetorical tapestry which seeks to move the audience from unbelief to belief.

The metaphor of birth communicates two salient realities—that of [re]creation (see du Rand 2005, 25; Witherington 2001, 121–122), and that of a new lineage and kinship. In the first-century Mediterranean world, birth functioned as the single most important factor of a person's honor status. This is from where one's ascribed honor (static honor) would be derived (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998, 81). The promise of a new birth thus signified more than just new familial relationships. It signified a new identity, with a new ascribed honor—"a life-changing event of staggering proportions" (82). With recreation and a new lineage, also comes a new identity and a new ethos; children ought to obey (Culpepper 1981, 29) and behave like their parents (Campbell 2017, 101). These life-giving metaphors also highlight a relational dimension. The believer does not simply become a child, but also a brother and sister to a new family. The Fourth Gospel is thus incarnational at its core. As ὁ λόγος became σάρξ, God's divine mysteries also became incarnate in metaphor and imagery. Lee (2016, 166) asserts that, "John uses images because of the incarnation, because flesh now has the capability of imaging and imagining God." In this sense, birth becomes a carrier of divine truth, transforming the mundane into vehicles for God's glory.

The Fourth Gospel's most fundamental message, therefore, comes dressed in (although, not exclusively) life-giving language accessible to those who grasp the maternal dimension. Whilst in no way negating the primary revelation of God as Father in the Fourth Gospel, the presentation of God's redemptive acts through his Son dressed in maternal imagery affirms God's daughters as important hearers and agents of the Johannine message. This means that women and mothers can lend an interpretive hand to brothers, fathers, and sons in the interpretation of John's Gospel and its portrayal of God's live-giving works.[35] As demonstrated in the prologue, Jesus came to translate God into language accessible to humanity. Identifying a possible metanarrative of birth marks the Fourth Gospel as a text that includes its female audience in a significant way. It thereby allows mothers, sisters, and daughters to *hear* the gospel and *preach* it as mothers, sisters, and daughters.

6. Conclusion

The Gospel of John is known for its many stylistic devices, woven together to convince the audience to become those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God—those who experience life in his Name (20:30–31). Among these stylistic devices, metaphor emerges as a remarkable means to package heavenly truths in accessible language. Drawing on a cognitive approach to metaphor, this analysis has enabled us to avoid the pitfalls of atomization or totalization by demonstrating that an undercurrent of reproductive language emerges as a feasible conceptual domain in the reading of various Johannine metaphors. Approaching the Johannine Gospel as a three-act drama, we have mapped out this imagery across language of birth (John 1:12–13; 3:3–8; 16:21–22), [living] water (4:10, 11; 7:38), the cross (19:34), and new creation (20:17, 22), demonstrating their interconnectedness and meaning-making potential as reproductive and live-giving language functions (alongside other conceptual domains) as potential metanarrative, communicating the central message of the gospel. Identifying the possible undercurrent of birth marks the Fourth Gospel as a text that honors the lived experiences of its female audience. It calls on women to function as active interpreters and ministers of the gospel, and on our brothers to hear the gospel in a way that only a sister could tell it.

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[35] Likewise, men and fathers ought to come alongside the gospel's female readers as they grapple to understand the Father-Son relationship expressed by John.

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Conspectus

Of Sheep, Shepherds, and Temples: A Social Identity Reading of the Good Shepherd *Paroemia* on the Way to a Destroyed Temple

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Abstract

The Good Shepherd *paroemia* of John 10 is often read as an inserted soliloquy between the once-blind-man of John 9 and Jesus's actions in the temple at the Feast of Dedication. In this context many readings perceive a two-level engagement drawing upon the perceived intertextual allusions to Ezekiel 34—and the further host of shepherd imagery in the Hebrew bible—and relating it to the context of a Johannine Community. From this perspective the Good Shepherd narrative is read as a condemnation of the Pharisees, and the "sheep of another fold" is taken as a reference to the incorporation of Gentiles in a "post-parting of the ways" or *Birkat Haminim* context. However, this two-level reading regularly dislocates the Ezekiel intertext from its own context of exile. Furthermore, although readings of John 10 recognize the presence of an intertext with Zechariah 10–11, they rarely invest it with the significance of Ezekiel 34. Therefore, this paper seeks to read the Good Shepherd *paroemia* through the lens of Social Identity Theory in the temple-removed context shared by Zechariah and Ezekiel, and the context of John's audience in a post-70 CE environment. From this context we will look at the shepherd and flock imagery in order to consider whether the integration of flock (10:17) and the sheep of another fold (10:16) fit better in a diaspora Jewish context struggling with the destruction of the Jerusalem temple under Titus in 70 CE. Through this lens we will see how the intra-group dynamics of the Good Shepherd monologue contribute to the ongoing social discourse around Jewish ethno-cultic practices without the Jerusalem temple.

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Fourth Gospel, John 9, *paroemia*, Zechariah 10–11, Ezekiel 34, intertextuality, social identity theory, Temple destruction, parting of the ways, sheep of another fold

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1. Introduction

The John 10 *paroemia*—figure of speech or saying—has caused significant consternation within scholarship coming as it does after the John 9 pericope where J. L. Martin identified a two-level reading between the Johannine Community's conflict with the synagogue apparatus, and the level of the historical Jesus. In this context the story of the Good Shepherd and his sheep takes on a new tone given the context of who the sheep may be and, therefore, who are the "sheep not of this fold." Within this framework we are going to consider the nature of the Good Shepherd *paroemia* and the intertextual references to which it may be linked. Taking into consideration that the predominant reading of the shepherd analogy here comes from that of the Ezekiel 34 connection, I contend that a better fit may be found with the less engaged intertextuality of the "bad shepherd" analogy found in deutero-Zechariah. To do this, we will first engage with the narrative and rhetorical context of the saying and story before moving to the intertextual connections found in Ezekiel 34 and noting how the portions of deutero-Zechariah influence a reading of the text. Finally, we will consider the social context generated by this narrative and how a reading that primes Zechariah over Ezekiel may highlight a salient social identity formation for those reading the John 10 narrative within the context of a post-temple environment and especially as refugees from the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus in 70 CE.

2. The Good Shepherd *Paroemia*

The Good Shepherd narrative is often read as an interpolation after the scene of Tabernacles and that of the Feast of Dedication, and as such, some read the pericope separated from its embedded context (Klink 2016, 458). However, in a received reading of the gospel, this pericope coheres well with the prior trial scene of the once-blind-man of John 9. Within this pericope the narrative can be separated into three distinct structural scenes. The first comes as a saying in 10:1–6 where initially the audience hears about those who enter a sheepfold incorrectly and are construed as "thieves and bandits" (10:1). Initially this engagement comes with no significant introduction to the character referents for the "one" and the "sheep," and yet the combination of the agrarian metaphor and the extended sheep and shepherd trope is drawn from the shared schematic narrative of the Old Testament (Keener 2003, 801–802; Bultmann 1971, 366). In contrast to the negative assessment of the thieves and bandits, the pericope then turns to the interior of the sheep pen. First, the shepherd is introduced (10:2), then the sheep who are known by name (10:3), then the authority of the shepherd is outlined by highlighting the sheeps' correct method of entering the pen. Next comes the drawing out of the actions of the shepherd, which emphasizes his interaction with and care for the sheep through calling them by name (10:4). While, in the next verse, the actions of "a stranger" (10:5) are placed in direct contrast with those of the shepherd. Overall, this contrasting rhetorical structure emphasizes the actions of the shepherd, and parallels the "stranger" (10:5) with the "thief and bandit" (10:1) in a chiastic form (Beutler 2017, 269). As a whole, this *paroemia* functions as the narrative fuel for the comparisons following.

The first of these comes with the comparison of Jesus as a gate in 10:7–10 as the encounter expands on the original saying. Rather than directly identifying with the shepherd here, Jesus instead draws a linkage with the gate of the sheep pen (10:7). While this connection brings a rather odd anthropomorphism, the direct comparison lies with the subsequent contrast with the role of those who came before, who are again castigated as "thieves and robbers" (10:8) (Skinner 2018, 105). This contrast of construed identities reinforces the social category constructions and draws the referent of 10:1 as a strong out-group for the audience (Lincoln 2013, 295). The group distinctions drawn here between Jesus as the gate protecting the sheep are further highlighted through the subsequent actions attached to each group. While Jesus is pictured positively as saving those who enter through the gate and providing them with pasture (10:9), the thieves provide a parallel negative assessment: coming to "steal, and kill, and destroy" (10:10). Where the social category constructions in the earlier *paroemia* were oblique in their referent, this comparison draws them in firmer terms.

This is then followed by the second comparison of Jesus personified as the shepherd himself in 10:11–18. In a similar fashion to the previous comparison, there is a positive assessment of Jesus's role as the shepherd who "lays down his life for the sheep" (10:11), and a corresponding negative evaluation of the hired hand who flees at the threat presented by the wolf (10:12). Here the comparison expands on the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep and sets up the shepherd as a prototypical leader for the collective sheep in the pen (10:14). In contrast to this relationship, the hired hand has no relationship with the sheep and subsequently the wolf scatters the flock (10:12). It is entangled in this context that we find the contested saying of "sheep not of this pen" (10:16), where it depends on the surrounding narrative for its referential engagement.

Finally, this agricultural scene is rounded out by a response which highlights the division of the *Ioudaioi* within the context of the conflict narrative (Sheridan 2012, 208). Tying these three structures together we find the linked metaphor of the sheep as a collective imagery for the believers whose social identity is predicated by the once-blind-man of John 9 (Reinhartz 2018, 34).

3. Rhetorical Context of the *Paroemia*

The rhetorical engagement of the story here presents an interesting conundrum for readers of the Fourth Gospel. John 10 comes as a narrative placed immediately after the engagement with the Pharisees over the question raised by the healing of the once-blind-man in John 9 and foreshadows the following narrative of the feast associated with the temple and its rededication in Hanukkah. As the pericope contains no significant relocation or introduction, the contextual salience of the interaction with the Pharisees remains for the gospel audience. Yet, there is a shift in audience within the narrative as the focus turns back to the *Ioudaioi* who are divided by the *paroemia* (10:19). Indeed, as Lee (2020, 82) highlights, this pericope forms a bridge between the two final signs of Jesus's public ministry: the giving of sight and the raising of Lazarus from the dead, which "embody dramatically the core motifs of life and light that emerged first in the prologue."

This rhetorical context drives the narrative that occurs within the entire section and highlights the symbolic meaning that "enables the reader to enter the story, identify with the characters, and experience the imagery at an affective level, firing the imagination in the cause of Johannine faith" (Lee 2020, 93). However, this imagery extends past merely identification and imagination, but drives a choice for the audience. In this narrative, the sheep and shepherd metaphor acts as a key (i.e., a significant cognitive memory prime) and serves to unlock various memorialized intertexts as background for the narrative at hand. This pattern of intertextual assessment and integration is common within the Fourth Gospel, despite the apparent paucity of direct citations (Chennattu 2016, 170). Rather, as Hays (2016, 284) describes, "John's manner of alluding does not depend on the citation of chains of words and phrases; instead it relies upon evoking *images* and *figures* from Israel's Scripture." These images and invocations are subsequently marshalled in fulfilment and completion narratives to highlight the identity formative end goal of the Fourth Gospel (Sheridan 2012, 241). In turn, these narrative invocations encourage the listeners to make internal assessments as to the characters in the narrative with whom to identify (Boomershine 2013, 111). Will they identify with the sheep within the pen, or with those who are not entering appropriately? Or perhaps with the sheep from another fold? To assess this, we will turn to the primary intertexts unlocked by the sheep and shepherd metaphor.

4. Ezekiel 34—The Most Common Connection

In the majority of secondary literature, Ezekiel 34 is commonly linked as the source material for the shepherd imagery that is found within the John 10 narrative (Klink 2016, 464; Keener 2003, 812). Indeed, there are good reasons for this. Here, the rhetorical pattern of Ezekiel 34 functions as a two-part oracle of judgement and salvation which bears a similar pattern to that of John 10. This narrative begins with a strong indictment of the shepherds of Judah, likely originally targeted at the final kings of Judah: Jehoiakim and Zedekiah (Allen 2016, 161). In this context the shepherd imagery evokes the royal requirement for justice and welfare within the land (Ps 72) and the condemnation by Jeremiah of the unjust practices of the monarchy (e.g., Jer 34:8). In Ezekiel's reckoning, these injustices have led to the deportations and scattering of the flock as part and parcel of the failure of the shepherds (Wright 2001, 274). Therefore, the judgement against the monarchy is brought to bear in 34:10 as YHWH declares antagonism towards the shepherds. Indeed, this strongly coheres with the rhetorical context found in Ezekiel 33 which indicates the plundering of Jerusalem as being the existential reference for this indictment of the false shepherds of 34:1–5 (Duguid 1994, 39).

This oracle then turns to its salvific component, where Ezekiel pictures YHWH taking over as the shepherd for the flock, drawing a strong contrast with the unjust actions of the false shepherds (Obinwa 2012, 265). Here YHWH—enacting the shepherd metaphor—will go out and search for the sheep who were scattered by the earlier judgement on the monarchy (34:11–12). As such, the shepherd metaphor takes on a notably positive tone, as YHWH fulfils the aspirations of the Davidic Psalm 23, whose kingship interacts dissonantly with the failures of the late Judahite monarchy of the judgement oracle. This personal commitment to the flock is emphasized with repeated first-person verbs throughout the section (Cooper 1994, 301). It is this personal involvement that drives a further reading of this passage as echoing the Day of the Lord motif found throughout the prophets, and the attendant ingathering of the flock at that time (Ezek 20:34).

Overall, this two-part judgement and salvation oracle parallels the rhetorical and thematic structure of John 10 and provides a cognitive bridge between the two passages. This linkage is often taken as a rationale for the description of the Pharisees collectively as "a thief and a robber" in John 10:1, which is made explicit by the memorialized *paroemia* invocation of 10:6. Indeed, the cognitive linking of the Pharisees and the false shepherds memorialization creates a strong comparative fit for the audience and highlights the non-understanding Pharisees as a distinct out-group to the identity structure of the sheep in Israel. In this reading, just as the late Judahite monarchy is arraigned as false shepherds (Ezek 34:2–4), so too the Pharisees are indicted as "a thief and a robber" (John 10:1).

Furthermore, in the post-70 CE context, the ingathering described in Ezekiel 34:11–16 would raise the aspirations of an anticipated return from exile and likely cohere with the drawing in of "sheep that do not belong to this fold" (John 10:16). This connection would be especially salient for the audience with the historical memory of the series of failed attempts at

Davidic and Maccabean self-governance along with the attendant context of the temple destruction under Titus (Hays 2016, 320). Together with the injunction against the bad shepherds of Ezekiel 34:10, this generates a distinction between the audience of the Fourth Gospel as the notional "sheep [who] listen to his voice" and those which enter like a thief or robber.

However, to link this *paroemia* tightly with the Ezekiel intertextuality also introduces some problems. The first of these comes with the context of the shepherds themselves. While in Ezekiel 34:1–6 the distinct out-group described is categorized as false shepherds, this same categorization is absent within the Johannine narrative (*pace* Hays 2016, 320). Instead of being described as "the shepherds of Israel" (Ezek 34:1), the Johannine narrative characterizes them as "a thief and a bandit" (John 10:1). While it may be inferred that an audience should link the Pharisees—taking the antagonists of John 9 as the rhetorical referent of 10:1—this cannot be guaranteed. Instead, the shepherd invocation here only unlocks the identity of the shepherd of 10:2 as tied to that of Ezekiel 34:11–16.

Secondly, the further context of separation in Ezekiel 34:17ff draws further dissonance, as YHWH says: "I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats" (34:17) (cf. Keener 2003, 806; Duguid 1994, 47). While this is a tempting intertextuality that serves to harmonize the Fourth Gospel with the Matthean separating of sheep and goats (Matt 25:31–46), it is rather dissonant within this passage. For within the context of the Fourth Gospel *paroemia*, we find not a separation within the pen, but rather an attempt from outside of the pen to extricate sheep from safety. Rather than an invisible intra-mural division, we find a strongly visible division at hand.

5. Zechariah 10 and 11—A Post-Exilic Context

Therefore, we will turn to deutero-Zechariah to see if this illuminates the shepherding intertext of John 10 any further; and we must do so with some degree of trepidation, as many have ventured into deutero-Zechariah and have not returned. Nevertheless, as we look at deutero-Zechariah, we find striking intertextual similarities amongst the apocalyptic imagery; and we may be confident that the Evangelist would have some knowledge of Zechariah given the explicit intertextual engagement with Zechariah in John 12:20, 16:32, and 19:37 (Bynum 2015, 47; Beutler 2017, 278; *pace* Coloe 2013).

The primary place in Zechariah where we discover overlapping material is in the false-shepherds narrative of chapters 10 and 11. The initial engagement comes in a pair of verses set within a poetic prophetic sequence. Here there is the observation that "the people wander like sheep" due to the lack of a shepherd (Zech 10:2). This observation is realized as YHWH's anger burns against the shepherds and leaders (10:3) before his enactment of direct care for the flock—which are explicitly identified as the "people of Judah" (10:3). Just as in John, this snippet of agrarian imagery is further expanded in the following prose as there is a strong indictment against the bad shepherds of Israel in Zechariah 11:4–17. This initially comes with judgements against the shepherds of Israel, who have not spared the flock, but handed them over for slaughter (11:5). Contextually, this "flock marked for slaughter" presents a strong resonance with an exilic context, as the flock is "give[n] into the hands of their neighbors and their king" who will "devastate the land" (11:6). Under the rule of Titus this resonance would be particularly salient with the ongoing presentation from the classical texts "criticis[ing] Roman rulers as bad shepherds" (Carter 2020, 191). It is in this context that Zechariah is called to enact a further shepherding metaphor involving the two crooks of "Favor" and "Union"—reminiscent of the staff of Aaron in Numbers 17:8, or the two sticks of Ezekiel 37:15–23—indicating the appropriateness of Zechariah as representing YHWH as shepherd.

However, in this extension of the shepherding metaphor we find a distinctly dissonant tone to the earlier indictments. In Zechariah we find not only judgement being passed on the shepherds, but also on the flock themselves. For in 11:8 we find that it is not only the rulers in rebellion, but the flock detests the shepherd as well. In response, it is the flock who are apparently abandoned here, as the staff called "Favor" is broken—a revocation of the covenant with the peoples (11:10; Foster 2007, 749). This judgement against the flock is further exacerbated by the enigmatic payment of thirty pieces of silver, and the subsequent breaking of the staff called "Union," here explicitly described as the familial bond between Judah and Israel. Finally, the picture of judgement is rounded out with a woe to the worthless shepherd who does not care for the lost, young, injured, or even the healthy, but rather deserts the flock in their time of need (11:17). Although this may be construed as the events of the Babylonian exile, the historical context between Zechariah 1–8 and 9–14 points towards a different setting for this agrarian metaphor. Rather, as Gonzalez (2013, 5) notes, the "reconstruction of the temple is presupposed" in Zechariah 11:13, and therefore this looks forward to a new judgement in a post-exilic period.

Throughout this pictured judgement, the "flock" metaphor found within the prophetic utterance "represent[s] the nation, men and women who suffer daily under the heavy oppression to which their false 'shepherds' subject them" (Klein 2008, 234). While the grasping at riches of the "pitiless" (11:5) shepherds in view highlights their attitude towards those who suffer under their inflicted injustices. As such, the indictment here coheres with the concern for the subsequently threatened sheep in Zechariah 11:4 and 11:7 (Beutler 2017, 277). Indeed, this assessment of the poor and worthless shepherds in chapters 10 and 11 coheres strongly with the rhetorical context of the discourse with the Pharisees in chapter 9 and their subsequent confusion in 10:6 and generates a similarly strong out-group from the Pharisees. However, the flock of Zechariah is not pictured as an entirely innocent party within the prophetic enactment. Rather, as we have seen, the flock itself also detests the true shepherd (11:8) and is subsequently abandoned, a context that would resonate strongly with the Johannine audience in the face of the post-70 CE environment.

It is here that both intertexts need to be placed in the invoked memorial context that is generated by the gospel. The narrative thrust of John 10 serves as a pivot to lead the audience from an engagement with the Pharisees and the once-blind-man, through to the next engagement at the temple and the Festival of Dedication. In the social context of the audience of the Fourth Gospel, this is a significantly dissonant perspective. For them the temple has been razed to the ground under Titus in 70 CE, and the Festival of Dedication is an ironic event that remembers a temple for which there is little-to-no possibility of restoration, let alone a re-dedication (Hoskins 2006, 174; Chanikuzhy 2012, 389).

6. Social Context of Reading the *Paroemia*

Indeed, as the temple-less dissonance occurs within the rhetorical context of the passage, it can only be further emphasized within the social context of the gospel audience. For we find in the social context of the first century a context which drives a reading of this portion of the gospel in significant conflict. One of the predominant conflict readings— from J. L. Martyn and others—derives the Fourth Gospel conflict through the lens of Jewish-Christian conflict inherent within the ἀποσυνάγωγος passages. In this view, Martyn argues that the conflict is related to "a formal agreement or *decision* reached by some *authoritative Jewish group* … at some time *prior* to John's writing." (Martyn 2003, 47 emph. orig.) Here the *Birkat Haminim*—the Jewish Benediction Against Heretics—serves as the codification of the formal agreement stemming from the Jamnia Council towards the end of the first century CE (Martyn 2003, 67). However, centering the conflict around this expulsion narrative has been significantly challenged across the past two decades of scholarship (see De Boer 2020). While there are many angles and approaches to this challenge, perhaps the most pertinent for this research is the strong charge of the *Birkat Haminim* being anachronistically applied to the Johannine context (Bernier 2013; Klink 2008, 2007). Indeed, as Klink argues, "Although a shift [between Christians and Jews] eventually occurred, it was not until long after the first century." Leveraging Boyarin, "it follows that in the later part of the first century the notion of heresy had not yet entered (pre)-rabbinic Judaism, and that the term *min*—only attested … in the late second-century sources—is in fact a later development in Jewish religious discourses" (Klink 2008, 108; quot. Boyarin 2001, 439).

In response, others such as Reinhartz (2018, 137–138) have suggested that this conflict was inspired by the incorporation of Gentiles into the early church, and that this *paroemia* was the very precedent for such an incorporation. Yet, the Fourth Gospel itself displays a high degree of Jewish sociolect and discourse, rather than sectarian or separatist language (Lamb 2014). As Klink (2008, 115) representatively observes, this type of language and discourse "portrays intra-Jewish dialogue and a development of self-identity." Drawing from these social observations, Hakola (2015, 56) extends the construal of the Fourth Gospel as a development of identity by postulating that the gospel functions as a hypothetical community construction device. Thus he writes, "I suggest that we can detect in the early Christian sources portraits of symbolic, imagined communities that construct social reality rather than reflect it" (Hakola 2016, 216). However, this approach often presents dissonance with historical artefacts, and Hakola only minimally considers the experiential impetus for the construction of social reality. Nevertheless, this approach highlights the significant intramural engagement in the identity development inherent within the Fourth Gospel.

Indeed, while several of these social contexts would provide a salient resonance for the identity conflict found within this passage, there is a likely stimulus closer in historical context than either the *Birkat* or any Gentile inclusion in the Fourth Gospel. Given that the rhetorical context of the Fourth Gospel is strikingly Jewish in its origin, focusing as it does around the cultic temple apparatus and Jewish festivals, it was likely penned for a Jewish audience (Bynum 2012, 15). Although it was later appropriated for Gentile use, the Fourth Gospel's decidedly Jewish focus fits well with a conflicted social identity of its audience (Myers and Schuchard 2015, 11). Therefore, I contend that this identity conflict is more likely stimulated by the destruction of the temple in 70 CE under Titus and Vespasian, which, underscored by the 73 CE destruction of Leontopolis, placed the gospel audience in an environment where Jewish temples are in rather short supply. In this context there is a significant negotiation occurring amongst the Jewish community regarding the means of cultic worship in a post-temple environment (Porter 2021b). The destruction of the temple triggers a decoupling of cultic worship from the physical entity and demands a reassessment of the traditional means and mechanisms for worship. Simultaneously, this negative trigger provides the stimulus for novel reappraisals of community identity formation without access to the cultic apparatus. Indeed, we find similar parallels to this pattern occurring within the Qumran and Oniad communities excluded from Jerusalem temple worship (Lawrence 2005; Martinez and Popovic 2007; Porter 2021a).

The context of this pericope, sandwiched between the Synagogal context of 9:1–41 and the Temple Dedication context of 10:22–42, highlights this negotiation for the audience. Indeed, the broader context of the Fourth Gospel strongly leverages the dissonance between the Jerusalem temple and festal contexts invoked within the narrative and the audience's salient memory of the temple destruction (as examined by Coloe 2001; Barker 2014; Wheaton 2015). From the initial temple clearing scene of John 2, the persistent memorial prime throughout the Book of Signs is that of the temple. Into this context, the Fourth Gospel positions Jesus's function as a temple fulfilment mechanism front and center as a primary theme of the work (Chanikuzhy 2012; Hoskins 2006).

While the synagogue would eventually ascend as the primary location of majority Jewish interaction, the loss of the temple would still be keenly felt, especially within the nascent Jewish Christian communities. Furthermore, given the destruction of Jerusalem and the high animosity of the local environment within Judea, it is quite likely that the social identity of the audience of the Fourth Gospel reflects an exilic context rather than a context within the *eretz*. As such, within this social context we must ask what would be the salient memorializations that the audience may access within this exilic "temple-removed" context?

7. A Conflict of Social Identities

Before we consider how this social environment of the reading event may impact on the audience, it is important to consider a framework for how individuals and groups construe their own engagement with others in a social context. Social Identity Theory, formally introduced by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1978, describes how individuals construe their own self-concept in relationship to the social groups within which they find significance (Tajfel 1982, 2). This process begins with considering how individuals perceive their world in terms of the groups—social categories—that they interact with. The first mechanism involves how people cognitively categorize their interactions via perceived interactions: is this interaction friend or foe? And further, what sort of contextual information do I have about this engagement? As these perceptions are contextually embedded, so too is the salience of the categories that are determined through the process (Haslam 2004, 24). The second element comes in the form of identification with the salient social group, and how this normative fit with a group impacts on external stimuli. Effectively, this is a self-categorization process that describes how people interpret inputs as part of groups (Turner 1987). Finally, the third component comes through comparisons with other social groups and understanding the difference between social groups. This allows for individuals and groups to determine who is in and who is out of various groups and reinforces their own self-categorization in that group[1] Through this framework, the narrative presented in John 10 drives all three of these processes as it describes inter-group interaction between the shepherd, sheep, the thieves, and robbers, hired hand, and even the wolf. So too this emphasizes the audience interaction with the social world of the text and acts to prime the salience of the intertexts that would be accessible to the audience as they process the narrative.

8. A Socio-Cognitive Resonance with Zechariah

Therefore, we find here the nub of the resonance with Zechariah, found within the reading context colored by the social identity of diaspora refugees, struggling with the loss of the temple. Here, they attempt to reconstruct a form of cultic practice that may be invigorated within a temple-removed environment. Throughout Zechariah 11 we see an indictment brought not only against the bad shepherds, but also an apparent revocation of the covenants between Judah and Israel and with the people in the land. Zechariah, acting as YHWH's mouthpiece, enacts the breaking of the "staff called Favor" (11:10) and the "staff called Union" (11:14). This sets the indictments against those who are described as an out-group to an ideal audience. While, in contrast, we also see an explicit drawing back of those outside the *eretz*, and an explicit linking of the House of Judah with the House of Joseph (10:6) as a corporate renewal. This is followed up in Zechariah 10:10 where the diaspora will be "brought back from Egypt and gathered from Assyria" (Redditt 1989, 639). This engagement explicitly keys a diaspora context for the anticipated eschatological reincorporation and, within the intertextuality of John and Zechariah, brings out a salient identity construction of diaspora Judaism and describes a strong in-group for the audience.

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[1] For further examples of how Social Identity Theory has been applied to biblical studies see Porter and Rosner (2021); Tucker and Baker (2014); Tucker and Kuecker (2020).

This parallel brings a strong political statement before the audience, linking the false shepherds and their judgement in the Old Testament intertexts with the present destruction of Jerusalem and the judgement upon the cultic apparatus. Indeed, just as Jesus's statement to be the "good shepherd" within the gospel is "politically oppositional, against the Jerusalem rulers as thieves, bandits and 'hired hands' of the Roman imperial order," so too this resonance would not be lost on the audience reeling from the ultimate judgement on that political order (Horsley and Thatcher 2013, 180). Rather the audience would be primed to draw categorical comparisons between the two groups on display, and to emphasize the salient identification of the renewed in-group.

Furthermore, this ripples out into the narrative pattern of Zechariah which brings the piercing of the shepherd front and center as the "one who they have pierced," bringing about this restoration for the eschatological Jerusalem. Indeed, here we find a strong parallel between the actions of the hireling and those of the false shepherds, and their subsequent inversion regarding the striking of the good shepherd in this Christological discourse (10:11). We see this in Zechariah 13 as the narrative intertwines the judgement against the people in the land (Wahlde 2010, 43). Here the striking of the shepherd is prefigured by the "pour[ing] out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication" (Zech 12:10) as a direct consequence of looking upon "the one they have pierced" and "mourn[ing] for him as one mourns for an only child and grieve[ing] bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son" (Zech 12:10). This strongly prefigures the Christological engagement of John 19–20 and memorially invokes the "future memory" of the events of the crucifixion and resurrection within the story level and reminds the audience of those same events as a tangible identity construct within the context of Jewish diaspora Christ-followers (*pace* Beutler 2017, 278).

9. Reading the *Paroemia* in a Temple-Removed Context

Therefore, I contend that within this context the destruction of the temple acts as a strong cognitive memory prime to invoke the context of Zechariah 10–13 where the revocation of the covenant with both Judah and Israel is tangibly evidenced for the gospel audience with the successful Roman siege and razing of Jerusalem. As with the prophetic enactment in Zechariah, the worthless shepherds had deserted the flock and left them to be plundered by wolves and neighbors. Collectively, the worthless shepherds and those who plunder are construed as a marauding out-group to be resisted by the in-group of the flock. But this linkage with Zechariah does more than simply illuminate a contextual background to the John 10 *paroemia*, but rather it provides a strong resource for engaging in the process of contested intra-mural identity formation in a diaspora context rocked by the cultically cataclysmic events of the temple destruction in 70 CE. For in this context there is a strongly eschatological Jerusalem of Zechariah 10:6–12 and 12ff that is memorially invoked, as the city that shall not be destroyed, the city which no enemy may stand against, and will be rebuilt in the face of their enemies. In the social construct of a post-70 CE environment, this invocation stands in stark contrast to the outcome of the physical Jerusalem and Titus's brutality in ensuring that the Judean upstarts would not present a significant threat for another sixty years. Especially as the "hired hand" had fled from Jerusalem during that conflict (John 10:12–13) and in resonance with Zechariah, had given up their leadership commission (Redditt 1993, 677). In contrast, this provides a diaspora hope for these newly exiled communities, fleeing the cataclysm of the Vespasian siege and Titus's brutality.

Rather, for the diaspora audience hearing this *paroemia*, they would be reminded of the one pierced and poured out (Zech 12:10) by the invocation of the "good shepherd laying down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11), a picture that is only reinforced by the tangible corporate memory of the temple "running down with blood" (Josephus, *B.J.*, 6.8.406) as the Romans stamped out the brief rebellion. Furthermore, within the rhetorical context, John interpolates this scene between the temple scenes of Sukkoth and Hanukkah, both of which incorporate ritual cleansing elements. The stark dissonance between the Water Libation and the memory of cleansing Antiochus IV Epiphanes's pigs' blood is interpolated here with the "good shepherd" being "pierced and poured out" and the temple destruction of 70 CE.

Instead of an identity structure that calls for a return to the temple, and is centered about these identity structures, the good shepherd narrative paints a possible future social identity that shifts the locus of temple worship to the figure of Jesus and radically reorients the nature of worship around this nascent community. Just as with other post-temple Jewish groups wrestling with conducting worship in the temple-less void of the post-70 CE environment, the Fourth Gospel is engaging with the same challenges and highlights the new pastures on offer through Jesus (John 10:9). This novel social identity formation draws upon the codified, textualized, and memorialized social structures inherent within the temple and reshapes these for new effect.

10. What Then of Our Sheep?

Returning then to our original question, what then can we say about the identity of the "sheep from another fold?" In many readings of the Fourth Gospel, this is associated with a concept of the incorporation of Gentiles into the sheepfold (Porter 2015, 58; Wahlde 2010, 455; Reinhartz 2018, 137; Lincoln 2013, 298), or even reconciliation with other "wayward" Christian groups (Brown 1978, 20). However, as we have seen, neither of our primary intertexts in Ezekiel or Zechariah gives any indication that this is to be interpreted in a Gentile context. Both are distinctly intra-mural prophetic pieces, engaging with the household of God. Furthermore, in Ezekiel there is no sense of anyone being drawn in from another context, as it is presumed that those who return were those who were originally part of Judah. But in Zechariah we see explicit indications that the ingathering to the eschatological Jerusalem will incorporate those drawn back from both Assyria and Egypt along with those taken into exile. This theme is further reinforced by the extended *inclusio* of Zechariah 9:9 and 12:10 bookending the passion narrative (12:15 and 19:37), reinforcing the nature of eschatological renewal envisaged by Zechariah (Bynum 2015, 73). Thus, in Zechariah we have a strong diaspora-based re-incorporation in view, rather than any notion of a broader centripetal attraction.

Therefore, with the echoes of Zechariah ringing strongly in the ears of the early diaspora audience, I would contend that the intertext of Zechariah would highlight an interpretation of the "sheep of another fold" in John 10:16 as those being reincorporated from the Jewish diaspora rather than the incorporation of Gentiles (contra Klink 2016, 465). This is especially the case as the construed out-group is not in the context of a *Birkat Haminim* inspired homogenized *aposynagogos* by the *Ioudaioi* as displayed in John 9:22. Furthermore, this would also support Coloe's (2013) contention that the *Hellenes* of John 12:20 are Greek-speaking Jews in Jerusalem for the Passover, rather than Gentiles. As such, I suggest that reading John 10:16 as an intra-Jewish diaspora reincorporation rather than an external incorporation of Gentiles, maintains stronger fidelity to the text, the intertexts, and the socio-cultural context. Therefore, the call of the diaspora—that would eventually be universalized and thrown open to the Gentiles by the early church—is a call to a salient social identity found in the sheep pen with the good shepherd. Just as the sheep that enter through the gate of John 10:9 "will be saved," so too those who find their identity in "the Lord's name will live securely" (Zech 10:12).

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Conspectus

Exegetical and Theological Reflections on John 10:1–18: Implications for Contemporary African Christian Leadership

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Abstract

One of the major challenges facing the contemporary African society (and church) is ineffective leadership. The problem of leadership in Africa has led to an increased scholarly interest in the theology of leadership; yet, the problem of ineffective leadership still persists in many African communities. This literature-based research, therefore, was conducted to explore how leadership principles embedded in the Good Shepherd pericope of John 10:1–18 might inform the behaviors, styles, and leadership philosophies of African leaders and hence serve as an antidote to ineffective and mediocre leadership within the African society. Through a historical-critical analysis and theological study of the text, the study argues that Christian leaders must serve, guide, protect, and provide for their followers, who in turn must hear their leaders' voices and adhere to their directives.

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1. Introduction

One of the major challenges facing the contemporary African society (and church) is ineffective leadership. Many African leaders are characterized by pride, selfishness, hypocrisy, corruption, mismanagement, and misappropriation of funds. The concept of leadership is defined in the context of this study as: "leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers" (Burns, cited in Hickman 2010, 68). From this definition, leadership is a dynamic phenomenon that seeks to move a group of people towards a certain goal. It may also be considered as a transformational force in an organization that motivates change. Leadership is dynamic in that it adapts to changes in the environment in which it operates.

For some time now, Africa has been depicted as a continent ruled by authoritarian leaders who often exercised very tight control over their followers (Costantinos 2012). While this might not be true of all leaders, there are many leaders whose leadership standards fall far below average. Many political/leadership ideologies have emerged in Africa—including Senghor's *negritude*, Nkrumah's *African personality* and *consciencism*, Nyerere's *ujaama*, Kenyatta's *uhuru*, Kaunda's *African humanism*, and Mobutu's *Cultural Revolution*—as means of dealing with Africa's leadership challenges. Yet, misuse of political power with the net effect being dictatorship, militarism, racism, ethnicity, tribalism, corruption, and moral and spiritual degeneration still abounds in many African societies. The church, which is expected to develop and promote biblical principles on leadership, is also in a leadership crisis. Many studies have emerged in response to Africa's leadership needs. However, the problem still persists because most of such studies fail to engage Scripture and deduce contextual and practical applications for the African context. This study is an exegetical and theological study of John 10:1–18 aimed at bringing out key leadership principles to enhance the quality of leadership in the African church and society. What follows is an outline of the context within which the text in question emerged.

2. Background to John 10:1–18

Church tradition attributes the Fourth Gospel to the Apostle John (Ayegboyin 2015, 134). Church Fathers such as Irenaeus, Polycarp, Eusebius, Clement and others maintained this position (Burge 2008, 842). The statement about "the disciple who Jesus loved" (21:20, 24) is widely considered as referring to John the Apostle, who was the son of Zebedee. The content of this gospel implies a Jewish writer who understood Jewish practices and had adequate knowledge of the Old Testament. That the writer was an eyewitness of some of the events is also evident (1:14; 2:6; 19:33–35; 21:11) (Ayegboyin 2015, 134). The author also seems to be quite familiar with the disciples of Jesus (4:33; 6:17; 11:54; 17:2, 22; 18:2). Considering these facts, it seems fitting that the Apostle John be identified as the author of the Fourth Gospel.

The date for the composition of the Fourth Gospel is debated. A date before AD 70, a date in the second century, or a date toward the end of the first century are all possible (Ayegboyin 2015, 136). However, the argument that the gospel was written in Ephesus between AD 85 and AD 95 seems more convincing. As a result of persecution, Christians had fled into Asia Minor (c. AD 68–70) but were now undergoing the beginnings of more severe persecution under Emperor Domitian (c. AD 81–96). This was perhaps the worst persecution in Church history (2 John 1–8; 3 John 9–10; Rev 1:9; 2:9–13; 13:7–10) (Amevenku and Boaheng 2020, 44). The persecution had destroyed Israel's national aspirations, leading to a polarization between Jewish and Christian communities (Amevenku and Boaheng 2020, 44). This period also witnessed the death of most first-generation Christians. This situation prompted the writing of the Fourth Gospel, to serve the catechetical and evangelistic needs of the early church (cf. 20:30–31) (Amevenku and Boaheng 2020, 44).

The Johannine Gospel can be divided as follows (Burge 2008, 841): The prologue (1:1–18), the book of signs (1:19–12:50), the book of glory (13:1–20:31), and epilogue (21:1–25). Of particular interest to the present study is the book of signs which can be divided further into four parts: the testimony of John the Baptist (1:19–51), Jesus and the institutions of Judaism (2:1–4:54), Jesus and the festivals of Judaism (5:1–10:42), and foreshadows of death and resurrection (11:1–12:50) (Burge 2008, 847). The book of signs has seven specific signs: The changing of water into wine (2:1–11), the healing of the royal official's son (4:46–54), the healing of the lame (5:1–9), the feeding of more than five thousand people (6:1–14), walking on water (6:15–25), the healing of a man born blind (9:1–41), and the raising of Lazarus from death (11:1–46). The passage under consideration, that is, the Good Shepherd Discourse (10:1–18), is found in the third division of the book of signs. The section within which the passage under consideration falls, that is, Jesus and the festivals of Judaism (5:1–10:42), is set within the context of Jewish festivals like Sabbath, Passover, Tabernacles, and Dedication.

The Good Shepherd Discourse of John 10:1–18 comes after Jesus's indictment of the Pharisees' spiritual blindness in 9:39–53. The audience for chapters 9 and 10 is the same. In chapter 9 one reads of the Pharisees' expulsion of a formerly blind person from the synagogue because of his recognition of Jesus as the Messiah (9:34; cf. 9:22). Chapter 10 opens a new theme; namely, Jesus is both the Good Shepherd and the gate. Jesus's use of the shepherd imagery is meant to differentiate his leadership from that of false shepherds. The text under consideration can be divided into two parts, a figure of speech (vv. 1–5) and an extended reflection or commentary on it (vv. 7–18) (Köstenberger 2004, 297). The passage also contains many allusions and metaphors rooted in first-century Judaism (Burge 2008, 841).

There is much scholarly argument regarding the source behind the material found in the shepherd pericope. The similarities between the Johannine shepherd and the Old Testament shepherd are used to support the idea that John borrowed his theme from the Old Testament. However, Bultmann expresses a different opinion. Bultmann (cited in Lewis 2008, 9) admits that the shepherd motif in John 10 is based largely on the Old Testament tradition, but notes further that "There is, however, a decisive difference in John 10, namely that the shepherd is not considered as the Messianic ruler; there are no traces whatsoever of the kingly figure." Bultmann (cited in Lewis 2008, 9) argues again that the people Jesus refers to as his sheep are not the people of Israel but his "own." In Bultmann's view, the Fourth Gospel borrowed from the Gnostic tradition which connects the messenger to the image of the shepherd. The Mandaean literature in particular, like the Johannine text, depicts the shepherd not as a regal figure, but as a heavenly being with a redemptive task (Lewis 2008, 9). In both texts, the shepherd gathers "his own" rather than "his people." The shepherd has great affection for his sheep, carries them on his shoulders, calls them by name and redeems them from the hands of a predator (Lewis 2008, 9–10). There is, however, the lack of mutual knowledge about each other (Lewis 2008, 10). Keener (2003, 799) argues against a Mandean background for this text because he believes the Fourth Gospel was written many centuries before the earliest extant Mandean sources. The argument surrounding the source of the shepherd pericope is such that no position can be conclusive. With this background, the study now proceeds to read the text closely.

3. Close Reading of John 10:1–18

3.1 Verses 1–6

The first five verses depict a morning shepherding scene; the sixth verse is a comment about the disciples' failure to understand Jesus's discourse. These verses read:

> 1 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber; 2 but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice,

> and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. 6 This figure Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. (RSV)

Jesus begins the discourse with the formula Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν ("Truly, truly" or "Most assuredly") to indicate that the message is a solemn assertion. In this subsection, Jesus sets two criteria for identifying fake leaders. The first criterion is the approach to the sheep (vv. 1–2) and the second is voice recognition by the sheep (vv. 3–5). Fraudulent leaders' entry into authority is wrong (v. 1). In the Greco-Roman world, sheep were kept in a pen (usually made of stone walls) with a door through which the shepherd or the flock may enter or exit. The pen provided protection from wild animals, thieves who used trickery, and robbers who used violence—none of which cared for the welfare of the sheep. A doorkeeper guarded the pen at night to protect the sheep from predators and thieves (Keddie 2001, 388; cf. Keener 2003, 803). In the case of a small flock there was no need for a gatekeeper; therefore, what Jesus has in mind here is a large fold where a large flock was housed (Brant 2011, 160). Any person who climbs the wall into the pen does not have good intent (v. 1). The real shepherd of the sheep (and for that matter the legitimate leader) always uses the gate. The Greek text does not have the definite article before "shepherd" (ποιμήν) and so the NAB renders it, "is shepherd of the sheep." Other translations (like the NIV, RSV, NRSV) prefer, "is the shepherd of the sheep"; that is, "the one who takes care of the sheep." The gatekeeper opens the gate for the shepherd and the sheep come to him as he calls his own by name (v. 3). This shepherd has the right to enter the pen.

A shepherd whose entry is not ordained by the gatekeeper or a shepherd who "climbs over the wall" or "climbs over at some other place" (enters into the sheep pen by some other means) is to be feared and not followed (v. 3). By this statement, Jesus challenges the legitimacy and authenticity of Pharisaic leadership of Israel, who are God's flock. The Pharisees have climbed into the pen and are now wreaking havoc among the flock. The leadership situation at the time Jesus made this assertion was comparable to the corrupt leadership of the priests of the Maccabean period. God's people followed the false leaders of the Maccabean period with Messianic expectations which were never realized (Burge 2008, 861). These people were indeed thieves and bandits, and in this verse, Jesus affirms that the Pharisees are no better. The way Jesus depicts and contrasts the shepherd and the thieves (or robbers), underscores the legitimacy of his Messianic identity, unlike the false or lesser shepherds and false messiahs. Israel had many false prophets and ungodly kings; Jesus, however, emphasizes that he alone is the legitimate shepherd with true authority over the sheep because he has received the gatekeeper's invitation.

Jesus's references to the shepherd leading out his sheep until he has brought out all his own and going before them (v. 3–4) possibly alludes to Numbers 27:15–18 (see also Ps 80:1; Ezek 34:13). Here, Moses prays for a future figure who will go out before and come in before God's people so that God's people "may not be as sheep which have no shepherd" (Num 27:17 RSV). The next verse mentions Joshua (Ἰησοῦς, "Jesus") as that successor (Num 27:18; cf. Heb 4:8–10). Joshua therefore typifies Jesus. The typological relationship between Jesus and Joshua is significant in understanding Jesus's role as the Savior of the world (cf. Matt 1:21).

Furthermore, the authenticity of one's leadership is determined by whether or not the sheep (the followers) recognize his voice. The sheep hear, recognize, and follow the voice of the true leader; the false leader's voice is not recognized (v. 5). The intimacy required for the sheep to recognize the voice of their true shepherd is a well-known phenomenon in Palestine where sheep could bear personal names (Burge 2008, 861; see also Blum 1983, 309). If a stranger enters the pen, the sheep will not follow him because they do not recognize his voice (v. 5). Even if the stranger decides to dress in the shepherd's clothing, use the shepherd's call and imitate his tone, the sheep will immediately detect the difference and scatter in fear. The emphasis that only Jesus knows and is known by the sheep is crucial in understanding Johannine discipleship which requires one to discern Jesus's voice and abide in him (Burge 2008, 861).

The behavior of the sheep, if applied to humans, has at least five ethical dimensions; namely, discernment (that is, the ability to distinguish between who to follow and who to run away from), the ability to translate discernment into action (follow or run away), following the leader's footsteps, the corporate dimension of the followers' response to the leader's voice, and the followers' act of following the leader without knowing specifically where they are going (Collins 2017, 55–56). This requires obedience on the followers' part and faithfulness on the part of the leader. Jesus was making the point that the Pharisees, who were spiritually blind, needed to be like his sheep who follow him as he leads them to the truth which leads to eternal life (cf. Keener 2003, 801). The Pharisees were to learn from the obedient and submissive character of the sheep so that they could yield to the leadership of Jesus, which alone is true leadership.

The narrator pauses to make a comment that gives his audience a glimpse into the cognitive state of Jesus's opponents, and by so doing provides the reason for Jesus's second version of the story. He also describes the story as a *παροιμία*, the meaning of which has been debated vigorously among translators. The word *παροιμία* is variously translated as "parable" (KJV and ERV), "allegory" (MFT), "illustration" (PHPS), and "figure" (RSV). It is important to note that the word *παροιμία* (used also in John 16:25, 29 and 2 Pet 2:22) is not the word rendered as "parable" (*παραβολή*) elsewhere in the gospels. This "parable" is different from the Synoptic parable which usually has a connected story. The allegorical interpretation may be opposed by the fact that in an allegory one person can hardly be represented by two figures—in this case Jesus is both the shepherd and the gate. The Septuagint (LXX) uses both words (*παραβολή* and *παροιμία*) to translate the Hebrew word מָשָׁל (which refers broadly to all kinds of figure of speech), indicating that there is no perceptible difference between the terms *παραβολή* and *παροιμία* used by the Synoptic writers and John respectively. It is therefore possible to translate *παροιμία* as "parable," or an extended metaphor which uses selected allusions to illustrate aspects of the truth conveyed by Jesus's discourse. The explanation given by Jesus (v. 7 ff.) makes allegorical interpretation less plausible. As a parable or an extended metaphor, the interpreter "must not look for more meaning in the details that Jesus is willing to furnish" (Keddie 2001, 385).

Even though Jesus used common imagery of the shepherd and gate in verses 1–5, verse 6 shows that this relatively simple figure of speech was not understood by those spiritually blind. "If they would not recognize his claims, they would not accept him as a shepherd; and their assumption that they were God's flock because they were descendants of Abraham (8:39) would eliminate the necessity of personal faith in Jesus for salvation" (Tenney 1981, 108). It is in light of this that Jesus puts this figure in another way that might make it more comprehensible (vv. 7 ff.).

3.2 Verses 7–10

> 7 So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and

> robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. 9 I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. 11 I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (RSV)

Jesus suddenly shifts the shepherd metaphor to the gate metaphor (v. 7). Though there are other New Testament passages which use the gate metaphor (e.g., Luk 13:24; Acts 14:27; 1 Cor 16:9) it is only in the present text that the gate metaphor is applied to Jesus. Jesus changes the scene from the village sheepfold with its gatekeeper (cf. 10:3) to the field in summer, where there "is neither roof nor door, but thorns along the top of the rock walls protect the sheep from wild animals, and the shepherd himself sleeps in the entrance, providing a door" (Whitacre, cited in Keddie 2001, 390). In the evening when the sheep returned to the fold after a day of grazing, the shepherd stood in the doorway of the pen, inspecting each one as it enters. Those who were scratched or wounded by thorns were anointed with oil to enhance healing (cf. Ps 23:5–6); those who were thirsty were also given water to drink. After all the sheep had entered the pen, the shepherd lay down across the doorway to prevent any unauthorized access. By so doing the shepherd became the door/gate. This was not an abandonment of the shepherd metaphor, but rather a further clarification of it. In this case, Jesus absorbs the shepherd's occasional function as a gate for the sheep into his composite picture of himself as the shepherd of his people.

The care and protection offered by Jesus (the Good Shepherd), and his discernment of worthiness for entrance contrasted him with the "thieves and robbers" (v. 8, 10), false messiahs, and religious leaders who had come prior to him (Tenney 1981, 108). The "thieves and robbers" who came before Jesus are not the Old Testament figures (e.g., Moses, Abraham, Isaiah, Elijah, or his immediate forerunner, John the Baptist:, who were appointed by God before Jesus to prophesy about his coming. Many factions appeared after the death of Herod the Great (4 BCE) to contend for the leadership of Israel; these leaders attempted to use violence to free the nation from Roman rule (Tenney 1981, 108). Jesus's purpose was not political, as that of these leaders. These leaders, and all who deny that Jesus is the divine Messiah, fall in the category of "thieves and robbers."

Jesus's main purpose was the salvation of the sheep (vv. 9–10) which he depicts as free access to pasture and fullness of life. Both the shepherd and the gate metaphors have salvific significance. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus cares for his sheep and provides them with salvation at the cost of his life; as the gate, he is the one and only legitimate way of entrance into salvation. The gate metaphor is reminiscent of the *ladder* metaphor which pictures Jesus as connecting heaven and earth (1:51), or *the way* metaphor, which depicts Jesus as the path that leads people to the Father (14:6). Scott (2003, 1187) traces the door metaphor to Jewish apocalyptic ideas of the "gate of heaven" and the idea of *σοφία*, both of which the Wisdom literature depicts as "means of access to knowledge, life, and salvation." The basis of the gate metaphor (v. 7, 9) may also be found in a messianic reading of Psalm 118:20, which says the righteous may enter through the gate that leads to the LORD. Therefore, the door metaphor is not only meant to portray the Pharisees as false teachers but, more importantly, to affirm Jesus's status as the only true saving leader.

The discernment characteristic of the Good Shepherd and the salvific significance of the gate are further revealed in verse 9 as the sheep are saved when entering by Jesus, the door to salvation. The expression "will go in and out" (v. 9b RSV) echoes covenant terminology, especially the

Deuteronomistic blessings for obedience (see Deut 28:6). At the same time, this expression means that all who will follow Jesus to the field will safely come back to the fold under divine protection (Keddie 2001, 391).

The expression “find pasture” is a common expression in the Old Testament (cf. 1 Chr 4:40; Ps 23:2). God’s people are commonly referred to as “the sheep of his pasture” (see, for example, Pss 74:1; 79:13; 100:3; cf. Lam 1:6). Jesus had earlier told the Samaritan woman of the satisfaction provided by the water he provides (John 4:14). He had also talked about the satisfying bread he provides (6:35). His promise that those who enter through him will find pasture (v. 9b), therefore, alludes to the spiritual food that satisfies every spiritual need and ensures spiritual growth. Jesus therefore speaks of his blessings for his sheep in terms of secure pasturage which is the highest good for his sheep. In addition to providing their spiritual needs, Jesus also provides the material needs of the sheep.

In verse 10 Jesus states that the false teacher, the thief, comes “to steal [κλέψῃ] and kill [θύσῃ] and destroy [ἀπολέσῃ]” but he (Jesus) has come that the sheep “may have life, and have it abundantly” (RSV). Jesus’s use of a series of nearly synonymous verbs adds poetic weight and emotional force to the contrast between himself and the thief. The thief takes life, but Jesus gives life. The thief cares only about feeding himself whereas Jesus cares mainly about feeding and building the sheep. The thief steals sheep in order to kill and destroy them; Jesus has come for the wellbeing of the sheep by providing an overflowing life to them. At the same time, the choice of these verbs helps John’s audience to recall the devastation of the First Jewish Revolt which was characterized by killing and destroying (Brant 2011, 161).

Jesus then proceeds to develop the sheep/shepherd figure further, stating, “I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (v. 11). The word “good” (καλός) is synonymous with “true” in other “I am” sayings of Christ and serves to create a contrast between true divine shepherding and false leadership (Scott 2003, 1187). The life of the shepherd could be in danger when he encounters wild animals like lions, wolves, jackals, panthers, leopards, bears, and hyenas (see Gen 31:38–40; 1 Sam 17:34–35, 37). The Good Shepherd was sacrificial, even laying down his life for those in his care (v. 11); he (the Good Shepherd) contrasts not only with those who would harm the sheep, the thieves and robbers, but even those who are not invested in the sheep such as the hired shepherds (vv. 12–13) (Tenney 1981, 109). These people would desert the sheep in the face of danger or pressure. Jesus, the “Great Shepherd” (Heb 13:20–21) and “the Chief Shepherd” (1 Pet 5:4), never withdraws from the sheep no matter the situation. The expression “lays down his life” is unique in Johannine literature and refers to a voluntary sacrificial death (10:11, 17, 18; 13:37–38; 15:13; 1 John 3:16). The word τίθημι (lay down) is also used in John 13:4 to mean “lay aside, strip off.” The word ὑπέρ (for) is used generally to connote sacrifice (John 13:37; 15:13; cf. Luke 22:19; Rom 5:6–8; 1 Cor 15:3) (Tenney 1981, 109). “Life” (ψυχή) goes beyond mere physical existence to include personality (Tenney 1981, 109). The Good Shepherd is willing to die for the sheep, in contrast to thieves, robbers, and hired men, who either destroy the sheep themselves or allow them to be destroyed. The death of the Palestinian shepherd is a disaster for the sheep, but the death of Christ means abundant life for his sheep.

3.3 Verses 12–18

> 12 “He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, who’s own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 I am the Good Shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, 15 as the Father

> knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So, there shall be one flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father." (RSV)

At the initial stages in Israel's life, shepherding was a primary occupation and one of importance since sheep were indicators of wealth and sources of food, clothing, and sacrifice. Later, when cultivation increased in Israel, slaves and younger sons took over the role of shepherding, so shepherds were often the uncommitted hired hands Jesus spoke about in verses 12–13. The laborers were at the bottom of the Mediterranean social order and not always trusted. The hirelings would not risk their lives for the flock as the Good Shepherd would (vv. 12–13). The hireling lacks not only the pride of ownership of the sheep but also the concern that proceeds from ownership. Jesus, being the Good Shepherd, owns the sheep, cares for them, feeds and protects them, and does not flee in the face of danger, but protects them even to the point of laying down his life (v. 15) as a demonstration of his radical love for his sheep.

Jesus then reveals the basis of his care and sacrifice for his sheep as a deep relationship of trust and intimacy between himself and the sheep, comparable to the relationship he has with the Father (vv. 14–15). The verb γινώσκω ("know") connotes "intimate acquaintance with" (see Scott 2003, 1187). The Good Shepherd discourse continues with the theological broadening of his "one flock" to include others not of the fold (v. 16), that is, the Gentiles, for whom Jesus would also lay down his life and to whom he sent his disciples (Matt 28:19; see also Isa 56:8; cf. Scott 2003, 1187). Jesus's desire to unite his other sheep to this fold is also highlighted in his farewell prayer (John 17:20). The statement, "there shall be one flock, one shepherd" alludes to God's providential care for his united people (cf. Jer 3:15; 23:4–6; Ezek 34:23; 37:24; Mic 2:12; 5:3–5; Psalms of Solomon 17:40).

The discourse ends with Jesus's assertion that his death, though voluntary in nature, was part of God's plan for salvation (vv. 17–18). The power to lay down his life and take it again is a statement about Jesus's death and resurrection. Jesus's mission will end in death; yet, since his "resurrection is truly the purpose of his death" (Brown, cited in Scott 2003, 1187), he will take up his life again to live forever. Since Jesus has sovereign authority over his own destiny, he is not to be considered a "victim" or a "good martyr," but a "victor" (Scott 2003, 1187). Rainbow (2014, 204) notes that what Jesus illustrates by saying that he lays down his life "for [ὑπὲρ] the sheep" (John 10:11, 15), "requires not only that the sheep benefit from the shepherd's protective action, but also that the shepherd interpose himself between them and the threat, so that the shepherd takes the brunt of it on their behalf, in their stead." This means that the shepherd ensures that the sheep face no threat at all.

The laying down of the shepherd's life established a new covenantal relationship through which one unites with other sheep in the fold; one's membership in the new covenant community requires a new ethical behavior. The word τίθημι is the same word Jesus used in 11:34 when he found out Lazarus had been buried and asked, "Where have they put him?" (Skinner 2017, 30). Again, the verbs "laying down" and "taking up" allude to the Jesus's action of laying down and taking up his towel in the feet washing narration (John 13:1–17; Culpepper 2017, 85).

From the exegetical study above there is no doubt that John 10:1–18 is of high soteriological value. It creates a clear distinction between false saviors and the true Savior of the world, Jesus, the Christ. The fact that Jesus is the only way to the Father and that his work on the cross is rooted in his love for humanity and his commitment to ensuring that the Father's will is done were also highlighted. Jesus's use of the shepherd and gate metaphors was meant to make his discourse accessible to his audience who were familiar with shepherding in first-century Palestine. This approach by Jesus underscores the value of contextualization in the propagation of the Christian gospel. This is something that missionaries should learn and apply as they seek to make their message relevant and applicable to their audience.

The soteriological data gleaned from the text provide a valuable resource for leadership in the church and society at large. The next section outlines three key leadership implications deducible from the shepherding role of Jesus as highlighted in the exegesis conducted above.

4. Implications for Contemporary African Leadership

4.1 Leadership as sacrifice

First, the shepherding role of a leader requires sacrifice. The leader does all he/she can to provide for the needs of the people just as a shepherd provides good pasture to his sheep (John 10:9). Jesus approaches his calling not only in a pastoral, selfless manner but more importantly in a love-driven, sacrificial manner, even leading to his death. He speaks five times about laying down his life for the sheep (10:11, 15, 17–18), something he chooses to do for their welfare. Jesus's voluntary sacrifice for the sake of his sheep to the point of dying for their sake differentiates him (the Good Shepherd) from other shepherds. Jesus stands in direct contrast with the thief and robber who only comes to steal, kill, and eventually destroy the flock. The same is true of shepherd-leaders. Christian leaders, imitating Christ, must prioritize the welfare of their followers, demonstrating a genuine care (Adeyemo 2006, 546). The leader therefore must be like a scapegoat who carries the burden of others (546; Lev 16). This requires great sacrifice.

The leadership ideology and practices of South Africa's Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu serve as a good example of how one can lead sacrificially in both the African church and society. Tutu has contributed immensely to the social-economic development and transformation of the apartheid and post-apartheid South African society through his selfless and sacrificial leadership. He is a social activist who speaks prophetically about socio-political issues such as social injustice, climate change, corruption, and human rights abuse, among others. He is one of the few leaders who have demonstrated great wealth of wisdom, kindness, leadership, and integrity in their relationship with others. Tutu's leadership highlights the fact that one's sacrifice in leadership must be for all, not a selected few. His theology of leadership is built on the unity and common identity of the human race (Tutu 2007, 46, 60). Therefore, though he is black by ethnicity (his father being a Xhosa tribesman and his mother a Tswana), he considered himself as a minster not only for the blacks but also for every child of God. He argued and demonstrated that leadership in the kingdom of God requires one to provide service to everyone in need, regardless of the person's social, political, or ecclesiastical affiliation. This aspect of Tutu's leadership ideology echoes Kofi A. Busia's assertion that "all nations and people, in spite of cultural and historic differences, belong to the same species of [human], share a common humanity, and can dwell in brotherly amity" and, therefore, "We consider philosophies and practices based on racial or cultural discrimination or segregation to be wrong and pernicious, and they may even constitute a threat to world peace; so we cannot wherever we find then given expression" (cited in Anane-Agyei 2017, 105).[1] As a way of sacrifice, Tutu used part of the money he received for winning the Nobel Peace Prize to establish a scholarship fund for South Africans in exile (Gish 2004, 95). This is a hallmark of a selfless and sacrificial leadership. A key lesson from this is that church leadership must not be restricted to the church environment but must be extended to all who need to benefit from it. Moreover, leaders must be ready to suffer for the sake of their subjects just as Christ did, even to the point of death.

The sacrificial character of the shepherd leader must result not only in caregiving and gatekeeping but also protection of the sheep from those who would endanger, harm, deceive, or mislead them. The contemporary world is full of deception and Christian leaders have the task of exposing false teachings through effective teaching ministry. The truth must be taught to expel falsehood, just as light expels darkness. By doing so, shepherd leadership facilitates growth, maturity, and increase. The sheep must also follow the shepherd and remain under his/her care to avoid being stolen by the thief and eventually being destroyed.

4.2 Leadership as service

Another principle from the exegesis is that leadership means service or servanthood. The shepherd metaphor suggests that the authority, power, and privileges that come with leadership are meant for service to God and to humanity. The prime goal of the leader must be to provide services that will make the society a better place to live. A servant leader is "seen as servant first" and exercises power without coercion. Greenleaf (2002, 27) asserts that: "The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead." As shepherd, Jesus renders many services to the sheep, including feeding, healing, and others. Similarly, Christian leaders must not exalt themselves or be served; they must serve God and humanity. Busia (cited in Anane-Agyei 2014, 37) makes this point in his assertion that "the ultimate goal of politics [or power] is the creation of conditions, which will give every individual the opportunity to be the best he can as a human being and as a member of a community." The services rendered must, for example, lead to the provision of good roads, potable water, health and sanitary facilities, access to education, and other amenities. Busia (cited in Anane-Agyei 2014, 104) further argues, "We must judge our progress by the quality of the individual, by his knowledge, his skills, his behavior as a member of the society, the standards of living he is able to enjoy and by the degree of cooperation, harmony and brotherhoodness in our community life as a nation." It is in this light, that the Most Reverend Prof. Emmanuel K. Asante (past Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church Ghana) maintains that all forms of authority are meant for the ultimate good of the society (Asante 1999). He served his nation (Ghana) as the chairman of the Peace Council, ensuring that political violence was condemned and reconciliation achieved to enhance peaceful coexistence and socio-economic development. He states, "People in power are trustees in the sense that the power they wield has been given to them for specific purposes, namely, to serve the human community in view of the realization of divine norms in social relationship" (Asante 1999, 69). Therefore, African (Christian) leaders must consider themselves as God's stewards who have delegated power for civil and ecclesiastical transformation through service. It, therefore, follows that any form of civil or religious authority that is dehumanizing, abusive, discriminative, or oppressive, contradicts the shepherd leadership model and must be condemned.

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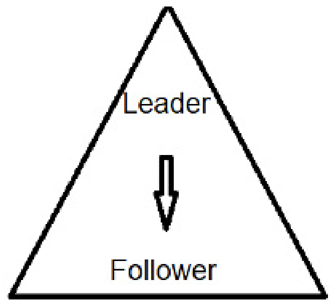
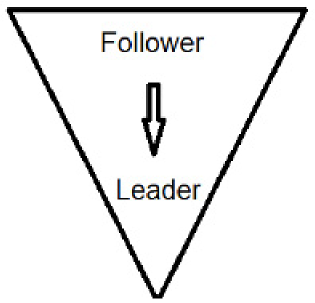
[1] Professor Kofi A. Busia was Ghana's Prime Minister of the Second Republic of Ghana (from 1969 to 1972).

The servant role of the shepherd leader implies accountability. The shepherd reveals this principle in the daily counting of the sheep on their return from the daily grazing. Accountability requires the honest use of power. One's subjects have the right to know what the leader uses their resources for. In African traditional worldview and practice, traditional leaders account for their leadership during social events such as festivals. Not only do they account for the past year(s), they also make projections for the ensuing year. Traditional chiefs do this not only to maintain peace with the living but also to avoid the wrath of their ancestors on whose stool the chief is considered to sit. In the same way, contemporary African (church) leaders must be accountable to their followers. Being accountable will establish a relationship of trust between leader and followers which, in turn, promotes increased productivity and healthier interpersonal relationships. Resources entrusted to the care of the church/state must be used wisely and efficiently to promote God's work. Being accountable to followers offers the leader the opportunity to know his/her shortfalls and to improve upon his/her leadership role.

Furthermore, servant leadership is "supportive, with authority at the bottom of the pyramid and followers being served by the leader and subject to the nurturing oversight of the leader," as opposed to worldly leadership that is "suppressive with authority [concentrated] at the top of the hierarchy and followers being lorded over and dictated to by those in authority" (Estep 2005, 46; see diagram below).



Worldly Model of Leadership



Shepherd Model of Leadership

Leaders must therefore not consider themselves as having supreme power, because God can take away their leadership role and give it to other people. The concentration of power in the hands of followers goes a long way to making followers feel important and part of the process of governance, which in turn leads to commitment, solidarity, and harmony. In Africa where people have an unquenchable thirst for power and fame, this model of leadership must be given the needed attention, developed, and promoted to ensure accountability, responsibility, and socio-economic/spiritual development.

4.3 Leadership as mentoring and modeling

Leadership involves influence and this influence must be positive. According to Asante (1999, 25), the concept of shepherd leadership presupposes the possibility that the followers will go astray, get lost, and become vulnerable. The leader must therefore be someone who can help others get back on track when they wander and go astray. From the Christian perspective then, a leader must first of all be a mature Christian who can help nurture others by word and practical examples. It is in this sense that Christian leadership can be regarded as exemplary. Christian leaders, being the "salt" and "light," are expected to be "disciplined and controlled in their private and public life, and in their exerting of leadership functions" (Ikenye 2010, 177). As the shepherd goes on ahead of the sheep, and his sheep follow him

(John 10:3–4), they follow the shepherd's steps. Leaders must recognize their role as role models for their followers. Any true leader will lead by example. A true leader does not say "do as I say, not as I do." If followers are to follow their leaders, then the leader should be trustworthy. This aspect of leadership is expressed in the Ghanaian proverb "The follower's style of walking is informed by how the leaders walks."

To be an effective role model for followers, one has to build close relationships with followers. The sheep follow Jesus, the Good Shepherd, because they know his voice (John 10:4). This is learned over time from the consistent and caring treatment of the sheep by the shepherd. This presupposes intimacy. Contemporary African (Christian) leaders must cultivate a deep sense of trust within their followers so that their voice can evoke the character and care of a shepherd-leader. As the leader moves ahead, he/she is to ensure that the followers are following along. Those who stray away must be brought back on track; those who grow weary must be strengthened; those who are discouraged must be motivated; and those who need extra guidance must be given the needed counsel. In this way, shepherd leaders exercise power with benevolence.

Another factor that will enhance the leader's ability to mentor and disciple his/her followers is his/her welcoming nature. Jesus, being a shepherd leader, not only enters the pen (calmly and safely) by the door; he himself is also the door to the pen. He welcomes his flock and allows them to enter the pen after their day's work is over. Jesus said, "I know my sheep and my sheep know me" (John 10:14). Jesus's knowledge about his sheep is not only cognitive but also experiential (Collins 2017, 56). The man that Jesus healed knew something about Jesus that the Pharisees did not know. If for nothing at all, he had experienced Jesus's healing power; he therefore became one of Jesus's sheep who knew him experientially (Keener 2003, 5). Followers must have true knowledge about their leaders, both cognitively and experientially.

The mentoring role of the leader also requires him/her to be a visionary, identifying those with leadership capabilities and nurturing them. This makes the shepherd leader a transformational leader in that he/she transforms the follower into a leader. The leader must help build the capacity of his/her followers for positive development. Such capacity building must go beyond just improving one's abilities and expertise to include provision of incentives and opportunities to utilize those abilities. That is, in the process of mentoring, the leader must not only build the capacities of the followers but must also delegate responsibilities with the accompanying authority required to act without their having to look over their shoulders (Phipps and Prieto 2011).

The mentoring role of the shepherd leader also includes promoting love, peace, reconciliation, interconnectedness, and interdependence. As the leader builds solid and genuine relationships with their followers, he/she becomes a unifying force which ensures peaceful coexistence among the flock. To be successful in this regard, one must uphold human dignity and social justice. The unifying and reconciliatory role of the shepherd leader is evident in the leadership ideologies and practices of Busia and Tutu. Busia (cited in in Anane-Agyei 2014, 7) taught that political power must be used "to create a democratic welfare society in which all may live a life of dignity and freedom, protected from destitution and from oppression." This leadership focus was meant to restore human dignity and freedom which was lost during the colonial days. As a means of protecting the individual against political abuse, Busia (cited by Anane-Agyei 2014, 1) ensured that the sovereignty of the people and rule of law were firmly upheld. He maintained that leadership (societal or ecclesiastical) "can flourish only in an atmosphere of kindness and affection and benevolence and sympathy."

In so doing he healed people with emotional hurts and those with wounded relationships.

Similarly, in the post-apartheid South African society, Tutu worked to reconcile the whites and the blacks by his "father-for-all" leadership style. He opposed leaders (in other parts of Africa) whose rule was considered worse than the rule of their former colonial masters. He pointed out that the same African leaders who were now abusing their own people were among those who strongly opposed similar practices by the colonial masters. With specific reference to Africa, Tutu articulated that, "It pains me to have to admit that there is less freedom and personality in most independent Africa than there was during the much-maligned colonial days" (Allen 2006, 347–348). Tutu (2007, v) acknowledged the presence of some good leaders in Africa but frowned upon bad leadership practices. For Tutu (2007, 22, 25), all humans must live together by the principles of interdependence, sharing of resources, interconnectedness, and brotherhoodness, in order to fight against the evil of tribalism and ethnocentrism. Interconnectedness and brotherhoodness requires transcending cultural differences to accept all members of the human society as equals. In national politics, the shepherd leader is expected to avoid nepotism (that is, making political appointments based on family ties) because this practice leads to incompetent leadership as people are appointed to certain positions which they are not qualified to occupy. Again, it leads to political exclusion and division among followers.

In his fight against tribalism, racism, and other attitudes that hinder reconciliation and peaceful coexistence, Tutu coined and popularized the expression "Rainbow Nation" as a metaphor for post-apartheid South Africa (Hill 2007, 89). This expression, which he first used in 1989, became a household expression after 1994 under the rule of the African National Congress (ANC) (Allen 2006, 391). By this expression he was (among other things) drawing attention to different ethnicities of people all of whom originate from God (through creation and the *imago Dei*) and are required by divine command to work together for peace and development despite their diversity (Hill 2007, 90). He explained *ubuntu*[2] in terms of humanness, gentleness, hospitality, and othercenteredness. An *ubuntu* system of leadership (found mostly in East, Central, and South Africa) is a humane-oriented leadership (Brubaker 2013). For him, to be human means recognizing that without other humans there is no existence for the individual. Tutu therefore draws from the African communal worldview to encourage people to live together in unity and peace. He was appointed by President Nelson Mandela as the chairman of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He worked hard to reconcile the nation and promote the spirit of unity among its citizenries. To sum up, the shepherd leader must be a servant of God, agent of change, parent to all, and source of motivation to the weary.

5 Conclusion

In the midst of ineffective leadership in African societies, the Good Shepherd discourse (John 10:1–18) offers a leadership paradigm which, when developed and promoted, may serve to improve leadership among African Christians. Christian leaders must serve, guide, protect, and provide for their followers who, in turn, obey their leaders' voices. The intimacy of the relationship between leader and disciple, highlighted by in the notion of recognition through naming, must inform contemporary African leadership. Contemporary African leadership, when executed along the shepherd model, has the potential to improve not only divine-human relationship but also human-human and human-environment relationships.

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[2] Ubuntu means "humanity" and is taken from the familiar Xhosa saying, "ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu" ("People are people through other people").

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Conspectus

Engaging Youth Worldviews in Africa: A Practical Theology in Light of John 4

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Abstract

This essay problematizes worldview engagement in Africa from a Kenyan context. The author suggests that robust youth engagement must straddle the traditional/animistic, modern, atheistic, and postmodern worldviews. The essay approaches the study using a practical theological methodology, which deepens the interplay of theory and praxis. In particular, the essay is grounded in Osmer's approach which asks four questions. The first question is the descriptive-empirical question, "what is happening," that explores the state of African youth ministry; the second question is the interpretive question, "why is this happening," which unpacks worldview issues in the lives of young people; the third question is the normative question, "what ought to be happening," and will engage Johannine Christology in John 4. The fourth question is the pragmatic question, which asks, "how can we apply this," and offers recommendations for youth ministry practice and higher education.

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1. Introduction

The state of youth ministry in Africa is showing a promising trend. There is a growing need and uptake of professional youth workers and pastors. Research in the area of youth ministry has also matched this upward trend, with Aziz, Nel, and Davis (2017) exploring the need for policy in the area of professionalizing youth work in the church. Weber (2017) has also called for the decolonization of youth ministry in Africa given its unique context. Nel (2015) has explored the need for "remixing" in light of inter-cultural realities of youth work, and Cloete (2019) has explored the nexus of technology in religious engagement of young people. In the East African context, Chiroma and Muriithi (2019) have explored how youth ministry education can be incorporated in higher education institutions, given

Keywords
Apologetics, Johannine Christology, Practical Theology, worldviews, youth ministry

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SATS
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the youth demographics that color the continent of Africa. Building on the work of western scholars in the area of youth work such as Root, Dean, and Yaconelli, the aforementioned scholars approach youth ministry realities from a practical theological, intercultural, and missiological perspective in light of African realities.

A neglected area of research is youth worldviews and the complexities they raise for ministry engagement. The youth demographic in Africa is broad, with African youth defined by racial and ethnic diversities, socio-economic and political tensions, as well as protracted cultural issues. On the one hand, the presence of African traditional worldviews is a critical factor in the religious expressions of African youth. On the other hand, skepticism and postmodernism are part of urban and cosmopolitan cities in Africa. This can be attributed to the reality of globalization, and the interconnection of the world through digital media that increases the flow of ideas. The rise of humanist skeptics and atheist societies in Africa has not been uncommon. Thus, practical youth ministry must increasingly respond to the questions around the interrelationship of faith and science, the uniqueness of Christ in light of world religions, and biblical-critical hermeneutics. Apologetics is thus a crucial asset of ministry to young people as well as the education of ministers within African seminaries and universities as I have argued elsewhere (Ndereba 2021a).

Worldview engagement by necessity involves the practice of apologetics. The field and practice of apologetics has been envisaged as the intellectual justification of the Christian faith in light of various worldview systems. Craig (2008, 15) defines apologetics as a branch of theology concerned with "the rational justification of truth claims of the Christian faith … primarily a theoretical discipline, though it has practical application." Frame (1994) defines apologetics as "the discipline that teaches Christians how to give a reason for their hope." Baucham (2015, 20) defines it as "knowing what we believe and why we believe it and being able to communicate that to others effectively." All these definitions take the intellectual aspect seriously. More recently, Gould (2019, 18) has proposed that a viable missionary encounter with today's post-Christian West implies the engagement of cultural apologetics. He defines cultural apologetics as the establishment of "a Christian voice, conscience and imagination in a culture so that Christianity can be viewed as true and satisfying" (Gould 2019, 21). Offering a more positive account for cultural apologetics compared to what Craig (2008, 65) suggests, Gould (2019, 21) helps us to consider the importance of cultural context in doing apologetics. However, the question of the worldview challenges that are present in the African context create a lacuna in apologetic methodology. The question of biblical models for worldview is second engagement. In other words, which biblical models are most beneficial for engaging different worldview contexts, particularly models that engage the mind, the heart, and the will in a holistic way? This essay bridges the gap by exploring the worldview challenges in the continent and offering a holistic model through exegeting the Johannine Christology emanating from John 4. This is part of what bridging the cognitive and affective aspects in youth apologetics entails (Ndereba 2021b).

2. The Worldview Challenge

The research context explores youth ministry within the African continent. Thus, an exploration of various worldviews that pose a challenge to gospel ministry must be considered. Worldviews can be described as follows:

- Assumptions or presuppositions we hold about reality (Sire 2004, 22)
- Foundational and comprehensive beliefs about the world, which are embodied in a story (Goheen and Bartholomew 2008)
- Interconnected systems of beliefs (DeWitt 2018, 7)
- Framework of thought (Chemorion 2014, 2).

Therefore, the concept of worldview implies the comprehensive beliefs that reveal what people value and that affects how they live. Within the African cultural context, several worldviews define the lives of young people.

2.1 Traditional/animistic worldview

Despite the fact that we live in the twenty-first century, our African traditional religions (ATR) and worldviews still play a critical role in African societies.[1] Although ATR can be described as theistic, they also have animistic elements which are centered around the influence of the spirit world upon ordinary life experiences (Chemorion 2014, 10). From our songs, proverbs, narratives, and lived experiences, the influence of the spirit world is central to the African. Mugambi (1989, 61) and other early African scholars seem to reject the collapsing of the African worldview into animism, based on the fact that African religions have a robust view of God. For example, Mugambi (1989, 61) references the work of John Mbiti's *Concepts of God* which studied nearly three hundred African communities and concluded the understanding of God as transcendent, immanent, omnipresent, and omnipotent. However, some scholars have critiqued this view that equates African concepts of God with biblical theism on the grounds of a skewed theological methodology—according to Han and Beyers (2017, 9), some of the early African scholars such as Mbiti began from "anthropological, phenomenological-comparative research on what the African peoples say about God," rather than biblical revelation. The point is that despite the contestations in terminology, African worldview or "religious heritage" has elements of animistic worldviews.

More recently, Turaki (2020) has offered a comprehensive biblical-theological framework for engaging concepts within ATR. Such concepts include witchcraft, good and evil, spirit beings, mystical powers, and covenants. The strength of the African worldview is that it offers a thin boundary between the visible and the invisible, which could lead to a more holistic view of life. However, the extreme and animistic view distorts the doctrine of God, hinders human responsibility, and perverts the reality of everyday life by unnecessarily placing responsibility on malevolent spirits. This is the reason African Christians have dabbled in witchcraft practices, for instance. Thus, within African Christianity, there is much that can be done in developing a biblical worldview in light of the issues raised by the animistic worldview.

A local example in practical ministry in Kenya will suffice. Recently there have been pushes within various circles to return to some traditional African rituals and practices. For instance, among the Agĩkuyu of Kenya, older men have been urged to give goats to the council of elders (*mbũri cia kĩama*) which was a ritualistic practice anchored on blood covenants.[2]

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[1] I am aware that there are many contentions on the definition of ATR. For instance, the Kenyan philosopher of religion Mugambi (1989, 141) differentiates between religion as used in traditional African societies and as a marker of world religions such as Christianity and Islam. The latter are rather institutions whereas religion in the African sense was intertwined with all of life. He prefers the use of the term "religious heritage" which views religion holistically within the socio-cultural makeup of a culture or society.

[2] This statement arises from anecdotal evidence from a Gĩkuyu elder and practical church ministry experience among the Agĩkuyu.

In my view, such practices distort the covenantal underpinnings that are grounded in the person and work of Jesus Christ (Ndereba 2021c). In my involvement in teenage mentorship programs, I have learnt that younger men and boys are being initiated into the council of elders (*kĩama kia athuri*), with consequential cultural practices that bring them into bondage rather than the freedom of Christ. The Presbyterian Church of East Africa presented a report to its 22nd General Assembly of 2018, encouraging both a gracious response to those who were members of the council of elders as well as a repudiation of practices that weaken its Christian witness.[3]

2.2 Modern worldview

The second worldview is the modern worldview. The modern worldview is rooted in the European enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This period of transformation was founded on transitions from agrarian to industrial societies, as well as feudalism to capitalism (Chemorion 2014, 27). The modern worldview is characterized by intellectual self-examination, critical rationalization, and scientific thinking (Berger 2014, 5). It arose as a response to the premodern way of life and is represented by figures like Descartes, Newton, Locke, and Kant. Berger (2014, 5–6) deftly locates it in the rapid urbanization that has come to define the world, the advance of the Industrial Revolution (and now the fourth industrial revolution), and the existence of capitalistic systems, all of which lead to increasing individuation as people now have to make choices within a pluralistic context. Erickson (2009, 74) further observes that the heart of the ideas of modernity include:

- Foundationalism—certain foundations exist to enable us to explore knowledge.
- Knowledge—knowledge is seen as the solution to the world's problems.
- Objectivity—one can maintain objective neutrality outside the hindrances of presuppositions.
- Agency of the knower—each individual person has the agency to explore reality by themselves.
- Rationality—Reality can be reduced to logical connections between various phenomena.

Some scholars, like Mudimbe (1988, 1), viewed the colonial process in Africa as a project of modernity. In his own words, the purpose of colonialism was to "organize and transform non-European areas into fundamentally European constructs." Mudimbe explores how the conversation on development is misleading, as it is heavily based on the epistemological assumptions of the modern worldview which can be summarized as dichotomous thinking:

> [T]radition versus modern, oral versus written and printed, agrarian and customary communities versus urban and industrialized civilization, subsistence economies versus highly productive economies. (Mudimbe 1988, 4)

Thus, scholars such as Gifford (2015) have traced the modern worldview within African economics, philosophy, religion, art, culture, and language. This worldview can be seen in how the contemporary adult society in Kenya views the issues of development, fashion, and education. In apologetic engagement with the urban populations in African cities, it will be critical to understand the underpinning of the modernist worldview from within a biblical worldview and framework.

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[3] Report to the Office of the 22nd General Assembly on the Practice of the "Mbũri Cia Kĩama," June 27, 2018.

2.3 Atheistic worldview

The third worldview is the atheistic worldview. Atheistic worldviews have thrived on the wings of modernity. With the tools of rationalization as well as the scientific advancements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, atheism has proposed that "God is dead." The atheistic worldview thrives on secularism and scientific materialism—namely, that reality exists without reference to a supernatural being and that matter is all that there is. Berger (2014, 133) differentiates between enlightenment atheism and militant atheism in the Chinese context: while the former is more philosophical, the latter is more political. Van Wyk (2014, 3) summarizes the various strands of atheism as follows:

- Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) viewed the idea of God as wish fulfilment and a projection of the human mind.
- Karl Marx (1818–1883) argued that religion is the opium of the people.
- Friedrich Nietzsche (1840–1900) declared triumphantly that the "metaphysical" God is dead.
- Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) considered religious faith in God an illusion and a projection of infantile desires.

Within the twenty-first century, the New Atheist Movement in the Western world has been notable. The "four horsemen"—Dennett, Dawkins, Harris, and Hitchens—have been influential figures in the movement that has crossed physical boundaries and settled within the African continent, partly due to the ubiquity of new media.[4] In the contemporary context, there are active Atheist societies in key African cities such as Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, Nairobi, and Lagos.[5] Having been engaged in apologetics ministry in the city of Nairobi, it is clear that there is a need for apologetics engagement among adherents of this growing worldview in the continent.

2.4 Postmodern Worldview

Postmodernity is presented as the fourth worldview construct. Postmodernity arose as a critique of modernity. Grenz (1996, 39) traces it to the 1979 report by Jean-Francois Lyotard to the Conseil des Universités of the government of Quebec (Canada). Grenz (1996, 40) notes its fluid nature by saying that "it defies definitive description." Whereas modernity was founded on certainty in epistemology, postmodernity maintains a subjectivist stance. In addition, Chemorion (2014, 31) observes that whereas modernity was based on intellectual thought, postmodernity is founded upon emotional feelings.

Within the global context, postmodernity has taken on two faces. The first is the contemporary concept of the "psychologized self" and the second, the development of "critical theory" as a substantive method of engaging reality. The concept of the "psychologized self" can be understood as the result of the movement from an individualistic self, as the basis of enlightenment thought, to a conceptualization of self that is dependent on one's feelings in view of the multicultural complexities of our time (Yin 2018, 195). Trueman (2020) explores how the contemporary understanding of "the self" has affected the current understanding of hybridity in sexuality. This contemporary situation, according to Trueman (2020, 36), is founded upon modernist thought and its critiques, particularly from the works of Taylor, Rieff, and MacIntyre. Whereas the postmodern view pushes for agency of the individual leading to a fragmentation of identity (Yin 2018, 212; Blackman 2005, 8), Yin argues that it is necessary to appreciate the fabric of communality without sacrificing human diversity (Yin 2018, 212).

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[4] Apart from a huge following on social media through their talks and lectures, their books have been influential for African Atheists. See, e.g., Daniel Dennett's (1995) *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life;* Richard Dawkins's (2006) *The God Delusion;* Sam Harris's (2004) *The End of Faith;* and the late Christopher Hitchens's (2007) *God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything.*

[5] A helpful academic research project on atheism in Africa is Patrick Brian Segaren Pillay (2017), "The Emergence of Atheism in Post-colonial South Africa," PhD Thesis (UKZN). https://ukzn-dspace.ukzn.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10413/16449/Pillay_Patrick%20Brian%20Segaren_2017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y. Other popular writings on the same include: Chika Oduah (2018), "Nigeria's Undercover Atheists: In Their Words," Aljazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/9/18/nigerias-undercover-atheists-in-their-words; and Kevin Muriithi (2020) "African Atheism Rising," The Gospel Coalition Africa. https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org/article/african-atheism-rising/

The second strand of postmodernity is what has been called "critical theory." Arising from the Frankfurt School of the early 1900s, it grew as a critique of the sociological theories of the day (Bronner 2013, 16). In contemporary life, this thinking has taken a deconstructive approach to "the traditional" theories underpinning conceptualizations of religion, theology, sexuality, gender, and race, among others. The core ideas of critical theory in modern parlance can be summarized as follows (Shenvi and Sawyer 2020):

- Social binary—where society is divided into "oppressor" and "oppressed" groups. Within society these include whites versus blacks, rich versus poor, heterosexuals versus LGBTIQAA+, west versus south, among others.
- Hegemonic power—contemporary critical theory advances the idea that the oppressor groups maintain their status quo largely because of the power they hold as a result of their position of authority.
- Lived experiences—oppressed groups are the only ones who are able to explain the problems they face on a day-to-day basis. Truth, especially when it has to do with contentious issues such as racism, sexism, and homophobia, can only be defined by oppressed groups.
- Social justice—the call for oppressed people to pursue liberation of social ills through affecting systemic change and calling oppressor groups to account for their past and present failures in being complicit.

Contemporary critical theory may be helpful on various fronts. First, it rightly considers the problems of systemic or structural "sins." Second, it calls us to appreciate the inherent dignity of all people because of the *imago dei*, and third, it pushes for transformative action within society. However, if viewed as a worldview that only pursues systemic change outside the wisdom of God's revelation, then its assumptions can be found to be at fault. For example, without the biblical concepts of God, creation, sin, reconciliation, and eschatology, systemic change may be unguided, unfruitful, and without any *telos*. Further, by stressing the "social binaries" within society, the posture may be more divisive rather than seeking reconciliation through the gospel of Christ. Within the Kenyan context, the following societal pushes reveal the mounting pressure of postmodern thought as it relates to sexuality, ethnicity, and human rights issues:

- Repeal 162—this was a movement beginning in 2016 that challenged the constitutional standing on gay and lesbian rights and issues. It was championed by the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC), Partnership to Inspire, Transform and Connect the HIV response (PITCH) program, alongside the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya and the Nyanza, Rift Valley, and Western Kenya LGBTIQ Coalition.[6]

- The Reproductive Healthcare Bill 2019—sponsored by Senator Susan Kihika, this bill seeks to open up the space for normalizing sexual expression among teenagers, creating an ethical dilemma for healthcare professionals who are anti-abortionist, and encouraging family planning methodologies that seem to be at odds with biblical worldview and ethics.[7]
- Political agenda in ethnical diatribe and Kenya's 2022 elections—For a long time, politicians have used the ethnicity debate for their political agenda. The conversation round the presidential elections in 2022 are now pegged on "a few tribes versus most Kenyans" and "hustlers versus dynasty" discourse. While there is much that can be said concerning these issues, at heart, they are making use of social binaries to pit the oppressed versus oppressor groups without focusing on the core issues. Clearly, Christian engagement in the public square must offer a holistic and biblical perspective on these critical issues in the society.

Postmodernism therefore challenges the biblical worldview in the areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. Although postmodernism has a few benefits on how we conceive reality and relate with one another, by and large, our engagement with it must be biblically sensitive as well as practically wise. This paper explores the Johannine Christology of John 4 as an example of how to strike this balance, as we encounter different worldviews in our apologetic engagement. The mandate of apologetics is not only to give a reason for our hope, but also to do so with gentleness (1 Pet 3:15). Jesus's interaction with the Samaritan woman gives us a good example of how to do this.

3. The Exegesis of John 4

3.1 Introduction

This section contains an exegetical account of John 4, which is the basis of the normative question in practical theology, "what ought to happen?" Since theology is grounded in biblical revelation, healthy theology must look at Scripture. John's Gospel and the Christology that is derived from it offer a good starting place. First, the non-Christian background of the gospel offers a helpful bridge to the contemporary African context, especially within urban African cities. New Testament scholars are largely in agreement on the Greco-Roman and Hellenistic background of John's audience (Barret 1978, 27; Bruce 1983, 29; Carson 1991, 25; Köstenberger 2004, 2). Second, the evangelistic thrust of the Gospel of John commends itself to the task of youth engagement. Stott (2001, 37) observes that John's purpose from 20:30–31 is gospel-centered. The apostle John carefully records the "signs" of Jesus, to convince his readers to believe in Jesus so that they might receive eternal life. This evangelistic thrust must never be lost in apologetics engagement. Apologetics serve the purpose of reducing the intellectual walls that prevent people from beholding Jesus Christ. The engagement between Jesus and the Samaritan woman illustrates how this can be done practically. Last, the Christological emphasis that runs through the gospel commends itself as a theological goldmine. Carson (1991, 95), for instance, observes how the person of Jesus Christ lies at the heart of the gospel—particularly the "I am" statements and the Christological titles "Son of Man," "Son of God," and "Lamb of God," to name some. Since Christology is at the heart of the Christian faith, exploring this theme from John's Gospel is a helpful strategy for apologetics engagement in Africa.

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[6] National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission https://www.nglhrc.com/; Partnership to Inspire, Transform and Connect the HIV response https://frontlineaids.org/our-work-includes/pitch/; the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya https://www.galck.org/; the Nyanza, Rift Valley and Western Kenya LGBTIQ Coalition https://www.facebook.com/nyarwek/.

[7] The Reproductive Health Bill 2019 http://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/bills/2019/ReproductiveHealthcareBill_2019.PDF

3.2 *An analysis of John 4:1–45*

3.2.1 The context

In terms of the literary context, our passage is sandwiched between John 3 and John 4:46–54 as well as John 5. John 3 retells Jesus's teaching on regeneration to Nicodemus and the central message of salvation for "the world" (3:16). It also contains John's understanding of his ministry as pointing to Jesus Christ, the one "who comes from above" (3:31), and his promise to give the Spirit "without measure" (3:34, quoting Ezek 4:11, 16). John 4:46–54 records the healing (second sign) of the official's son by Jesus because of his believing in his word, "your son will live." Clearly, as with the purpose of John's Gospel, the works (or signs) of Jesus Christ vindicate his divinity.

In terms of the historical context, the setting of the passage has to do with the interaction of Jesus with the Pharisees. In fact, the passage tells us that there is a growing hatred from the Pharisee camp and comparison with the ministry of John. There is an allusion to the importance of Samaria and the well identified as Jacob's well (4:6). Given the geographical context of Sychar (Samaria), Jesus is showing that he is not only the Jewish fulfillment of Old Testament promises but also the Messiah of the Gentile world (4:26, Carson 1991, 215).With regard to the canonical context, Jacob's well symbolizes a place of interest for the Jewish people (Gen 33:19; 48:22; Josh 24:32). Mention of the "living water" (4:10, 13–14) looks back to the Old Testament teaching that first, God's people had forsaken him, "the fountain of living waters" (Jer 2:13, 17:13), by digging their own cisterns. Second, that God will offer his people living waters so that they will never thirst again (Isa 49:10; John 4:14, 7:38; Rev 7:16), thereby pointing to the restoration that God promises in Christ through the Spirit to all nations ("whoever" or "everyone" 4:13, 14) and finally to the eternal rest at the end of time. As Bruce (1983, 104) notes, this "running water aptly illustrated the fresh and perennial supply of God's grace, as it does in these words of Jesus."

3.2.2. The structure

In analyzing the structure of biblical narratives, scholars consider rhetorical devices, characters, conflicts, narrative settings, and points of view (Resseguie 2013). Although plot analysis is a viable method of approaching narratives in literary studies, there are some ambiguities regarding the definition and function of "plot" within the narrative (Morgan 2013). Yet, since this particular narrative in John 4 occurs within a wider canonical context, much more needs to be considered. Mburu (2019, 66) has offered the four-legged stool approach in the art and science of interpretation—that is the literary context, the theological context, the historical-cultural context, as well as African parallels. The following section considers a simple plot analysis and then integrates the varied contexts of the passage.

- The *setting*: Jesus at Sychar (Samaria) near Jacob's well at noon (4:1–6).
- The *conflict*: The Samaritan woman's initial opposition to Jesus's request for a drink (4:9) "how is it that you a Jew, ask for a drink from me a woman of Samaria."

- The *rising conflict*: moves from gender and cultural conflict (4:9), to material conflict ("how will you draw the water?" 4:11), to spiritual conflict ("I have no husband" 4:16), to religious conflict ("our fathers worshipped in this mountain" 4:20).
- The *climax*: Jesus's self-revelation as the Messiah who was to come (4:26).
- The *resolution*: The woman believes and witnesses to the Samaritans "come see a man" (4:29, 39, 42).
- The *New Setting*: Cana of Galilee (4:46).

3.2.3 The theological themes

This passage shows how Jesus engages with one viewed by the wider culture as an "outsider." This is helpful for engagement with young Africans who espouse different worldviews as earlier mentioned, including African traditional/animism, modernism, atheism, and postmodernism. John 4 is a primer on the practical approach to worldview engagement. Rather than Jesus critiquing the Samaritan woman's religion, or attacking her lifestyle, Jesus engages her deep presuppositions and finally offers her himself as the Messiah of God. The following implications emerge from this passage:

- *Jesus Christ is the reconciler*—In the series of dialogues in this passage, the Samaritan woman raises various objections to Jesus's conversation. These include gender barriers (4:9—"how is it that you … [ask] me a woman of Samaria"); cultural barriers (4:9—"how is it that you a Jew ask for a drink from me … a Samaritan"); materialistic barriers (4:11—"you have nothing to draw the water with"); spiritual barriers (4:17—"I have no husband," showing her hiding of her secret lifestyle), and religious barriers (4:20—"our fathers worshipped on this mountain"). Jesus is able to move beyond these socio-cultural, religious, and spiritual barriers by emphasizing that true worship of God is in spirit and in truth (4:24) for all who look to Christ. Once the barriers are broken, the woman is able to behold the Messiah for who he is (4:26).
- *The humanity of Jesus*—This passage reveals several aspects that point to the humanity of Jesus. The passage records that Jesus was weary (4:6), he requests a drink (4:7), and starts a conversation with an unexpected individual. Although this passage also points to the deity of Jesus Christ, the humanity of Jesus is evidently what enables him to engage with the Samaritan woman. Paul elsewhere notes that the humiliation of Jesus (Phil 2:6 ff.) is foundational to the Christian faith. Here we see Jesus interacting with a sinner and an outcast before he defends his message in light of the Samaritan religion and worldview.
- *Defending the faith*—Within a contemporary global and even hospitable African culture, tolerating other beliefs that are contrary to the Christian faith has softened the task of defending the faith. In this passage, Jesus defends the core tenets of the biblical faith when he compares Samaritan and Jewish religions with the gospel message. Christian engagement in the public square will often take both the "offensive and defensive" approaches in apologetics (Taylor 2006, 13, 14), even while doing so in the spirit of love and grace.
- *The Deity of Jesus*—The issue of Christology is what separated the Jews from the Christians. The issue of Christology is what separates traditionalists and skeptics from Christian believers today. Although the Jews were expecting a messianic ruler, the Samaritans were expecting a "Taheb" modeled after Deuteronomy 18:18—a teacher like Moses who would speak the very words of God (Bailey 2008, 214). To the Greco-Romans who saw their

Caesars, like Augustus, as the *soter* (savior), Jesus was actually the true Savior of the World. "I AM" is the exact phrase that is used in the Greek Old Testament to translate the Hebrew self-revelation of God to the Israelites, particularly to Moses in the burning bush (Bailey 2008, 211). The other "I AM[s]" in John further explore the doctrine of Christology and its implication for Christian theology and life. Jesus's self-revelation as "I am he" (also in 6:35; 9:37; 20:31) is always climactic and points to the heart of the gospel (Ridderbos 1997, 165).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This essay has presented the necessity of worldview engagement for holistic ministry to Africa's critical youth demographic. While apologetics has served as a helpful tool in doing this, the African context has been absent in the scholarly conversation. This essay has highlighted that gap and also explored a biblical model by exegeting Jesus's engagement with the Samaritan woman in John 4. By utilizing Johannine Christology in this particular passage, as well as in the wider canon, this essay has explored various theological implications from the passage. Considering the worldview challenge in which Africa finds itself, and the Christology that emerges from John 4, the following are points of application for theological education and Christian ministry:

(1) *Theological education as worldview education and transformation*: Theological education is not only a familiarization of theological facts but of individual transformation. Teachers and students must view theology not merely as ordinary education but as the transformative life experience of those who think about God and live *coram deo*—before the face of God. Theological education should help students to see how worldview affects not only them, but also their congregations and communities, and offer them the tools to wisely engage their contexts.

(2) *Discipleship in the church*: Discipleship in the church has often been viewed from a programmatic lens, whereby congregants jump from one program to another. While there is a need for this, discipleship by and large is the transformation into Christlikeness in the company of other disciples. Thus, it is both a Christ-centered and lifelong interaction between followers of Jesus Christ.

(3) *Youth Ministry*: Church leaders must consider the unique cultural moment facing young people and envision ministry as pointing them to Christ while answering their deepest questions and needs. Given the worldview challenge that has been offered in this paper, youth ministry must be geared towards offering Christ as the "living water" for all who are thirsting at the cisterns of traditionalism, modernity, atheism, and postmodernity. Youth ministry must therefore incorporate a biblical worldview approach to all its forms, including catechizing, preaching, fellowshipping, and pastoral care. In the area of counseling young people, a good number of the issues are undergirded by faulty belief systems. Given the complexities of youth sexuality and pornography for example, young people must be offered Christ as the satisfaction to their deepest longings and his grace as the power to deal with sin, shame, and guilt.

(4) *Practical or Public Theology*: The voice of theologians is needed in the public square. This can happen in the form of public engagement, writing opinion articles for newspapers, or social media engagement through podcasting, vlogging (video blogging), and blogging. Rather than theologians only writing academic papers for a limited audience, our work must be a work of translation into the day-to-day realities of African life and society. That way, our theology can affect the lives of people and bring the transformation that we long for and that we have received in Christ.

Theology, therefore, must be practical in nature. This paper has shown how such a practical theological approach is necessary today, in view of the worldview challenge in contemporary Africa and the Christological center of our faith.

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Conspectus

The Prologue of John: A Conceptual Framework for African Public Theological Discourse

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Abstract

One of the recurring concerns in public theology is the possibility of arriving at a normative methodology. Some are of the opinion that a normative methodology is not necessary, while others think it matters and have proposed normative methodologies of their own. Furthermore, some think it matters but the nature of “public” and “theology” are too diverse to have a normative method since each context has rights to its preferred methodology. Be that as it may, having a methodology requires a known goal. Many public theologians agree, the goal of public theology is the transformative progress of the society from where it presently is to where it should be, according to God’s standard. In other words, the goal of public theology is the same as the goal of Christian theology (Moltmann 1999). Over the history of the Church, the concept of the Word of God becoming flesh (*Logos* incarnation) has had a major impact on the self-understanding of Christianity. Therefore, this study revisits the prologue of John where the incarnation is explicitly stated. Taking its cue from the impact it has had on Christian theology in general, the aim of such revisit is to investigate the passage and see what hope it provides in an attempt to propose a normative methodology for doing public theology, particularly in Africa. This undertaking assumes that the prologue of John is significant for the entire enterprise of Christian theology, and so applies it to public theology. This study assumes as important that there is an anchor for the goal of public theology. African public theology needs a normative method. This paper uses a literary methodology and engages literature on public theology, in dialogue with an exegetical analysis of the prologue

Keywords
incarnation, society, Africa, hermeneutics, theology

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of John (1:1–18). It argues strongly that God's invasion of human history in the incarnation gives an enduring hermeneutical springboard, a defining model for carrying out the goal of public theology in a normative fashion.

1. Introduction

Hendriks (2016, 8–14), in attempting a model of how the Church should understand her public theological role, stresses the self-emptying of Christ in order to reach out to those suffering. Musa (2020, 29), though not disagreeing with Hendriks, emphasizes how the principles sourced from the law in the Pentateuch should still model the Church's thinking in doing public theology today. In explaining how Jesus can be seen to be in sync with his model he says, "Jesus provided an example of how this should be done in his Sermon on the Mount, in which he penetrated to the heart of the law and taught Christians how to focus on what God desires and to be perfect as God is perfect (Matt 5:48)."

It can be argued that the goal of public theology is a phenomenon in process partly due to the nature of public theology itself and the diverse contexts in which it is done (Forster 2020, 15ff.; Day and Kim 2017, 5, 10). Smit (2017, 67) puts it in sharp language when he says, "There is hardly any agreement on what constitutes public theology." Yet, as most public theologians have acknowledged, the goal of public theology is the same as the goal of Christian theology (Forster [2020, 16] quoting Moltmann;), 16; Smit comments on Russel Botman, 2017, 67–68). According to Moltmann (1999, 1), "There is no Christian identity without public relevance, and no public relevance without theology's Christian identity." At the center of this goal, at least for the Christian, lies the quest for an experiential reach for what God has reached man for (Agang 2020, 3–5; cf. Phil 3:12). Many public theologians have labored and are laboring in light of this.

Day and Kim (2017, 10) postulate that public theology will always be indebted to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who emphasized the grounding of any Christian theology in the exemplary incarnation of the Word made flesh (Bonhoeffer 1963, 277ff.; cf. John 1:14). The relevance of the incarnation of Jesus for public theology has been acknowledged. However, in Africa the relevance of the incarnation of the *Logos* in John's Gospel for public theology has not been given the attention it is due.

It is appropriate to agree with Smit (2017, 67–68) that no normative methodology has yet been arrived at. Smit is right when he says that the question of whether it matters should be dropped. But as a working central motif can be discerned, as stated above, a continuous quest for a normative method is never out of place. This contribution seeks to call attention to what can be sieved from John's *Logos* incarnation. The article is premised on the idea that a normative method via a model may not be far from reach after all. This takes its cue from the impact John's *Logos* incarnation (John 1:1–18) has had on the understanding of Christianity as a whole.

Therefore, this contribution revisits the prologue of John, centering on his idea of the *Logos* incarnation. This contribution sees this passage as a model dialogue passage for Christians in Africa's public squares as they engage their immediate spaces with their identities. For, as Bonhoeffer (1963, 277) stated, "A truth, a doctrine, or a religion need no space for themselves. They are disembodied entities. They are heard, learnt and apprehended." An incarnation not limited to an event of the past or the present, "but as an ongoing embodiment of God in those who follow Christ" (Behr 2019, viii). The Church is Christ's active incarnation in society. What follows then is a theological reading of the prologue of John in an attempt at locating a conceptual framework for the grounding of a normative methodology for public theology in Africa. Afterwards some concluding theological reflections are drawn, demonstrating the implication of such a framework.

2. John—Jesus is God Enfleshed

Without apology, John bluntly wrote,

> In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.... The word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1–4, 14 NIV)

On this passage, Dunn (1989, 213) notes,

> Few if any passages have been so influential on subsequent theology. For it was the *Logos* (Word) concept, the explicit affirmation of the incarnation of the *Logos*, and the identification of Jesus as the incarnate *Logos* which dominated the Christology of the second and third centuries.

The obsession and preoccupation of second- and third-century ecclesial Christological discourse is, perhaps, due in part to the difficulty in understanding the mystery surrounding the person and the divinity of Christ. Lewis (2004, 122) is correct when he says, "The philosophically unthinkable became fact. While philosophers were seeking to escape the 'flesh' and be free in 'spirit,' God who is Spirit becomes flesh." The profundity of John's epigram is breath-taking. Kim (2009, 421) puts it well, "THE PROLOGUE OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL, (John 1:1–18) is one of the most profound passages in all of Scripture. It is crafted with unparalleled literary beauty while also possessing unique theological depth." Even though Johannine scholars have different persuasions on the message of the Fourth Gospel, they agree on the centrality of the prologue in Christian theology as a whole. Especially that it is cardinal to understanding the incarnation and making groundings for the subsequent understanding of the Trinity—the Christian presentation of God (Bultmann 1971; Dunn 1989; Hurtado 2003; Ashton 2014; Carson 1991; Joy 2010; Behr 2019).

The uniqueness of John can even be pictured thus: John's perception of Jesus Christ stems in part to this leaning, for while all the other apostles would either be busy eating the meal served or be busy listening to Jesus's teaching, John would be at the side of Christ leaning (John 13: 23, 25; 21:20). Obviously, this place of intimacy helped John not only to listen to the teachings but to also hear and know the heartbeat of Christ, and thus be able to perceive and present him in the fashion no one ever did.

The focus in this article is to investigate John's insight into the life and person of Jesus Christ as enshrined in the prologue and the work he feels Christ has achieved and its implication for African Christian public life. Doing that demands that we seek first to recover as far as possible John's perception of Jesus Christ and why he passionately and bluntly brought to the fore the concept of the *Logos* as the means God chose to reveal himself to fallen mankind. This, to my mind, is the hub around which his *Logos* Christology revolves.

The majestic statement by John in his prologue echoes the opening words of Genesis 1:1. Carson's (1991, 113) influential comment on this epigram is worthy of quotation. He states, "In the beginning immediately reminds any reader of the Old Testament of the opening verse of the Bible." The similarity in construction between Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 is breathtaking. While Genesis 1:1 lays down a blueprint, John 1:1 gives the commentary. It is interesting to note that John's subject in his commentary is the incarnate Word of God. John traces Christ back to Genesis and tells us that he is the self-existent God who created everything from the beginning (Gen 1:1–3; cf. John 1:1). This same Creator, John argues, has made his dwelling among humans (1:14). The surest evidence of God taking abode with humans is his glory (δόξα; 1:14b) taking up habitation among them. The Son displayed the character of the Father above. He was full of grace and truth (1:14c).

This startling declaration, that Christ is the incarnate *Logos* and Creator, is illuminating, transforming and unparalleled. John also tells us that Christ is the long-awaited Messiah (John 1:11–12; 3:16; 20:31; 1 John 5:11–12; Rev 22:12–16) who gives his life for us and for our salvation (3:36; 1 John 5:12). John's unique portrayal of Christ as the incarnate *Logos*, that gives a vivid picture of who Christ is, is in line with the rest of Scripture (20:31, cf. Mark 1:1; Luke 2:11) and this has led to the transformation of lives around the world. Early North-African Church Fathers like Tertullian, Athanasius, and Augustine also experienced the transforming power of Christ as they dwelled on the works of John. Their understanding of Christ, as revealed in their works, has also transformed many lives in Africa.

3. John's Prologue

In the Church's history, "revelation" has meant the self-disclosure of God to man. The medium of God's self-disclosure is in revelation shrouded in the incarnation. The incarnation is packaged in Jesus Christ and through Scripture (John 3:16; 5:39; 14:9; 1 Tim 3:16). God uses these channels to speak to our forefathers in the past and these latter days by his Son (Heb 1:1–2). John's notion of the Son as the Word is the beginning point for *Logos* Christology which served as a crucial phase in early Christianity's attempt to explain itself. It was important for early Christians to prove their movement as the right continuation of true religion traced back at least to Abraham, and to come to a coherent understanding and statement of its faith concerning Christ (Dunn 1989, 213).

Regardless of its diverse interpretations of what constitutes right observance of the Law of God, Judaism has always had a uniting ground in its claim of being a monotheistic religion, and the same was the case in the first century CE (Ashton 2014, 1–2; cf. Evans 1993). Christianity, which sprang from Judaism, made the radical claim that it was the fulfilment of the prophecies of Judaism. As such, it carried the burden of proving that it was not a heresy. There was such tension that Jews expelled Christians from their synagogues at some points, which drew a fundamental line that divided them (Ashton 2014, 2; Evans 1993, 168 ff.).

> [It is] fundamentally because the two religions, though both profess belief in one God, have completely opposed conceptions of God's definitive revelation to humankind. For the Jews this can be summed up as the Torah, the law revealed to Moses. For the Christians it is summed up in the very person of Christ. (Ashton 2014, 2)

According to Dunn (1989, xxviii; cf. Hurtado 1998, 11–14) this carved the unique response of John, explaining how Christians are right to claim they are disciples of Jesus even to the point of worship, and that at the same time they are not violating the monotheism that is inherent in the OT. Against this backdrop, John used *Logos* or Word to reveal the mystery of the incarnation—the Christian belief that "God has now made himself known by the entry of Jesus Christ, His eternal Word, into the world" (St Helen's, Bishopgate 2008, 25).

4. *Logos*: Origin and Scope

The background to the *Logos* concept and its use in the prologue of John's Gospel has been discussed vigorously many times (e.g., Dunn 1989, 215; Behr 2019, 245). Here we limit discussion to two schools of thought on the origin of the *Logos* concept as used by John in his prologue, that of Dunn and Bultmann respectively.

The principal background for the origin of *Logos* in the investigation of Dunn (1980, 258 ff.) is traced back to the Old Testament, particularly in the Inter-Testament Hellenistic Judaism obtained in the wisdom literature of that era in which the figure of wisdom receives considerable prominence. Painter and Dodd (n.d., 50) share this same opinion. According to them, John's "starting point was the Jewish, or early Christian use of the term. He began with the Hellenistic Jewish identification of *Logos* with Torah/wisdom." This original context though does not imply, for example, that there could not have been any external factor at influence. That the context is "Hellenistic Judaism" already rules out that the original context was strictly Jewish.

Rudolf Bultmann (1971, 13–15), on the other hand, writing before Dunn, Painter, and Dodd, attributed the origin of the *Logos* concept to a pre-Christian Gnostic myth. While he acknowledges that the Fourth Gospel shows an acquaintance with the Synoptic Gospels and Pauline background thinking (6–10), he nevertheless sees the original context of the prologue as gnostic. For him, "The background is an early oriental Gnosticism, already under the influence of Old Testament belief in God as Creator…. John thus, uses gnostic language and conceptuality of the gospel." This assertion has been rejected by Dunn and many Johannine scholars (cf. Evans 1993, 7) who hold that such a view is untenable because, as it is, the trace of a gnostic pre-Christian *Logos* myth cannot be substantiated (Dunn 1989, 215).

Thus, to pin down the origin of the *Logos* concept to a particular background, Kim (2009, 425) contends, is to leave out some essential aspect of its roots. For him, "There is no consensus on the antecedent or background of the λόγος." He maintains further, "Proposals for its conceptual background can be broadly classified into three sources: (a) Greek and Philosophy (Stoicism and Philo), (b) the "Word" as the personification of Wisdom in Jewish wisdom literature (σωφία), and (c) the word of God in the Old Testament" (425–426).

Some have even gone further, asking whether the origin of the prologue lies with John, or whether he only adopted an existing hymn offering some editorial work to fit it into his purpose (Behr 2019, 245; cf. Bultmann 1971, 18 commenting on Burnley's hypothesis of movements from Aramaic into Greek, assuming John wrote in Greek). Although there are many ideas regarding the backgrounds and origin of the prologue, all the different voices agree that it contains a profound message. The article next inspects the message.

4.1 History and Tradition

Picking up from Kim's comment above, Harris (1994) noted that Johannine scholars have not been able to prove beyond reasonable doubt whether the background to John's use of *Logos* is strictly Jewish or Greek, since the *Logos* concept has both Jewish and Greek sources. Notwithstanding its background, Harris postulated that John had in mind three main emphases for using *Logos* in his writing:

> First, John 1:1 outlines the relationship of the Word to God. John 1:1a (in the beginning was the Word) forms a clear statement of pre-existence. John 1:1b (the Word was with God) distinguishes God (the Father) from the Word.... John 1:1c (and the Word was God) affirms the full deity of the Word. Second, John 1:3 gives

> the relationship of the word to creation: "through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that had been made." Third, John1:14 shows the relationship of the Word to humanity: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." (Harris 1994, 191–192)

The following paragraphs will briefly discuss Harris's three categorizations of prologue—namely, the being of the Word, his relationship with creation, and his relationship with humanity.

4.1.1 The Being of the Word

On the first verse of the prologue, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1 NIV)," Harris (1994, 191–192) comments that the statement of the beginning forms a clear statement of the pre-existence of the Word. That is, whatever the Word is, it has always been. For readers familiar with Judaism this is the same as saying that the Word is equal to God—for only God possesses this quality.

Harris (1994, 191–192) goes on to draw a distinction, however, between the Word and God as he introduced the ripple concept of the Father. But as the verse concludes by merging the seeming gap between the Word and God, Harris explained this as expressing the deity of the Word without obliterating the Word's pre-existence and distinction from God (the Father). This presents the reader with a difficulty. How could Christianity claim to be a monotheistic religion, like Judaism, while making the *Logos* equal with God, as stated above? It is precisely to this end that Dunn (1989, xxvii ff.) labored in his *Christology in the Making*. There he cautioned firmly: "To avoid confusion, therefore, it would be better to speak of the Johannine Christ as the incarnation of *God*," not as the incarnation of the Word. This sets a precedent that, whatever the distinction might be, it does not invoke a distinct God (Father) co-existing with the Word, so that Christianity is some form of bitheism (Dunn 1989, xxxi). In plain terms, the incarnation is what made the Word of God, who is God, become Jesus Christ (Dunn 1989, xxxi)—Jesus is God enfleshed.

4.1.2 Relationship with creation

The Word's becoming enfleshed does not relegate his preceding relationship with matter. John 1:3, as commented by Harris (1994, 191–192), gives us the relationship that existed and still was in existence at the incarnation: "through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that had been made (1:1 NIV)." The God-Creation motif is an enormous one to tackle, but it is sufficient for our purpose to summarily consider God distinct from what he has made. That the Word is the one *through* whom creation came to be is "[a] poetical description of divine immanence, of God's self-revelation and interaction with his creation and his people; it was a way of speaking of *divine agency* rather than of *divine agent* distinct from God in ontological terms" (Dunn 1989, 240). Thus, never de-emphasizing that the Word is something other than what created the creation—God himself.

4.1.3 Relationship with Humanity

Before verse 14 of the prologue, we read that the Word is the light that gives light to every human in the world (1:9). The function of this light to mankind (part of the creation *by* the Word) is the imprinting of the purpose of existence on mankind. This also indicates that it is only through the Word that man has life and understands what life is meant for. Dunn (1989, 242) puts it thus, "[it is] the vivifying power and revelation of God, as God giving life and revealing how that life should be lived." And this stands at the center of the whole incarnation story: the communication of the meaning of life to God’s creatures.

It is at this point of communication of what life is that verse 14 paints its picture of the Creator becoming one with his creation in the symbol of man, Jesus Christ. A claim unparalleled either in Jewish or Greek thought (Dunn 1989, 243), thus initiating an innovation to the usage of *Logos* not heard before and now uniquely appropriated by Christians. In Dunn’s words:

> If it had asserted simply that an individual divine being had become man, that would have raised fewer eyebrows. It is the fact that the *Logos* poet has taken language which any thoughtful Jew would recognize to be the language of personification and has *identified* it with a particular person, *as* a particular person … the manifestation of God becoming a man! God’s utterance does not merely come through a particular individual, but actually becomes that one person, Jesus of Nazareth! (Dunn 1989, 243)

Thus, the incarnation of the *Logos* is central to the Christian identity. Without it, there is no purpose to living other than groping around in the utter darkness that the world is in (cf. John 1:5, 10–11). Our question now remains. Our aim is to demonstrate how this incarnation story, that as Christians we believe is what has forged our identity and its ensuing purpose, should be the ultimate springboard for the Church’s engagement with the society at large as we go barefooted into the field of public theology. We start with some reflections on how this has been the case even right from the early centuries of the Church.

5. Christology as “Churchiality”

If Christ so incarnated himself, and if we agree with Philip Melanchthon’s powerful statement “To know his acts of kindness is to know Christ,” (Zamoyta 1967, 169), then, we have to agree with Gonzalez (1987). He insightfully declares,

> The purpose of this incarnation of the Son of God is to free us from the power of the Devil and to show us the way of salvation, Christ achieves his victory over the Devil throughout the totality of his life, but most especially in his incarnation and his death. In his incarnation, Christ invaded the dominions of the Devil, and thereby began his victorious work. But it was in his death that Satan himself, being fooled by the seeming weakness of the Savior, introduced him into the deepest shadows of his empire, where Christ defeated him in returning victoriously from among the dead. Since then, all the dead who wish to do so may follow him, thereby escaping the claws of death and of its master Satan. (Gonzalez 1987, 223)

Christology is a product and activity of the Church rooted in apostolic proclamation and patristic doctrinal confession and formulation. The conciliar formulations—some of which became known as the Apostles’ Creed, for example, gave defining conclusions that Jesus is the Christ and one co-equal, coeternal, and consubstantial with the Father. As Quasten (1995, 23) endeavored to show, “The Apostles’ Creed (*Symbolum Apostolicum*) is a brief summary of the principal doctrines of Christianity … hence may be called a compendium of the theology of the Church.” This firm resolve—contained in the Creed—is built around the fundamental fact that, after Jesus’s death, the disciples were not, as one might have expected, rounded up, arrested, and perhaps executed (Wright 1996, 109).

I have argued in my work (2019), *Jesus Christ as Ancestor: A Theological Study of Major African Ancestor Christologies in Conversation with the Patristic*

Christologies of Tertullian and Athanasius, that had this happened, that would have constituted an extinction of the good news about Jesus Christ and possible witness of the apostles. But they (the disciples), frightened and doubtful as they were, lived and had daily fellowship in the upper room in Jerusalem (Acts 1:14–15; John 20:19; Acts 1:13). They devoted themselves to the apostolic teaching (Acts 2:42) and publicly witnessed to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, despite the threats coming from the religious leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 4:20).

Quintessential to apostolic proclamation is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Kereszty (2011, 22) argues, "In light of the resurrection, the Church finally understood the mystery of the crucified and risen One: 'My Lord and my God' Thomas cries out when the risen Jesus shows himself to him." The resurrection of Jesus changed the perspective of the apostles thereby transforming their worldview so much that timidity was transformed into boldness. The ones who went into hiding in the upper room in Jerusalem for fear of the Roman authorities could now stand in public and boldly witness to the death and resurrection of their Lord (Acts 2:14ff.; 3:11ff.; Turbi 2019, 126). And this cause, of proclaiming Christ as the risen Lord, became the pillar upon which the Church Fathers consolidated and built their theology(ies). Thus, in the question, "Who is Jesus of Nazareth lies an impenetrable mystery…. Jesus, Son of Mary, is God existing in another way" (Zamoyta 1967, x). The foundations of the patristic response to the Christological question come from the prologue of John. As Grillmeier (1975, 26) is convinced,

> The climax in the New Testament development of Christological thought is reached in John. His prologue to the Fourth Gospel is the most penetrating description of the career of Jesus Christ that has been written. It was not without reason that the Christological formula of John 1:14 could increasingly become the most influential New Testament text in the history of dogma.

Furthermore, Grillmeier (1975, 27) postulates, "In John, Christ's activity of revelation and redemption is represented as a dramatic descent and ascent. The course traversed by Christ begins in the heavenly world (1:1 ff.) and leads to the earthly world (1:11, 14), to the cross (19:17 ff)." The Judaic meaning of the cross as the place on which the crucified is understood to have incurred God's curse became transformed to mean not only the wisdom and power of God, but the source of redemption in fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant of promise (Deut 21:22–23; Gal 3:13–14; cf. Gen 12:2–3; Turbi 2019, 127).

Paul the apostle did not look back to his former credentials as an expert in Jewish law, but rather looked to the "surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake, I have lost all things, I have considered them rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (Phil 3:8 NIV). He told the sophisticated of his day, "we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:23 NIV; Turbi 2019, 127–128). For the early Church, God's power in Christ is demonstrated in raising him back to life after death (Acts 2:32), exalting him to his right hand (Acts 2:33; Phil 2:9a), and giving him a name that is above every name (Phil 2:9–11) as fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (Isa 45:23).

Accordingly, this crucified and exalted One is now made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36) and Mediator of a new covenant (Heb 9:15) through whom, as our Advocate (1 John 2:1 cf. 14:16), we receive forgiveness of sin (John 1:29; Acts 13:38), grace, and truth (John 1:17). These together led to justification from “everything you could not be justified from by the Law of Moses” (Acts 13:39 NIV). Jesus, who has become both Lord and Christ and by whom we are justified, made us more than conquerors and victors as opposed to being vanquished (Rom 8:37). He engrafted us (Rom 11:17), making us members of God’s multiracial community (Eph 2) and nation of priesthood (1 Pet 2: 9) to walk in the light as he is in the light (1 John 1:7; Turbi 2019, 127–128). This is the doxology the early church sang and lived by unwaveringly. And for me, African public theological discourse should take its cue from the apostolic and patristic periods. For the faithful in those eras, Christ was produced not only in their literature but in their songs and proverbs. And they took pride in being humiliated because of that name (Acts 5:41).

6. The Incarnation as Hermeneutical Foundation for African Public Theological Discourse

In the words of Jensen (2007, 2) hermeneutics is, “The reflection on the problem of understanding.” Jensen (2007, 2) also sees hermeneutics as “The art of *hermenneuein*, i.e., of proclaiming, translating, explaining, and interpreting.” In this light, when classical Christian theology asserts that God became flesh in the man, Jesus of Nazareth, hermeneutics was in play. Given this reasoning, the incarnation or divine self-disclosure of God in Jesus the Christ should thus be the motif for acceptable African Christian life in the public square. In the incarnation, God in Christ, demonstrated the highest moral standard in life. Jesus taught righteousness and called upon people to do the same (Matt 3:15). He illustrates in the Beatitudes the highest ethical principles and taught the “light and salt lesson” to show how Christians ought to live in society (Matt 5). He reached out to the poor and needy of his society. By reason of his social engagement, especially with the masses at the grassroots, he was called a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and “sinners” (Luke 7:34).

In the incarnation, Christ raised the dead and healed all manner of sicknesses and diseases (Matt 9:27–30; Mark 5:21–34). He healed the blind (Mark 8:22–25; 10:52; John 9), fed the crowds (Mark 5:42; 8:1–8), and freed the demon-possessed (Mark 5:1–8; 9:25; Luke 4:31–41; 5:1–8). His followers are his mother and brothers (Mark 3:34–35) and he invited all, including the little children, to come to him (Mark 10:13–16) and proclaimed good news to the poor, freedom to the captive, and announced the year of the Lord’s favor (Isa 61; cf. Luke 4:18). He also instituted love for all—including your enemies (Luke 6:27–42; 1 John 3:11), washed his disciples’ feet (John 13), and encouraged them to believe he is the resurrection and the life and that no one goes to the Father except through him (John 11:25–26; 14:6–14). Simply put, in the incarnation, God became man, and he does not distinguish enemies and friends, poor and rich—he broke down all inequalities and social barriers. By virtue of the incarnation, many of “the poor” of his day were able to find restoration and succor from alienating social, cultural, religious, political, and economic structures.

Considering this, this article proposes that the incarnation should be the theological expression and solution to the experience of the African context. In Africa there is an ever-increasing gap between the rich and the poor, leading to depression and destitution. For this reason, I argue that Jesus’s activities in the incarnation should be used to deconstruct Africa’s current alienating socioeconomic and sociopolitical structures. Africans should reconstruct structures anew, with social and distributive foci, and egalitarian justice. The African Church, by virtue of its praxis, should create socio-cohesive structures such that the saying, “During Solomon’s lifetime, Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig tree" (1 Kgs 4:25 NIV) becomes a lived reality on the continent.

African public theology should strive to see those in the upper echelons and corridors of power live within the reach of the poor and vulnerable of society. They should live out the norms of the community and offer needed help—according to the will of our Father who is in Heaven—to improve Africa's social, political, and economic landscape (Matt 6:10). This is the theology this paper advocates—one that dislodges political and economic exploitation in favor of social and political order in which all, regardless of one's tribal, political, religious affinity, can be accepted and belong. All this is exemplified in the incarnation. By way of resonance, Luke records this of the ministry of Jesus: "He went about doing good" (Acts 10:38 NIV). All this implies that, as God, Jesus came to actualize his kingdom among men (Matt 12:28, 41–42; John 6:26–58; 8:12–29; 10:30–38). Thus, Christ became all things to all and that is exactly what the incarnation means—God became flesh to do away with sin and societal decay. In other words, in the incarnation, God put a smile on the faces of the indigent of society and restored hope to the hopeless.

In Christ's time and ministry, Christian life is not compartmentalized, rather, it was all about dispensing the light of the gospel replete with love, tolerance, forgiveness, and good works. To this end, Jesus's life and ministry should provide a defining model of how life should be lived in the present-day African context in which some societies have been ravaged by Boko Haram and religious fundamentalism as well as the devastating effects of COVID-19. Against this background, this paper contends that the relevance of the message of God's love and hope demonstrated in the incarnation (John 3:16) in the midst of these global trends cannot be overemphasized. It thus cannot be debated that, in Jesus's time, human needs were met as Luke records in Acts 10:38ff. And this, for me, lays the ethical basis for African public theological discourse in which civil servants, politicians, businessmen and women should "live out" their faith in public corridors since they are the light and salt of the world (Matt 5:13–16). In fact, Christ's ethics were people and community focused. And this rhymes perfectly with African mentality, "Man, who lives on the earth, is the centre of the universe" (Mbiti 1981, 33).

Since one overriding emphasis in Africa is life in the community, it is legitimate to argue that our theology should reflect the fact that we are community oriented and people focused. If an incarnation approach is taken, we would not wait until global pandemics like HIV and Aids, Lassa Fever, and COVID-19 strike before dishing out palliatives, which would be construed as eyeservice. Essential lifesaving services, development, and empowerment should be the watchword and passion of our politicians and the well-to-do in society. For that is what the incarnation epitomizes—a demonstration of love and mercy to all. This means, we must fight against nepotism, tribalism, and godfatherism that have come to be the norm in most African societies. Simply put, the incarnation should be the one cardinal norm of operation for Christian politicians and civil servants. As Christ got involved with the poor and needy, so they should, likewise, ensure they dispense the democratic dividends to the masses at the grassroots through building modern infrastructure, the supply of good drinking water, and public conveniences for the common good. The theological imperative and justification for active involvement with their society is simple—everything was made by and for Christ, everything holds together in Christ, and everything will be reconciled by Christ (Col 1:15–20). His saints therefore need to emulate Jesus's praxis on the planet earth by participating with theological integrity derived from a biblical worldview in tune with divine wisdom modeled in the incarnation (Turbi 2020, 122).

7. The Incarnation as a Catalyst for the African Church's Involvement in Politics

Politics in Africa is as significant as human existence. The constant overlap between religion and politics is so significant in the continent that ignoring it is almost synonymous with ignoring the existence of the sun that shines on all.

Consequently, this paper takes a leaf from the compendium by Agan, Forster, and Hendriks (*African Public Theology* 2020) in consistently engendering the application of biblical principles in public spaces and other spheres of influence so as to create an Africa that is reflective of God's glory. But then, I propose that it also needs legitimization, and the Johannine *Logos* prologue offers such a legitimization. The *Logos* who was not of this world, became one of us. And what makes this much more remarkable is that *Logos* was described as resisting and even overpowering the darkness (John 1:5). African Theology and praxis must begin to see Christians living in Africa take this stance. We must first imitate Christ and begin to shift our focus from the pilgrim concept to one that seeks to occupy various sociological niches, resisting and overpowering the seeming darkness engulfing Africa, especially through the auspices of poor leadership and jungle politics. Like the *Logos*, it is high time we incarnate in these problematic spheres and shine the light there by participating in accordance with Evangelical tradition derived from biblical worldview.

According to Yamsat (2001, 4), Aristotle said that politics is, "about the study of happiness and about working out how this happiness should be secured for the good of a given society." Yamsat's assertion implies that politics is meant to be used for the common good of every citizen of every given nation. Quite unfortunately, however, the opposite is the common practice of politics in Africa. The wrong and selfish usage of politics is clearly seen as practiced by countless politicians, for whom politics has become an instrument for relegating the masses who, ironically, are also their electorate. This is a gross negation of the principles of the incarnation. For this reason, this paper calls for sincere and regenerated Christians to be actively involved in politics representing the interest of the Church and masses. Canvassing for Christians' involvement in politics, Yamsat (2001) traces the Christians' right of politics to the Scriptures. He alleges,

> The Holy Bible does not leave us in doubt about the nature of church involvement in political government. It need not be overemphasized that freedom or democratic rights originates from God, it is his creation, right back to the origin of creation, as we read in Genesis 1:28. The first set of human beings, Adam and Eve were created in his image and created with freedom, freedom to govern the universe and all God's creation. (Yamsat 2001, 13)

Kafang (2011, 20) believes that for Christians, and especially the Church, separating politics and religion is a serious mistake. He writes, "From a biblical point of view, this dualistic distinction between church and the world, between the sacred and the secular, is mistaken. Christ is Lord of the whole world, over every dimension of creation."

This political and divine right granted to man by virtue of being created in God's image brings the Church into the political picture. As such, it is the Church's divine duty to teach and train her members how to do politics that glorify God and are beneficial to humanity, and this is the perfect link with the incarnation—God in Christ was involved with the society and politics of his day. So, the Church in Africa should not do less. As we are convinced, once the Church is involved in the socioeconomic and sociopolitical structures of the day, Christian values will also be entrenched, and thus influence how things are done on the social and political fronts. In consequence, this paper argues that it is the Church's sole duty to teach and train Christian politicians for the Lord. By doing so, politics and politicians in the Christian domain would be transformed and yield the anticipated result which is to glorify God. These politicians are not just to get the Church's attention only when it is time for the Church's endless projects which are usually to get funds from them. The Church can achieve this by way of organizing seminars purposely for political training. And by so doing, the Church would be in a better position to not only know these Christian politicians, but also have the capacity to call them to account each time they err. Kafang (2011, 21) proposes, "Christians must create awareness, be informed citizens, and raise the conscience of their members through seminars, workshops, publications and the like." Furthermore, Kafang is convinced that "Our personal piety and heart-deep dedication to Jesus Christ should work their way out in the way we seek to obey God with all the political responsibilities as public officials and as citizens" (cf. Esth 1–9; Dan 1–12). Yamsat (2001, 40) keenly notes,

> The church should be the power deciding which Christian is qualified to go on political quest, the church should be the one to recommend and send any political candidate veering for any political position. If those in political leadership or in positions of authority are instituted by God, then it is important that we know who and who are being called by him into those positions of leadership. It also means that the church should be interested in knowing who and who God is calling into these positions of authority. For how can the church support and bless those elected into offices of authority when they have not supported them right from the choosing processes? That is why it makes sense to say that the church should make sure that it is only those whom it believes are called and have the gift, get to the throne.

As difficult and seemingly unattainable as this sounds, it is the right thing to do, and it is doable. Every Christian politician is a member of a particular local church and as well under the authority of the Church, hence the Church's leadership has the power to make it happen. This brings Christianity into the fore of politics, hence, empowering Christianity with the needed power to stop all forms of marginalization from wherever and bring emancipation in the very manner that Jesus did during his earthly ministry.

It is critical to state further that the Church's political training should not be strictly about the present serving politicians, including the church members. Church members need to know their political and civic rights, be aware of their responsibilities as citizens, and also need to be taught how to support leaders, as well as call them to accountability (Rom 13). This also prepares intending politicians to be aware of the Church's role in their prospective political intentions.

The last point brings all theological institutions and seminaries into the picture. The sole aim and objective of African theological institutions is to raise godly church leaders for the Church and society (cf. Madimbo 2020, 349). This is achieved by many relevant courses offered in these institutions which are geared towards producing quality and contemporary African church leaders. Theological institutions beyond just teaching the theology of public policy, should not leave the training of politicians only to secular universities. They should have a political science department in the faculty of theology whose sole aim is to raise godly future politicians. This can be done just as the other various departments do with relevant courses. Romans 13:1–2 says, "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgement on themselves" (NIV).

This verse has political meaning for all Christians in Africa, and it is the Church's duty to teach this political meaning to all members. This Scripture simply states that all authorities, including the ones we naturally detest, including non-Christians in authorities, are established by God. Therefore, it is our civic responsibility and divine order not to rebel against them since it implies rebelling against God who placed each in the seat of authority. The Church would have to teach members the meaning of this passage and also teach members to hold tight to their rights as Africans. Without the involvement of the Church in political issues in Africa, our continent will continue to suffer setbacks from the ethnic, religious, and political shenanigans, jingoism, oppression, and slavery tendencies as is the case currently in Nigeria. To halt this menace, Christians all over the continent must unite. The Church in Africa must also revisit her position on the separation between Church and state, as well step up in the fight against oppression of Christians and unwanted relegation. And of course, unity and Christian brotherhood—demonstrated in the incarnation—should be the heartbeat of the Church in Africa. This campaign is a must if the Church is to thrive in Africa.

8. Conclusion

The prologue of John in classical Christian theology draws attention to the scandal of the Word made flesh. In historic Christian tradition and belief, this is known as the incarnation, or the divine self-disclosure of God in Jesus the Christ. In consequence, the paper finds theological justification and imperative in the fact that the invasion of God in the man, Jesus of Nazareth, lays the ethical and hermeneutical (methodological) foundation and defining model for African Christian involvements with the social and political issues of their societies. In the incarnation, God became man, and he did not distinguish enemies and friends, poor and rich—he broke down all inequalities and social barriers. The poor of his day overcame alienating social, cultural, religious, political, and economic structures and destitution. For this reason, the paper proposes that the incarnation should be the theological expression and solution to the experience of the African context—a situation in which the ever-increasing gap between the rich and the poor is alarming. The theological imperative and justification for active involvement with their society is simple—everything was made by and for Christ, everything holds together in Christ, and everything will be reconciled by Christ (Col 1:15–20). But how did John arrive at the concept of *Logos*? How did he view the incarnation and so make sense of God's love for humans? Against this background, the paper investigated the evolution and development of John's *Logos* and concludes that the incarnation is the hermeneutical foundation and motif for African public life.

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Book Review: *Origins: The Ancient Impact and Modern Implications of Genesis 1–11* by Paul Copan and Douglas Jacoby

Dustin Burlet

Copan, Paul, and Douglas Jacoby. 2019. *Origins: The Ancient Impact and Modern Implications of Genesis 1–11*. Nashville: Morgan James. xvi + 248 pp. ISBN: 978–1–68350–950–9. Kindle: Approx. R135 ($9.19); Paperback: Approx. R194 ($13.89).

The controversies surrounding the book of Genesis have lasted for millennia and show no signs of abating anytime soon. Incontrovertibly, few exegetical matters require as much circumspection and pastoral sensitivity as dealing with those things that concern science, creation, and the Bible (history, literature, and theology), particularly concerning the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Given the challenging and often sensitive nature of these topics and the wide diversity of opinions that exist in the Church at large, how does *Origins: The Ancient Impact and Modern Implications of Genesis 1–11*, by Paul Copan and Douglas Jacoby, help to contribute positively to this all-important subject?

Prior to offering a full-scale review, a brief overview of the volume, as a whole, is in order. *Origins* consists of fifteen chapters and is divided into four main parts of roughly equal length: (1) Orientation, (2) Creation: Chaos to Cosmos, (3) Cycles: Eden to Deluge, and (4) Cleansings: Deluge to Babel. Aside from the "orientation" section (which is four chapters in length and mostly deals with the structure of Genesis, ancient sources, and the gods and goddess of the ancient Near East), each of the other main units seeks to expose the meaning of the first eleven chapters of Genesis in its original (ancient Near East) context. Many chapters end with a brief "recap" section. With respect to this point, the authors state, "here the principal *biblical truths* of the text will be listed, followed by *points of contact* with *pagan culture and mythology*, *connections with the NT*, and then *application*" (64, italics original). Four appendices (ancient cosmology, the geocentric universe, Genesis genealogies, and God's two books), a postscript (a caution to teachers), and a six-page bibliography round out the volume. Unfortunately, there are no indices.

From a pedagogical perspective, *Origins* is easy to read with ample white space, copious headings, wide margins, and an attractive writing style that is pitched "just right" for the non-initiated. For example, in discussing the contrasts/comparisons of Noah's Flood with other ancient Near East epics (such as Gilgamesh and Atrahasis) the authors re-tell the story of "Goldilocks and the Four Bears" where the protagonist sits in the bears' chairs, eats their spaghetti, and is later rescued by a park ranger who puts the bears into a zoo. The point is clear. As Copan and Jacoby assert: "Any changes to a familiar story tend to be highly noticeable" and, likewise, "the truth (biblical theology) is most visible at the points where the story has been recast" (pp. 15–16).

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Origins is also visually pleasing to the eye with a plethora of charts, tables, graphs, and the like. Most surprisingly (but also, most welcome), there are even a few high-quality, high- resolution illustrations/reproductions of certain ancient artefacts, such as Hadad, an ancient god of the storm, an Assyrian Lamassu (i.e., a cherub) the *Imago Mundi* (image of the world map), and an artistic rendition of both ancient cosmology and a geocentric universe. One wonders, though, why the same map, "The World of Genesis 1–11," is reproduced no less than three times (!) in the same volume (pp. 13, 85, 193).

The purpose of *Origins* is made explicit by Copan and Jacoby who hope that:

> [Y]ou experience this book as a helpful running commentary on Genesis 1–11. Yet there is another reason for the book. *Origins* is also a work of Christian apologetics, and we aim to convince you that Genesis is seriously interacting with the ancient world, critiquing its polytheistic worldview while providing a credible alternative. If we can learn to engage with our culture as Genesis did in the ancient world, our own proclamation of the biblical message will be greatly enhanced.... Further, by suggesting how these eleven chapters *should* be read, we hope to undo some of the damage wrought by those who have created unnecessary obstacles to faith, for outsiders and insiders alike, as well as for children of Christian families. (xii, emphasis original)

Though the authors rarely cite the names of specific people or list various organizations and institutions, it seems evident that Copan and Jacoby seem to be referring to various "concordistic" views of Scripture, i.e., Young Earth Creationism (YEC) and/or Old Earth Creationism (OEC) and, perhaps, even certain aspects of the Intelligent Design (ID) movement. That this is the case seems to be made most clear through the authors' repeated assertions that the words of Scripture ought to be understood "literarily," that is, in keeping with the genre of the literature of the biblical text itself, and not "literally" since the problems with the latter in interpreting the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis are "legion" (68). Elsewhere, they state, "It bears repeating that reading the Bible (a) to answer modern questions it was never intended to answer or (b) to confirm previously held beliefs is a flawed approach to Scripture" (27).

Given this assertion, Copan and Jacoby are to be commended in the restraint that they often demonstrate in delineating their arguments against so-called "woodenly literal" approaches to interpretation (see p. 50). To be clear, the authors exemplify academic professionalism and common courtesy, taking a firm, yet gracious, tone that is usually free of *ad hominem*, 'straw man,' and other fallacious and personal attacks when arguing controversial points. For instance, concerning Noah's Flood (Gen 6–9), they maintain:

> Before we discuss the flood narrative, let it be said that whatever one's conclusions about the nature of the deluge (literal or not, global or regional), this is not a matter of salvation. Informed men and women hold differing views on this matter—and that doesn't mean they are hardhearted or theologically careless. Since a lot has been written on the topic and from many different angles, we should strive to maintain a respectful attitude towards those with whom we disagree. (159)

This statement, however, is also something of a “double-edged sword,” for though the authors claim that they provide “abundant chapter endnotes” (see p. xiii), even a cursory overview will reveal that they are actually far from copious. This is, perhaps, most evident in the authors’ engagement with contrary viewpoints. To put the matter differently, though the authors do provide sufficient rationale throughout *Origins* for what they believe and why (and though, as mentioned above, they are often quite circumspect and judicious in their comments while doing so), it is rare to see evidence of their opponents’ actual argumentation *vis-à-vis* direct quotes and citations in the book itself. Would it not have been advisable for the authors to make more direct reference(s) to these “different angles?”

This shortcoming was especially prominent in the brief “appearance of age” section wherein the authors state:

> Scientific evidence cannot be claimed for both a young earth *and* an appearance of age, which is precisely what the young earth advocates are doing. There should be no shred of evidence for a “young earth” if the Omphalos Theory is correct. Moreover, this approach makes God a party to deceit, since through the physical world he is misleading us. And yet the Scriptures affirm over and over that God *reveals* truth through the creation (Ps 19:1; Rom 1:20). You just cannot have it both ways. (237, all emphases original)

Regrettably, however, this is an unfortunate caricature of many in the YEC camp who, by and large, effectively distinguish between the patently false “appearance of age” argument in favor of a “mature” creation.[1]

Although some may quibble about Copan and Jacoby’s decision to intentionally avoid the debate(s) about science and Genesis, one may, nonetheless, stand in agreement with the following assessment: “If you are disappointed that this book sets too many modern concerns (the age of the earth, the origin of species, the location of the ark …) on the side, don’t despair. The appendices and the many endnotes will prove helpful. Further, the bibliography (in the final section) could keep you busy for a long time” (27).

Some other (relatively minor) criticisms, however, must be addressed. To begin, although Copan and Jacoby blandly assert that the cosmic serpent may be identified as Behemoth (see p. 98), this should be noted as being a *minority* viewpoint among most scholars, who tend to only identify the Leviathan as being snake-like (cf. Job 40 and 41).

In addition, despite Copan and Jacoby’s repeated assertions that the seven days of creation are meant to convey “*theological* truths—not *chronological* truths” (62, italics original) and that the “the six days in Genesis 1 appear to be topical, not sequential” (69), this assessment tends to break down upon further analysis. That is to say, the chronological, sequential order of events seems to be internally quite crucial to the “problem, preparation, and population” schema that Copan and Jacoby advocate (see p. 74). To be clear, do not the waters of “Day One” need to exist prior to them being able to be separated on “Day Two” and for the events of “Day Three” to occur? Likewise, is it not logical to assume that in order for humanity to rule over the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea (Gen 1:28), at least some of these things would need to have been created earlier? In addition, although one may, perhaps, argue that not everything in the Creation week is necessarily sequential since “light” is created before the traditionally accepted sources of the light (i.e., the heavenly bodies; cf. Gen 1:3–6 and Gen 1:14–19), it nonetheless remains evident that at least some kind of ordered, chronological sequence is still assumed by Scripture itself (cf. Exod 20:11). In brief, it would seem evident that most attempts to rearrange the days of the creation week tend to force impossibilities or reduce them into absurdities.

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[1] Ken Ham, for example, writes, “Now it is true that when God created the earth the first day of Creation Week, it wasn’t fully functional. God deliberately prepared the earth and created the various kinds of living things over six days. However, at every stage of creation, everything God did was “good,” and all was functional for His created purposes. The creation was then finished—mature, but not with so-called “apparent age.” When Adam and his first descendants looked at the earth, they did not assume apparent age because they knew, based on God’s word, that creation had taken place recently.” https://answersingenesis.org/astronomy/age-of-the-universe/mature-for-her-age/

Alongside this, though the authors maintain that there are “ten generations from Adam to Noah, ten from Noah to Abram” (see p. 8), the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 are not actually symmetrical. That is, the *toledoth* of Adam (Gen 5:1–32) contains ten names (Adam to Noah) with the tenth, Noah, having three sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth). The *toledoth* of Shem (Gen 11:10–26) only records nine names (Shem to Terah) with the ninth, Terah, fathering three sons (Abraham, Nahor, and Haran). Moreover, to say that Abraham counts as the tenth generation in Genesis 11 does not help because consistency would demand that Shem too be counted (cf. Gen 11:26 with Gen 5:32).

Lastly, questions of Mosaic authorship and literary (or oral) sources are largely left unexplored with little to no indication of their not-insignificant role in the greater world of higher learning/academia. They do, however, state (see p. 13) that the “final version of Genesis was evidently written no earlier than 1000 BC, since the monarchy, to which the text refers, was established in the late eleventh century (cf. Gen 36:21).”

Minor irritants include a non-comprehensive bibliography. One will search in vain, for instance, to find Richard Averbeck, Rhonda Byrne, D. A. Carson, Daniel Dennett, Skye Jethani, Gordon Johnston, Philip Ryken, David Rudolph, or Jeff Robinson listed in the bibliography though each author does appear within the volume itself. As noted above, this problem is only exacerbated by the thorough lack of indices. Other infelicities also include missing bibliographic information and/or incorrect citations of said bibliographic information (e.g., see p. 67 fn. 87, p. 69 fn. 102, and p. 186 fn. 243; cf. p. 182). Minor typographical errors also do occur (pp. 23, 39, 145).

Such matters notwithstanding, *Origins: The Ancient Impact and Modern Implications of Genesis 1–11* by Paul Copan and Douglas Jacoby is a fine addition to the ever-increasing library of books concerning Genesis (history, literature, and theology). Its primary readers will likely be the invested laypersons, pastors, Christian leaders, and/or Bible College/Christian university students. One also hopes that this volume might be leveraged as an apologetics tool to help those looking for theistic viewpoints on Creation.

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Book Review: *Majority World Perspectives on Christian Mission*, edited by Nico A. Botha and Eugene Baron

Moses Vongjen

Botha, Nico A., and Eugene Baron, eds. 2020. *Majority World Perspectives on Christian Mission*. George, South Africa: KREATIV SA. 241pp. ISBN 978-1-928478-84-3. R300.

Nico Adam Botha is a professor of missions at the University of South Africa, and Eugene Baron is a senior lecturer in missiology at the University of the Free State. The book is a compendium of extracts from the Majority Christian Leaders Conversation with a "rich diversity of perspectives on mission." The material has 241 pages and contains 13 articles by different authors (except for Hwa Yung who has two articles). It is edited by Nico A. Botha and Eugene Baron. The book opens up areas necessitating shifts as dictated by current global issues, and it calls for attention on shifts that have occurred from original patterns due to given factors.

The conversation began in 2016 with eleven mission practitioners from the Majority South (Africa, Asia, and Latin America). Although not to be understood as anti-western, it is a "decisive response from those Christian Leaders in the Majority World." It aims at achieving a "new avenue for meaning and interpretation" (vii). Its intent is to decolonize mission and to present it as genitive to God; repudiating wrong notions that are likely to emerge about the Global South; presenting mission from the perspective of the Reign of God (vii); to recognize that mission is the essential task of the church; and to become aware of geographical shifting in that, "the center of gravity" is no longer in the North but has shifted to the Global South or Majority World (viii).

Peter Tarantal examines Global South leaders in the African perspective. First, he notes remarkable growth of the Christian populace after which he highlights the need for a fresh look at how theology, mission, and leadership are done (1). Tarantal observes that African leaders stand in between two tensional characteristics in that, while some of the leaders portray favorable characteristics, others represent the direct opposite. Tarantal is hopeful that African leaders can overcome recent failures and take the lead in global matters by being people of integrity and ability, and by being people who mean well for their fellow citizens through mentoring and discipleship.

Nico Botha notices another shift in two major areas: first, the meaning of mission migrating from an ecclesiastical center to a theological center (21). Second, church and mission are no longer viewed as the same in objective but separately, as evidenced by the existence of various and multiple mission agencies. Botha believes that the New Testament has a missionary character, history, and theology to influence the world (18); hence by nature, the church is sent to engage in mission and her mission should encompass love and justice. Moreover, all church members should be involved because relationship and unity are key factors.

Moses Parmar identifies and examines factors challenging the spread of Hinduism and Buddhism (35–37), even though it was believed that both

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Christianity and Islam would have been wiped out by 2030 (35). Parmar sees a possibility for Hindus and Buddhists to be penetrated with the gospel when freedom for decision is granted to them, and when the gospel is demonstrated by targeting the needy, accompanied by mobilizing support and prayer.

Patrick Fung proposes a shift from the tradition of merely passing the mission baton from the Western World to the Majority World Church to partnership sharing, where all participate in fellowship and mission, and (in the words of Samuel Escobar) "neither imperialism nor provincialism has a place" (45). The author recommends a method modeled after the Trinitarian unity thus giving us "the esteemed privilege of being junior partners with the Holy Spirit" (46). Fung notes the need for the Global South Church to develop the capacity to increase itself by itself.

MLH and GF (names not disclosed for security purposes) target the Middle East and North Africa where the Muslim population is dominant and where Islam is determined to bring all people to submission/subjection with her position of wealth (58–60). Even though several Islamic militant and jihadist groups are great threats to Christianity, especially in missions, the author sees possibilities in connection with dialogue in MENA (72). Similarly, Ben Abraham reflects on the challenges Christianity faces from Islam and the role Christianity should play in evangelizing Muslims in the Middle East. He notes the reality and prospects of Asian Muslims turning to Christ as never before (229–241) and displacing the tension between the two religions through efforts of gifted missionaries. The authors anticipate a generation of efficient missionaries who have the persecuted at heart. Furthermore, Christians becoming objects of Muslim hostility is a recurring development. Indeed, dialogue as suggested by MLH and GF, in an age of increasing social and political divides, can be a workable and efficient mode for stability in relational and coexistent stances. It works proficiently in settling disputes as well. On the other hand, there can be drawbacks when those concerned lack the ability to converse without avoiding a dispute.

Gideon Para-Mallam proposes a shift in which spiritual evangelism, social involvement, and activism of the church are all harnessed to transform the national society (88–113). He proposes discipleship and partnership in this task as a sure way for Christians to build their communities. Hwa Yung, in a similar article, approaches nation-building with an evangelical agenda especially in emergent nations (175–192). This is in the sense of "its givenness, especially in the modern world today" (176). Both Para-Mallam and Yung see possibilities for Christians partaking in nation-building through evangelism chiefly in the Global South and other emergent nations, with the objective of transformation through participation of believers. Mallam, for instance, expects the church to go beyond seeking conversion especially in the midst of global challenges (89). Yung also purposes a "multi-level Christian approach on the subject in which Christians at different levels of society can participate" (176).

Rupen Das observes a shift in humanitarianism in the Majority World Church from its original, spiritual, and missional objective, claiming that it "has reached unprecedented levels since World War II" (120). He questions its genuineness, whether it is part of God's mission, and whether it can be prioritized in Christian mission and integrated with gospel proclamation (123). He suggests that the church can be a very convenient medium for humanitarian agencies when she collaborates with those in need at a local level (130). It is worthwhile to observe that in a world where violence, crises, and natural disasters are not only a fact of life, but are on the increase, succor of this nature is a welcome development. Conversely, its helpfulness is hindered when the objective is manipulated so that others enrich themselves, leaving the affected in their deprived conditions.

Hwa Yung observes a shift in Christianity from “white-man’s religion” to the explosion of the church globally (139), arguing that the nineteenth and twentieth century marked the great missionary advance of the gospel. Consequently, the center of gravity of the church is moving into the Majority World as modernity/secularism has moved into America (140). The author is concerned about churches in the Global South still depending on the West for theology and financial support, and he highlights the dangers of stagnation.

Eugene Baron raises questions for post-apartheid South African missiologists in the context of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) in which he observes another shift in the praxis cycle and/or method mission agencies adopt as a mode of operation, especially in colonized South Africa. The problem he observes is one of identity and roles, especially in a post-apartheid context like South Africa (158–164). Using the original intent or objective of the 4IR, Baron considers the current social imagination and the projected spiritual spheres (156).

Ruiz on his part observes a danger where “the church is being pressed by the ambitions of worldly success” (196), warning against a system where growth is determined through numerical count, materialism, monthly turnovers, and salary sizes, to name a few. Ruiz focuses on the Great Commission to emphasize the making of disciples. He recommends the involvement of the whole church in transforming traditional patterns of Christianity and commitment to obedience. The author has done well to raise the consciousness of the church to a neglected but effective area in ensuring church growth.

Krishnasamy Rajendran examines the history of the church and its missional movements and activities during the 1800s and 1900s to the latter part of the twentieth century with a focus on the Protestant mission era in which Western missionary movements focused on the two-thirds World with the gospel (213). Consequently, the Global South has witnessed an increase in Christians to even many more than there are in the West. On this basis, Rajendran proposes the need for the Global South to re-evangelize the West (220). The article realistically presents a clear need for a shift to the West and North with the gospel where modernism and other influences prevail.

In my opinion, the book draws attention to shifts that are necessary for missionary endeavors in enhancing the spread of the church as well as sustaining its growth. I find the book refreshing; and its rich perspectives are widely enriching, especially in understanding church life and the practice of mission. This material is highly recommendable to all who intend to have a global idea of what Christianity is and does.

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