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"Do You Love Me?" A Narrative-Critical Reappraisal of ἀγαπάω and φιλέω in John 21:15–17

DAVID SHEPHERD
d.shepherd@chester.ac.uk
University of Chester, Parkgate Road, Chester CH1 4BJ, England

Over the centuries, a great number of readers have grappled with the question of whether the alternation of verbs (ἀγαπάω and φιλέω) that appear in the mouths of Jesus and Peter in their last conversation in the Gospel of John (21:15–23) is narratively significant. In recent times, the conclusion that this alternation represents John's stylistic preference for using different but synonymous words (rather than repeating the same word) has emerged as something like a settled consensus.[1] The mortar of this consensus is the insistence that any attempts to draw a dependable semantic distinction between ἀγαπάω and φιλέω are doomed to fail-

[1] So, e.g., Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (2 vols.; AB 29, 29A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966, 1970), 2:1102–3; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 584; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1991), 676–77; George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC 36; Waco: Word Books, 1987), 394; J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* (ed. A. H. McNeile; 2 vols.; ICC; Edinbugh: T&T Clark, 1928), 2:702–4; Gary M. Burge, *John* (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 587–88; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St. John* (BNTC 4; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 517; D. Moody Smith, *John* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 396; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 1235–36; Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (SP 4; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 559; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (Reading the New Testament; New York: Crossroad, 1994), 261; Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 335. See William Hendricksen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (2 vols. in 1; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953; repr., 1970), 495, for a list of older commentators who see no significance in the alternation.

ure whether in Greek literature generally,[2] the Septuagint,[3] the NT,[4] or John's Gospel itself.[5]

While the dissenting opinion—that the alternation of verbal forms in John 21:15–17 is not merely one of style but of substance—was championed by British scholarship of the nineteenth century, support for this position has continued to dwindle in the face of the apparently irrefutable evidence that the Gospel of John regularly deploys synonyms for the purpose of stylistic variation.[6]

By way of anticipation, although I concede the impossibility of semantically differentiating ἀγαπάω and φιλέω in any consistent way in ancient Greek (or in any of its constituent corpora), I will argue from a narrative-critical standpoint that the most plausible frame of reference for Jesus' use of ἀγαπάω in his first conversation with Peter after the resurrection (John 21) is his use of ἀγαπάω/ἀγάπη in their final conversation before the passion (John 13–17).

While readers of John have long been interested in narrative aspects of the

[2] See, e.g., Robert Joly (*Le vocabulaire chrétien de l'amour, est-il original? Φιλεῖν et Ἀγαπᾶν dans le grec antique* (Brussels: Presses Universitaires de Bruxelles, 1968).

[3] Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 676. Jacob's love for Joseph (LXX Gen 37:3, 4) and Amnon's "love" for his sister (2 Samuel 13) are expressed by both verbs. Similarly, both are used to represent אהב in LXX Prov 8:17.

[4] See James Barr, "Words for Love in Biblical Greek," in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird* (ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright; Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 3–18.

[5] See, e.g., C. F. D. Moule, *Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 198; E. D. Freed, "Variations in the Language and Thought of John," *ZNW* 55 (1964): esp. 192–93; Leon Morris, "Variation—A Feature of the Johannine Style," in idem, *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 293–319. The present study is premised on the methodological assumption that evidence of variation for stylistic purposes (or a lack of evidence for other explanations) at various points in a text should not preclude the possibility of variation for other demonstrably literary purposes at other points.

[6] While Brown (*Gospel according to John,* 2:1102–3) associates this position primarily with R. C. Trench, B. F. Westcott, and A. Plummer, he also acknowledges antecedents as ancient as Origen. Indeed, as Hendricksen (*Commentary on the Gospel of John,* 495–96) notes, defenders of the distinction include authorities such as Jerome, and in modern times commentators such as C. Bouma, C. R. Erdman, F. W. Grosheide, R. C. W. Lenski, A. T. Robertson, and T. Zahn. See also James H. Moulton and George Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 2; Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950), 72–73; Joseph H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1889), 653, as well as B. B. Warfield, "The Terminology of Love in the New Testament," *Princeton Theological Review* 16 (1918): 153–203, and Ceslas Spicq, *Agapé dans le Nouveau Testament* (3 vols.; EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1958), 3:230–37. The case for seeing the alternation as significant in this passage has been rearticulated by Hendricksen (*Commentary on the Gospel of John,* 494–500), John Marsh (*The Gospel of St. John* [Baltimore: Penguin, 1968], 668–70), and, most recently, K. L. McKay ("Style and Significance in the Language of John 21:15–17," *NovT* 27 [1985]: 319–33), but few have seen fit to follow.

Gospel, this interest has certainly intensified in recent years, thanks largely to the efforts of R. Alan Culpepper and others who have (more or less) followed his lead.[7] Thus, recent scholarship—whatever its attitude toward the gains of historical-critical scholarship in relation to John—has shown an increasing appreciation for the narrative unity of John's Gospel.[8] Accompanying this appreciation is a recognition of the complexity of communication taking place in and through the text of the Gospel.[9] Paul Anderson, for example, deploys the notion of "dialogue" as a conceptual framework for addressing literary issues arising in a reading of the Gospel. While Anderson's analysis takes account of the Gospel's rhetorical efforts to involve and engage the reader dialogically (e.g., 20:30–31; etc.), it also recognizes the prominence and significance of literal dialogues (particularly with Jesus) in the narrative itself.[10] Moreover, he reminds us of the author's interest in creating a dialogue between narratively prior and subsequent materials/events whether through the words of various characters (Jesus and others) or through explicit narratorial comment.[11] It is with these insights in mind that the present study focuses its attention on the latter half of John *qua* narrative, and in particular on those parts of the narrative immediately prior (chs. 13–18) and subsequent (ch. 21) to the crucifixion and resurrection.

I. John 21

While the authorship and indeed historical relationship of ch. 21 to the bulk of the Gospel of John have been much debated, the suggestion that the chapter was consciously composed with John 1–20 in view is now rather less contentious.[12] The

[7] Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (FF: New Testament; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). See also the bibliography (1980–93) in Mark Stibbe, *John's Gospel* (New Testament Readings; London: Routledge, 1994); and idem, ed., *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Perspectives* (NTTS 17; Leiden: Brill, 1993).

[8] See, e.g., Moloney, *Gospel of John,* and his editorial introduction to Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* (ed. Francis J. Moloney; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 2003); Mark Stibbe, *John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel* (SNTSMS 73; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[9] See, e.g., Jean Zumstein, *Kreative Erinnerung: Relecture und Auslegung im Johannesevangelium* (2nd ed.; ATANT 84; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2004); and idem, "Intratextuality and Intertextuality in the Gospel of John," in *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism: The Past, Present, and Futures of the Fourth Gospel as Literature* (ed. Tom Thatcher and Stephen D. Moore; SBLRBS 55; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 244–45.

[10] Paul Anderson, "From One Dialogue to Another: Johannine Polyvalence from Origins to Receptions," in Thatcher and Moore, *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism,* 114–18, esp. 117.

[11] Ibid., 98.

[12] See, e.g., Frans Neirynck, "John 21," *NTS* 36 (1990): 321–36; Timothy Wiarda, "John 21.1–23: Narrative Unity and Its Implications," *JSNT* 46 (1992): 53–71; Grant R. Osborne, "John 21:

catalogue of lexical and literary parallels compiled by Raymond Brown and others establishes beyond any reasonable doubt that if John 21 was not written by the author of the remainder of the Gospel, it was the work of one who consciously or unconsciously wished it to appear as if it were.[13] Indeed, arguments regarding the preference for stylistic variation in John 21 are necessarily premised on a consonance of style between the first twenty chapters of John and the last, whether ch. 21 was the epilogue from the hand of the author himself or the appendix of a redactor who followed him.[14]

The allusiveness of John 21 is particularly clear in vv. 18–23, where the topic of the death of Peter and the Beloved Disciple is taken up. Most obviously, the narrator's reference to the one who had leaned back against Jesus ἐν τῷ δείπνῳ, "during the supper" (v. 20), explicitly encourages the reader to associate the dialogue between Peter and Jesus in ch. 21 with the upper room and the events that took place there on the final evening before Jesus' crucifixion. While some have speculated that this belated identification of the Beloved Disciple (initially mentioned in v. 7) is a sign of the original independence of vv. 20–23,[15] it is more likely that the explicit allusion was left until this point in the chapter in order specifically to link the dialogue of Peter and Jesus (vv. 15–23) with the events of that fateful evening, when the title of the Beloved Disciple is used for the first time (13:23). Such a suggestion is strengthened by the obvious connections between Jesus' conversations with Peter in the upper room (13:31–38) and on the beach (21:18–23).

II. John 13–17

In John 13, though Jesus insists that Peter and the others cannot go (v. 33) where Jesus is going now, he promises that Peter will go later (v. 36).[16] So too in ch. 21, Jesus prophesies that Peter will go in the future (v. 18b) where he would not go

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Test Case for History and Redaction in the Resurrection Narratives," in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels,* vol. 2 (ed. R. T. France and David Wenham; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 293–328.

[13] Brown, *Gospel according to John,* 2:1077–80. On narrative echo effects in John, see Stibbe, *John as Storyteller*, 29. For a recent, nuanced discussion, see Francis J. Moloney, "John 21 and the Johannine Story," in Thatcher and Moore, *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism,* 237–51.

[14] See John Breck, "John 21: Appendix, Epilogue or Conclusion?" *SVTQ* 36 (1992): 27–49; and Peter F. Ellis, "The Authenticity of John 21," *SVTQ* 36 (1992): 17–25. See also the recent review offered by R. Alan Culpepper, "Designs for the Church in the Imagery of John 21:1–14," in *Imagery in the Gospel of John: Terms, Forms, Themes, and Theology of Johannine Figurative Language* (ed. Jörg Frey, Jan G. van der Watt, and Ruben Zimmermann; WUNT 200; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 369–70.

[15] E.g., Beasley-Murray, *John,* 409.

[16] Burge, *John,* 589; Keener, *Gospel of John,* 927.

in the past (v. 18a).[17] Just as Jesus insists in ch. 13 that the journey will require Peter to follow him (v. 36), so too in ch. 21 Jesus' demand is twice couched in the language of discipleship ("Follow me") (vv. 19, 22).[18] Moreover, that the journey's ultimate destination is Peter's death is as clear in ch. 21 (vv. 19, 22) as it is in their conversation before Jesus' crucifixion (13:37, 38).[19] Finally, just as Jesus understands his own death in terms of the glorification of the Father (13:31–32), so too Peter's demise will ultimately be for God's glory (21:19).[20]

It is in this context of Jesus' discussion of discipleship and his own death (13:31–38) that he introduces the commandment to love one another (vv. 34–35). While some have seen these verses as intrusive,[21] more recent readers have rightly recognized that they are, in fact, well integrated in their present context.[22] As Francis J. Moloney notes, the notion that the followers of Jesus must do to each other *as Jesus had done for them* (v. 15b) finds a clear echo in his commandment that they love one another *as Jesus has loved them* (v. 34b).[23] It is specifically in the context of Jesus' imminent and unaccompanied departure and his eventual absence (v. 33), that the disciples are to make the master present and experience his love by loving one another (vv. 34–35).[24] The forceful threefold repetition of verbal forms in v. 34, ἀγαπᾶτε ("Love"), καθὼς ἠγάπησα ("as I loved"), ἀγαπᾶτε ("Love"), and the nominal form ἀγάπην in the verse that follows leave Jesus' hearers and John's readers in no doubt: ἀγάπη, as Jesus defines it at the outset of his Farewell Discourse is a love that lays down its life and in so doing marks out those who call themselves Jesus' disciples.[25]

[17] Bernard, *Gospel according to St. John,* 710: "he could hardly have failed to remember a recent occasion when his eager offer to follow Jesus was put aside by the Master (Jn 13.36)."

[18] Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John,* 487; Paul S. Minear, "The Original Functions of John 21," *JBL* 102 (1983): 92.

[19] Burge, *John*, 589.

[20] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 409; Carson, *Gospel according to John,* 679; Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John: Based on the Revised Standard Version* (London: Oliphants, 1972), 637.

[21] Fernando F. Segovia ("The Structure, *Tendenz,* and *Sitz im Leben* of John 13:31–14:31," *JBL* 104 [1985]: 491) sees the two verses as disruptive of the theme (departure) and christological thought in vv. 31–38. See also J. Becker, "Die Abschiedsreden Jesu im Johannesevangelium," *ZNW* 61 (1970): 215–46; Rudolph Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John* (3 vols.; New York: Crossroad, 1982), 53.

[22] So, e.g., John C. Stubbe, *A Graeco-Roman Rhetorical Reading of the Farewell Discourse* (Library of New Testament Studies 309; London: T&T Clark, 2006), 99.

[23] Moloney, *Gospel of John,* 386.

[24] Keener, *Gospel of John,* 923; Moloney, *Gospel of John,* 386.

[25] Herman C. Waetjen, *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple: A Work in Two Editions* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 336; Moloney, *Gospel of John,* 386. While Moloney (p. 391) follows Johannes Beutler (*Habt keine Angst: Die erste johanneische Abschiedsrede [Joh 14]* [SBS 116; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1984]) in seeing the beginning of the discourse in 14:1, Fernando Segovia (*The Farewell of the Word: The Johannine Call to Abide* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 61–62) is surely right to identify 13:31 as the starting point.

That Jesus' specific understanding of ἀγάπη offers itself as not merely the opening but also the central theme of the Farewell Discourse is hardly a new notion in Johannine scholarship.[26] More recently, Yves Simoens' chiastic analysis of the discourse (followed by Stibbe) concludes that the initial unit, 13:1–38, should be understood under the rubric of "*Agapè-Glorification,*" with the final unit, 17:1–26, reflecting a mirror image ("*Glorification-Agapè*"). The central focus of the chiasm is Simoens' unit "*Agapè Mutuelle,*" 15:12–17, with its command to "love one another" (ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους) repeated at the beginning (v. 12) and the end (v. 17).[27]

Such a conclusion regarding the thematic centrality of the ἀγάπη command is supported by L. Scott Kellum's still more recent discourse analysis of the Farewell Discourse and identification of 15:1–17 as the peak (i.e., intent) of the larger textual unit. [28] Among other features, Kellum notes the significance of the rhetorical underlining (i.e., repetition) of ἀγάπη and associated verbal forms (nine times) in 15:1–17. [29] Of these nine occurrences, four appear within six verses (15:12–17) and three within the space of eight words in vv. 12–13, where we find Jesus returning to the topic broached at the outset of the discourse in 13:31–38.[30] In addition to the emphatic fronting of Ἐντολὴν καινήν (v. 34), the similar rhetorical underlining of ἀγάπη in 13:34–35 (noted above) marks these verses as an introduction to or anticipation of ch. 15—a "pre-peak" from the textual and structural perspective of discourse analysis.[31] Within the flow of the narrative itself, of course, Jesus' command in ch.15 to "love one another" (ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους), specifically, "as I loved" (καθὼς ἠγάπησα; 13:34; 15:12),[32] and to do so by laying down one's life (13:37–38; 15:13),[33] all resonate so clearly with Jesus' initial discussion of ἀγάπη

[26] See, e.g., Johannes Schneider, "Die Abschiedsreden Jesu: Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Komposition von Johannes 13,1–17,26," in *Gott und die Götter: Festgabe für Erich Fascher zum 60. Geburtstag* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1958), 103–12; Siegfried Schulz, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (NTD 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972).

[27] Yves Simoens, *La Gloire d'aimer: Structures stylistiques et interprétatives dans le Discourse de la Cène (Jn 13–17)* (AnBib 90; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 199, followed by Stibbe, *John*, 144. See also Moloney, *Gospel of John,* 424.

[28] See L. Scott Kellum, *The Unity of the Farewell Discourse: The Literary Integrity of John 13:31–16:33* (JSNTSup 256; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 145, 193. For an earlier exploration of the discourse analysis concept of "peak" as applied to John, see Steve Booth, *Selected Peak-marking Features in the Gospel of John* (American University Studies, Series 7, Theology and Religion 178; New York: Lang, 1996).

[29] Kellum, *Farewell Discourse*, 193.

[30] Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John,* 397; Burge, *John*, 376, 418.

[31] Kellum, *Farewell Discourse*, 195.

[32] Carson, *Gospel according to John,* 521: "The words 'as I have loved you' not only remind us of the immeasurably high standard Jesus himself provides, but explicitly tie this passage to the new commandment (13:34–35)."

[33] Lindars, *Gospel of John,* 491.

and self-sacrificial discipleship in 13:31–38, that John 15:12–13 functions as a repetition and thus reemphasizing of the particular understanding of ἀγάπη that Jesus introduces to Peter and the other disciples at the outset. In addition to this quantitative emphasis, Jesus' words in v. 13 emphasize this specific connotation of ἀγάπη qualitatively by means of his use of the superlative: "greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend."[34]

While the initial ἀγάπη command in 13:34–35 is addressed to all the disciples, the clear qualification of ἀγάπη as a love that lays down its life (which will turn out to be Jesus' primary point [15:12–17]) emerges only as Peter himself comes into view as Jesus' explicit conversation partner. Although we are not able to assess the rest of the disciples' assimilation of this association, Peter's commitment to lay down his life (v. 37) gives the initial impression that he has grasped the self-sacrificing character of ἀγάπη as Jesus commands it, and indeed Jesus' own response in v. 38 suggests that Peter's eventual denial will stem from a failure of resolve rather than a faulty understanding.[35]

III. John 18

Narrative confirmation that Jesus' point regarding ἀγάπη has made an impression on Peter is furnished by the events of that same evening, narrated immediately following the Farewell Discourse.[36] While it is tempting to attribute Peter's assault on the high priest's servant (18:10) in the garden to nothing more than the sort of characteristic impetuousness already encountered in ch. 13,[37] a full appreciation of Peter's motive as implied by the narrative must consider the immediate context of 18:8–10 in light of the preceding conversations in the upper room.

One of the distinctive aspects of John's narrative of Jesus' arrest is his report of the reaction of the disciples (apart from Peter). Whereas Matthew and Mark simply report that Jesus' followers fled, abandoning him to his captors (Matt 26:56;

[34] John 15:13: μείζονα ταύτης ἀγάπην οὐδεὶς ἔχει, ἵνα τις τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ θῇ ὑπὲρ τῶν φίλων αὐτοῦ.

[35] So F. Lapham, *Peter: The Myth, the Man and the Writings: A Study of Early Petrine Text and Tradition* (JSNTSup 239; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 8 n. 13; and Brad Blaine, *Peter in the Gospel of John: The Making of an Authentic Disciple* (Academia Biblica 27; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 77: "Peter's pledge to give his life for Jesus is sincere, but the courage needed to carry out the act is not yet mature."

[36] Although Kellum (*Farewell Discourse*, 195) sees 16:16–24 as the denouement (or "post-peak") of the Farewell Discourse, most commentators include ch. 17 within the larger unit. Ἀγάπη and related verbal forms again feature prominently toward the end of ch. 17, with four occurrences in the final four verses (vv. 23–26) and three in vv. 23–24.

[37] So Brown, *Gospel according to John,* 2:812; see also Hendricksen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John,* 381.

Mark 14:50), John is at pains to clarify that the deliverance of the disciples was the fulfillment of a prophecy ("I have not lost one of those you gave me" [18:9]). These words of Jesus echo similar sentiments in John 6:39 and 10:28, where he promises that his sheep will not perish but will have eternal life.[38] In the garden, as Jesus himself clarifies ("If you are looking for me, then let these men go" [18:8]), the safety of his friends is secured at the price of his own detention and probable death.[39] In this immediate context, and with the words of Jesus in the upper room ringing in his ears, Peter's otherwise inexplicable attack on the high priest's servant becomes clearly intelligible to the reader: in light of Jesus' prediction earlier that same evening that Peter would fail to embrace an ἀγάπη that lays down its life for the friend (13:34–38), Peter decides to prove his love by risking his life for the sake of Jesus.[40]

The resulting rebuke of Peter in John 18:11 (cf. 13:6–9, 37–38) is clear in its thrust. While Matthew's inclusion of Jesus' judgment that "all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (v. 52) ironically illuminates a large part of Peter's self-sacrificing motive in the garden, John's report of Jesus' rebuke of Peter ("Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?") focuses on Peter's obstruction of Jesus' journey toward "where he is going"(13:33), namely, the cross.[41] In John, Peter is condemned not for his violence per se. Instead, the narrative in John implies that Peter is rebuked both for failing to understand the necessity of Jesus' self-sacrifice and for failing to remember that Peter will not follow Jesus now, in his own expression of self-sacrificing ἀγάπη, but "will follow later" (13:36).

As the action moves from garden to courtyard (18:15-27), Peter moves to the foreground of the narrative.[42] In John, the affirmation that Peter and another disciple were "following" Jesus (v. 15) serves as a pivot between the two scenes, affirming Peter's status as "follower" because of/in spite of his action in the garden.

While each of the Gospels recounts the scene in the courtyard distinctively, it has been observed that John's account of the scene foregrounds the contrast

[38] See Stibbe, *John as Storyteller*, 95–105, for a reading of John 18 that fully recognizes the connections with ch. 10.

[39] See Carson, *Gospel according to John,* 579; Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John,* 520–21; Bernard, *Gospel according to St. John,* 587; and cf. Stibbe, *John as Storyteller*, 104.

[40] Bernard, *Gospel according to St. John,* 588; Waetjen, *Beloved Disciple*, 380; Timothy Wiarda, *Peter in the Gospels: Patterns, Personality and Relationship* (WUNT 2/127; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 110; and, most recently and most thoroughly, Blaine, *Peter in the Gospel of John*, 88-89, whose balanced discussion of Peter's motives in the garden notes the narrative significance of the conversation in the upper room and specifically the notion of giving up one's life that is found in 13:36–37 and 15:13.

[41] Carson, *Gospel according to John,* 579; Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John,* 436; Moloney, *Gospel of John,* 484: "Peter is thwarting God's design as Judas is thwarting God's design. The prophecies of 13:1–17, 21–38 are being fulfilled."

[42] See Stibbe, *John as Storyteller*, 96–98.

between Jesus and Peter and focuses on the issue of discipleship.[43] The term μαθητής ("disciple") appears four times in the account of Peter's first denial (vv. 15–18) and the theme of discipleship is marked nine times in these four verses.[44] Peter's initial denial of his discipleship is then juxtaposed with the simultaneous interrogation of Jesus about "his disciples and his teaching" beginning in v. 19. Having taken up the open and public context of his teaching (v. 20), Jesus then responds to the question regarding his disciples: "Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said" (v. 21).[45] The irony, of course, is that the one who has followed Jesus most closely throughout his ministry is in the very midst of denying his discipleship (vv. 15–18, 25–26) and effectively undermining Jesus' claims that his teaching is to be found in his followers. As Culpepper correctly observes, "what Peter denies in John is not that Jesus is Lord but that he is his disciple (8:17, 25, 27). Jesus is on his way to death and (at the time at least) Peter is no follower of his."[46] Verses 13–27 do not make it explicitly clear that Peter's denial of his discipleship is motivated by fear for his life (presumably put in jeopardy by either his association with Jesus or his violent action in the garden),[47] but John's reference in v. 27 to the cock crowing clearly points to Jesus' conversation with Peter (13:31–38) as the backdrop against which the latter's denials must be understood.[48] Whatever the precise rationale, Jesus' prophetic judgment that Peter would prove "unwilling" to express the ἀγάπη that lays down its life (13:38)[49] conclusively colors the reader's

[43] See Brown, *Gospel according to John,* 2:842: "John has constructed a dramatic contrast wherein Jesus stands up to his questioners and denies nothing, while Peter cowers before his questioners and denies everything." So too Carson, *Gospel according to John,* 585.

[44] Moloney, *Gospel of John,* 487: v. 15 (3x), v. 16 (3x); v. 17 (2x), v. 18.

[45] Ibid., 487.

[46] Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 120. So too Carson, *Gospel according to John,* 581; Beasley-Murray, *John,* 324; Kevin Quast, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple: Figures for a Community in Crisis* (JSOTSup 32; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 86. See also Brown (*Gospel according to John,* 824), who notes the contrast between 18:5, 8, where Jesus confesses who he is in defense of the disciples, and 18:17–25, where Peter denies that he is a disciple.

[47] Commentators (so Burge, *John*, 495; Moloney, *Gospel of John,* 491 [following Bernard, *Gospel according to St. John,* 603]) often see the final accusation in John (from a relation of the man whom Peter assaulted) to imply that Peter's fear relates to the potential discovery and prosecution of the attack in the garden. If, however, this was Peter's primary concern, it is difficult to explain his earlier evasions, which suggest that it is rather the fear of association with Jesus and the possibility of sharing his desperate fate that motivate Peter's denials.

[48] See Burge, *John*, 497; Carson, *Gospel according to John,* 581, 586; John Fenton, *The Gospel according to John in the Revised Standard Version* (New Clarendon Bible; Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 182; Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John,* 442; Moloney, *Gospel of John,* 492 (contra Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* [trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray; Oxford: Blackwell, 1971], 648).

[49] Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times!"

understanding of the episode.[50] Jesus' insistence, in his conversation with Peter and the rest earlier in the evening (chs. 13–17), on the need for self-sacrificing ἀγάπη serves as the narrative backdrop against which Peter's own actions later in the evening (ch. 18) must be viewed. By referring to Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial (13:38), John 18:27 invites the reader to the conclusion that Peter has failed, first in the garden and then in the courtyard, to grasp fully or express faithfully the particular kind of ἀγάπη that Jesus demands of his disciples in his last significant conversation with Peter and the others before his passion.

IV. John 21 Revisited[51]

The suggestion that the threefold pattern of question and response in Jesus' first conversation with Peter following his resurrection (John 21:15–17) is a conscious evocation of the three denials before it (ch. 18) is, of course, far from original.[52] Indeed, in light of the clear connections between 13:31–38 and 21:18–23 (referred to at the outset of this study), some have even observed that this threefold pattern of question and answer in ch. 21 must eventually resonate with Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial in ch. 13.[53] What has not been previously explored, and what occupies the rest of this study, is how Jesus' insistence that Peter follow his

[50] While the absence of any explicit expression of remorse on the part of Peter (in contrast to Mark 14:72; Matt 26:75; Luke 22:62) has been held against him by some commentators (e.g., Arthur H. Maynard, "The Role of Peter in the Fourth Gospel," *NTS* 30 [1984]: 531–48), Blaine (*Peter in the Gospel of John*, 101) rightly notes that if John is keen to blacken the Synoptics' portrait of Peter by omitting the mention of his weeping, it is difficult to explain why he would proceed also to omit Peter's curse of Jesus.

[51] For a recent discussion of the symbolism and significance of John 21:1–14, see Culpepper, "Designs for the Church," 369–402. That the narrative is preparing in vv. 1–14 to take up the issue of Peter's discipleship (or lack thereof) in vv. 15–22 may be suggested by the fire of coals (ἀνθρακιάν) outside Caiaphas's courtyard (18:18), which then reappears on the beach (21:9) in advance of Peter's encounter with Jesus. For this and other literary connections between John 1–20 and the opening of ch. 21, see Francis J. Moloney, "John 21 and the Johannine Story," in Thatcher and Moore, *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism,* 240–41.

[52] See, for instance, Keener, *Gospel of John,* 1235; Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John,* 485; Moloney, *Gospel of John,* 555; Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 869; Brown, *Gospel according to John,* 2:1111; Bernard, *Gospel according to St. John,* 701; Marsh, *Gospel of St. John,* 669. Brown (ibid.) rightly dispenses with Bultmann's objection to the identification, citing the reference to the "charcoal fire" in 18:8 and 21:9 and the fact that these are the only two groups of three related to Peter in the Fourth Gospel.

[53] Minear, "Functions of John 21," 92: "Moreover, it is highly probable that the same author intended from the outset to balance the triple denial, predicted in 13:38 and narrated in 18:15–27, with the triple pledge of love in 21:15–17." See also Hendricksen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John,* 486; Wiarda, *Peter in the Gospels*, 113; Quast, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple,* 143; Keener, *Gospel of John,* 1235; Moloney, *Gospel of John,* 558.

example of self-sacrificing ἀγάπη (chs. 13–17), and Peter's failure to do so, might impact our reading of their conversation in ch. 21.

While Barnabas Lindars rightly recognizes that Jesus' use of ἀγάπη in 21:15–17 facilitates the allusion to the ἀγάπη command in 13:36–38 (and indeed 15:12–17), the modern consensus that no semantic distinction regarding ἀγαπάω and φιλέω can be maintained in John (see above) prevents Lindars from recognizing the significance of the allusion.[54] While the modern consensus presupposes that the alternation between ἀγαπάω and φιλέω in Jesus' conversation with Peter (21:15–17) should be judged in light of the stylistic usage of John as evidenced throughout the whole of the Gospel, the structure and allusive nature of John's narrative as illustrated above suggest a more apposite and narratively proximate frame of reference.

Having clarified at the outset (and eventually at the heart) of his Farewell Discourse, his particular understanding of ἀγάπη as a love that lays down its life, Jesus' prediction of Peter's failure to live up to that love in John 13:38 creates a narrative structure that requires both the reader of the text and the character of Peter within the text to "remember."[55] John's narrative notice (18:27) that Peter falls short (thereby fulfilling Jesus' prophecy) inevitably serves to remind both the reader and Peter of Jesus' original call to self-sacrificing ἀγάπη.

Standing outside the narrative world of the text, it may seem plausible to assess Jesus' and Peter's choice of verbs in 21:15–17 in light of John's usage across the entire Gospel. However, in the allusive and psychologically realistic narrative world created by the writer of John's Gospel, it is clear that the most plausible frame of reference—narratively speaking—for what ἀγαπάω and φιλέω mean in the mouths of Jesus and Peter in their *first* conversation *after* the resurrection (21:15–17) is what these words meant in their *last* conversation *before* the passion (chs. 13–17)—a conversation that, as we have seen, turns on Jesus' attempt to encourage a distinctive understanding of ἀγάπη and ends with Peter's signal failure to grasp and express it (ch. 18).[56]

[54] Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 634-35.

[55] Given that Jesus refers to glorification and death (11:4) immediately after the shepherd discourse with its motif of self-sacrifice (10:11–18), Jeffrey L. Staley (*The Print's First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel* [SBLDS 82; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988], 68–69) may be correct to see a foreshadowing of Jesus' particular understanding of ἀγαπάω in ch. 11, when Mary and Martha's initial request for help in 11:3 ("The one whom you love [φιλεῖς] is sick") is seemingly corrected/clarified by the narrator in 11:5: "Jesus loved [ἠγάπα] Martha and her sister and Lazarus." If such an understanding is being announced here by the narrator, however, it can only be for the benefit of the reader, not Peter or the disciples.

[56] Interestingly, the narrative plausibility of such a proposal is supported by psychological research, which suggests that conversational memory (including that of specific words) improves when the dialogue to be remembered contains "high-interaction" statements that carry information related to the subsequent dynamics of the speaker-listener relationship. See further

In light of Peter's failure, Jesus thus asks in 21:15: "Simon, son of John, do you love me [ἀγαπᾷς με] more than these?" Having now exemplified the essence of ἀγάπη by laying down his own life, Jesus' concern is that Peter will finally be willing to do as he had promised and follow him in expressing this love (13:31–38). Jesus thus uses the verb ἀγαπάω not because it denotes a higher love (so Westcott) or a lower love (so Trench) or because of the way it is used in classical Greek, the Septuagint, the NT, or even the book of John as a whole (see introduction). Rather, John's Jesus uses ἀγαπάω *now* in his question to Peter (21:15), because, quite simply, John's Jesus used ἀγαπάω *then,* in his earlier conversation with Peter (chs. 13-17). While Jesus' inclusion of "more than these" may query whether Peter is more willing to lay down his life for Jesus than for the rest of the disciples,[57] the alternative understanding seems more sensible: Does Peter, whose unthinking loyalty to Jesus has always been "more" forthrightly expressed than that of the other disciples—and seldom "more" so than in his last conversation (13:6, 37)—truly love (ἀγαπάω) Jesus more self-sacrificially than they do?[58]

The fact that Peter's answer (v. 15), "Yes [ναί], Lord, you know that I love you [φιλῶ σε]," makes use not of ἀγαπάω but φιλέω has of course prompted an exhaustive (but vain) search for a sustainable semantic distinction between the two verbs.[59] The foregoing discussion, however, points in another direction: in the context of the wider narrative and Jesus' interest in Peter's (failed) grasp of ἀγάπη, it becomes clear that the precise connotations or denotations of φιλέω here in ch. 21 are neither John's nor Jesus' primary interest.[60] Rather, the point is quite simply that whatever sort of love is indicated by φιλέω, it is demonstrably not the sort of love for which Jesus is asking—nor the sort for which he had explicitly been asking on the night he was betrayed.[61]

B. MacWhinney et al., "The Role of Arousal in Memory for Conversation," *Memory & Cognition* 10(4) (1982): 308–17.

[57] See Brown, *Gospel according to John,* 2:1104–5, for a discussion of the unlikelihood that "these" should be understood as the masculine object of the verb (i.e., do you love me more than you love these disciples [so Moloney, *Gospel of John,* 559]) or as one or more of the boats, nets, or fish.

[58] So Carson, *Gospel according to John,* 676; Burge, *John*, 586–87; Brown, *Gospel according to John,* 2:1104 (albeit with grammatical reservations); Beasley-Murray, *John,* 405; Marsh, *Gospel of St. John,* 669; Keener, *Gospel of John,* 1236.

[59] See n. 6 above and Carson, *Gospel according to John,* 676–77, for the standard rebuttals that have persuaded many of the unsustainability of a general semantic distinction between the two.

[60] While the argument put forth here thus stands in the tradition (ancient and modern) of seeing the variation of verbs as narratively significant (see n. 6 above), it differs from previous attempts to delineate the difference in terms of semantic distinctions between the two verbs generally by allowing John's Jesus (and the unfolding narrative) to define the specific, functional distinction between them.

[61] In addition to the concentration of forms of ἀγαπάω in key command passages such as 13:31–38 and 15:12–17 (see above), the comparative paucity of verbal forms of φιλέω in the Farewell Discourses (15:19, 16:27 [2x]) is striking when compared with forms of ἀγαπάω in

Attempts to maintain a distinction between Jesus' ἀγαπάω and Peter's φιλέω have typically foundered on Peter's seeming equation of the two through his use of the particle ναί ("yes") at the beginning of his response (v. 15). In the words of one reader: "Why should he say 'yes' [I have the sort of love Jesus seeks], if he means no [the love I have is different]?"[62] While it may be argued that Peter's "yes" need only be a general affirmation (which allows for a subtle distinction between the two words) rather than a specific equation, few have found such arguments persuasive.[63] Instead, Brown (unwittingly) points to a more plausible solution: "Peter . . . shows no awareness that he is answering a request for a higher or more spiritual or more rational type of love (*agapan*) with an offer of a lower or more affectionate form of love (*philein*)."[64]

In light of Peter's repeated failure (ch. 18), immediately following the Farewell Discourse (chs. 13–17), to grasp or express the self-sacrificial nature of ἀγάπη, as exemplified and defined by Jesus (rather than by general Greek usage), it is hardly surprising that Peter now, in his response to Jesus' question, once again misunderstands the kind of love Jesus asks of him. Peter's insistence that Jesus "knows" the true nature of Peter's love may reflect his high estimation of Jesus' empathy (or omniscience),[65] but it also serves to magnify ironically the reader's estimation of Peter's own ignorance. Peter's "yes" thus reflects his failure to draw the necessary distinction between the ἀγάπη that has been requested and the φιλία that he has offered.

While Jesus' subsequent command to Peter to "feed" (βόσκε) his followers (just as Jesus has done first in the upper room [ch. 13] and here again on the beach [vv. 9–13]),[66] encourages Peter's functional identification with Jesus, others have

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chs. 13–17: 13:1 (2x), 23, 34 (3x); 14:15, 21 (4x), 23 (2x), 28, 31; 15:9 (2x), 12 (2x), 17; 17:23 (2x), 24, 26). The pattern of nominal usage likewise reinforces its prominence: ἀγάπη is used strategically at the beginning (13:35), middle (15:9, 10 [2x], 13) and end (17:26) of the Farewell Discourse.

[62] The question (without brackets) belongs to Bernard, *Gospel according to St. John,* 704, but the sentiment is shared more widely: Morris, *Gospel according to John,* 873; Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John,* 486. So too Brown, *Gospel according to John,* 2:1103; Burge, *John*, 587; Quast, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple,* 146.

[63] Marsh, *Gospel of St. John,* 669, who sees Peter's φιλέω as expressing a lesser love, nevertheless insists that "Peter, who would on some occasions undoubtedly have answered with a confident 'Yes', now knows that he can make no such claim." Yet of course, that is precisely what he does answer. The only other appearance of ναί in John's Gospel (Martha's emphatic affirmative response to Jesus' question regarding his messianic identity in 11:27) suggests that "yes" really does mean "yes."

[64] Brown, *Gospel according to John,* 2:1103. So too Wiarda, *Peter in the Gospels*, 113: "That Peter is not consciously insincere in affirming his love is indicated by his tone ('you know')."

[65] For discussion, see Brown, *Gospel according to John,* 2:1106.

[66] For recent discussion of these verses in relation to the Eucharist, see John Paul Heil, *Blood and Water: The Death and Resurrection of Jesus in John 18–21* (CBQMS 27; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1995), 156–69.

noted that the specifically pastoral language—"my lambs" (τὰ ἀρνία μου)—is evocative of the imagery of the still earlier discourse of ch. 10 with its portrait of the Good Shepherd (vv. 11–18).[67] Indeed, given the clear intent of Jesus' question in v. 15 to help Peter grasp and embody the ἀγάπη that lays down its life, an evocation of the shepherd discourse can only be intended to remind Peter of the primary responsibility of the Good Shepherd, emphasized not only at the beginning of the discourse (10:11) but also in the middle (v. 15) and at the end (vv. 17–18): the shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.[68] Rather than merely a concession to Peter's failure to understand and grasp the ἀγάπη he demands, Jesus' pastoral charge is thus revealed as a further challenge to Peter to remember that the true fulfillment of the pastoral role to which Jesus is calling him requires an embracing of the ἀγάπη that lays down its life.[69]

Having challenged Peter's understanding, Jesus repeats his initial question (v. 16), now without reference to the disciples, but still with reference to the kind of love (ἀγαπάω) he ultimately requires of Peter.[70] Peter's reuse of φιλέω in his response and thus repetition of his initial failure to recognize the kind of love asked for evokes Jesus' own reiteration of his challenge to Peter to take up the role of the shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (πρόβατα)—the very word that Jesus uses now alongside the semantically broader pastoral term "tend" (ποίμανε) to make the allusion to his earlier discourse still more clear (10:11–18).[71]

[67] So Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John,* 486; Moloney, *Gospel of John,* 555; Marsh, *Gospel of St. John,* 672; Lindars, *Gospel of John,* 635; Hendricksen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John,* 489.

[68] So Bishop Cassian, "John XXI," *NTS* 3 (1956–57): 132–36, followed by Brown, *Gospel according to John,* 2:1114, and Minear, "Functions of John 21," 95. See too Keener, *Gospel of John,* 1237; Moloney, *Gospel of John,* 555; and Quast, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple,* 147. For discussion of the shepherd in John 10, see A. J. Simonis, *Die Hirtenrede im Johannes-Evangelium: Versuch einer Analyse von Johannes 10, 1–18 nach Entstehung, Hintergrund, und Inhalt* (AnBib 29; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967); and esp. *The Shepherd Discourse of John 10 and Its Context: Studies* (ed. Johannes Beutler and Robert T. Fortna; SNTSMS 67; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). See, too, more recently Jerome H. Neyrey ("The 'Noble Shepherd' in John 10: Cultural and Rhetorical Background," *JBL* 120 [2001]: 267–91), who sees a resonance of John's shepherd who lays down his life with the Greek rhetorical tradition surrounding the "noble death," arguing that the nobility of Jesus is thus demonstrated precisely by his attitude toward death.

[69] D. Francois Tolmie, "The (Not So Good) Shepherd: The Use of Shepherd Imagery in the Characterization of Peter in the Fourth Gospel," in Frey et al., *Imagery in the Gospel of John,* 353–68.

[70] The reading pursued here confirms, but also complicates, the observation of Anderson ("From One Dialogue to Another," 117–18) that responses to dialogues initiated by Jesus in the Gospel are either positive (i.e., acceptance) or negative (i.e., rejection or incomplete acceptance). Peter's responses to Jesus throughout the latter half of ch. 21 are arguably both positive and incomplete, thereby reflecting and/or creating a genuinely and cognitively realistic sense of ambivalence.

[71] Πρόβατα appears only twice in John (2:14, 15) outside chs. 21 (vv. 16, 17) and 10 (vv. 2, 3 [2x], 4, 7, 8, 11, 12 [2x], 13, 15, 26, 27).

Jesus' third question of Peter (φιλεῖς με, "Do you love me?" [v. 17]) is clearly similar to the previous two, but differs in its use of the very same verb (φιλέω) that Peter has used thus far. Jesus' adoption of Peter's terminology has been seen as either Jesus' accommodation to Peter's real or imagined capacity for love or, alternatively (and sometimes additionally), as a challenge to Peter's ability to offer even the φιλία he has professed.[72] Instead, it is suggested here that Jesus' use of φιλέω signals a change of tactics in the pursuit of his original strategy. Given that Peter has repeatedly failed to hear what Jesus is saying (ἀγαπάω), Jesus now invites Peter to hear what Peter himself has been saying (φιλέω) in the hope that the apostle will finally grasp the difference between the two. This hope is nurtured in the reader (and in Jesus?) by the narrator's note that "Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love [φιλέω] me?'" That this hope is in vain, however, and that Peter's pain relates not to his recognition of his previous misunderstanding but to his realization that he has been asked three times[73] is confirmed by Peter's reuse of φιλέω (rather than ἀγαπάω) in his final reply (v. 17).[74] Thus, while Jesus' three questions may well signal his intention to rehabilitate Peter following the latter's three denials, Peter's own continuing failure to grasp the kind of love that Jesus demands results in Jesus' final and most pointed attempt, "Feed my sheep" (βόσκε τὰ πρόβατά μου), to evoke in Peter a consciousness of the self-sacrificial love (imagined in ch. 10, eucharistically illustrated in ch. 13, and exemplified in the crucifixion) to which Peter is being called.[75]

Although the relationship between Jesus' conversation with Peter in 21:15–17 and the exchange that follows in vv. 18–19 has begun to be recognized,[76] the integral nature of the relationship is, in fact, suggested by Jesus' use of the very same formula ("Truly, truly I say to you" [v. 18]) that he had used in 13:38. Just as Jesus had, in his conversation with Peter on the night he was betrayed, tried to clarify for Peter the nature of the ἀγάπη that lays down its life (13:31–37), so too in their first conversation after the resurrection Jesus now queries Peter's recognition of his need to

[72] See Quast, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple,* 145; Hendricksen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John,* 489; Marsh, *Gospel of St. John,* 670; Osborne, "John 21," 325 n. 77.

[73] So Brown, *Gospel according to John,* 2:1106; Carson, *Gospel according to John,* 678; Beasley-Murray, *John,* 405; Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John,* 487; Lindars, *Gospel of John,* 635.

[74] While I do not agree with Maynard ("Role of Peter," 531–48) in his interpretation of the nature of the misunderstanding, I do support his recognition that a version of the misapprehension found in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in ch. 3 and the Samaritan woman in ch. 4 is to be found here in Jesus' conversation with Peter (contra Blaine [*Peter in the Gospel of John*, 165], who sees the differing verbs as synonymous and fails to recognize the rhetorical and tactical nature of Jesus' use of φιλέω).

[75] Here then is yet another example (alongside 3:1–10 and 4:7–26) of a Jesus who (according to Blaine, *Peter in the Gospel of John*, 165) "constantly challenges his hearer to understand him *on his own terms*" (emphasis Blaine's).

[76] Moloney, *Gospel of John,* 555: "Jesus' further words concerning Peter's future are but the logical consequence of the christological basis for his shepherding" (contra Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 713; and Brown, *Gospel according to John,* 2:1117).

embrace this love (21:15–17). Just as Jesus, in the face of Peter's failure to understand on that dark night, had to abandon the exchange of question and answer and speak into Peter's future (13:38), so too Jesus now, in the face of Peter's continuing failure to understand, leaves off questioning Peter in order to speak again into his future (21:18–19). While Jesus' prediction of Peter's future clearly resonates (as we have seen at the outset) with his earlier prophecy that Peter will "follow" later in Jesus' own path of self-sacrifice (13:31–37), so too does Jesus' prediction of Peter's reluctance. Just as Jesus anticipated Peter's denials (13:38), so now he predicts Peter's resistance to the embrace of the ἀγάπη that lays down its life (21:18): it will be not Peter himself but someone else who will dress him; Peter will not go where he wants, but someone else will lead Peter where he does not want to go.[77]

Indeed, the final action narrated in John's Gospel further reinforces both Peter's failure to internalize Jesus' call to self-sacrificial love and Jesus' insistence that Peter embrace it. In response to Jesus' reiteration of the message of the upper room ("Follow me!" [21:19]), Peter's only response is to deflect Jesus' command in the direction of the "disciple whom Jesus loved." Jesus' response in v. 22 ("If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me") reaffirms for the final time in the Gospel the nexus of death and discipleship that Jesus so clearly associates with the command to love, not only in his last conversation with Peter before the crucifixion but also in his first conversation with him after the resurrection.

As will undoubtedly be clear from the above, I suggest that Jesus' use of ἀγαπάω (and Peter's use of φιλέω) is neither accidental nor incidental to the development of the narrative of John 21. On the contrary, I believe that the alternation is best understood as a crucial part of Jesus' effort in ch. 21 to remind Peter of the kind of love (ἀγάπη) that Jesus had demanded of him on the night he was betrayed (chs. 13–17) and that Peter subsequently failed to grasp or express (ch. 18). While Peter's persistent inability (despite Jesus' equally persistent encouragement) in ch. 21 to express or apprehend the love that lays down its life need not preclude the suggestion of Jesus' rehabilitation of Peter, the latter's lack of response to Jesus' final command "You must follow me!" leaves the reader of John's Gospel to wonder whether Peter will indeed fully embrace his discipleship.[78]

[77] Contra Blaine (*Peter in the Gospel of John*, 174), who argues that there is no suggestion of Peter's resistance.

[78] So, Wiarda, *Peter in the Gospels*, 114.

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